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The Home Mission Work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference: A Description and Evaluation

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THE HOME MISSION WORK OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNODICAL
CONFERENCE: A DESCRIPTION AND
EVALUATION

A dissertation Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America¹ presents a complex picture. It began as an expression of the doctrinal unity which existed among its constituent synods. In his presidential address to the 1946 convention of the Synodical Conference, Pastor E. Benjamin Schlueter² reminded the delegates of the dual purpose of the Synodical Conference by quoting portions of Dr. C. F. W. Walther's sermon preached at the opening of the first convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872. He pointed out how Walther had said that the Synodical Conference was to be a means to assist its constituent synods in maintaining their faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. It was also to have as the final purpose of its joint work the saving of souls.³

To enable the Synodical Conference to function as an agent to help preserve the orthodoxy of its constituent synods, doctrinal essays were presented at its conventions and the actions and essays of the individual synods were given a thorough scrutiny by review committees appointed at

¹Hereafter it will be designated as the Synodical Conference.

²Edwin Albert Benjamin Schlueter (1880-1952) of the Wisconsin Synod was elected president of the Synodical Conference in 1944. He was at this time also the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

³Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin August 6-9, 1946, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 7-8.

each Synodical Conference convention. Yet in spite of all these efforts, in the end the Synodical Conference disintegrated in doctrinal strife.⁴

In making its effort to ensure doctrinal orthodoxy, the Synodical Conference did not neglect the goal of saving souls. The scope of this dissertation is to describe, analyze, and evaluate the home mission work⁵ of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, which was a mission to Afro-Americans.⁶ The purpose is to expose the various factors which impacted this mission work and either helped or hampered its success. As a result of the study, it is the hope of the author that the church will learn from its past and manage to put fewer obstacles in the path of the Gospel it proclaims.

In making this study of the black mission work of the Synodical Conference, it became apparent to the author that the two theological disputes which disrupted the Synodical Conference, the Predestinarian Controversy of the 1880s and the fellowship dispute which began in 1938,

⁴For an account and evaluation of the process of disintegration see George J. Gude, "A Description and Evaluation of the Pressures and Difficulties within the Synodical Conference which Led to Its Destruction," (STM Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Mo., 1986).

⁵The terms home or inner missions were used interchangeably in the sources to describe the mission work that was done within the United States, in contrast to the mission work that was done in a foreign country. Beginning in 1935/1936 the Synodical Conference also conducted mission work in Nigeria. The history of the foreign mission work of the Synodical Conference has yet to be given scholarly treatment.

⁶It must be remembered that the individual synods were also conducting various types of mission work on their own throughout the period. This dissertation deals only with that which was done by the Synodical Conference itself.

had little impact on its black mission work.⁷ There appear to be two reasons for this. The first was timing. The Predestinarian Controversy occurred just as the mission to the Afro-Americans was beginning, and the mission was still tiny. While it was true that the first missionary, Rev. John F. Doescher, sided with the opponents of C. F. W. Walther and left the Missouri Synod, Doescher had by that time already taken a call out of the black mission. In the case of the Fellowship Controversy, by the time the majority of the heat was generated by this controversy, the process of amalgamating the black congregations into the existing synods, begun in 1946, was already well underway.

The second reason that these theological controversies had so little impact on the Synodical Conference mission work was the integral relationship between the black mission and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. There were several aspects to this relationship. The vast majority of the white workers, including both pastors and professors, were from the Missouri Synod and would naturally have been sympathetic to its position. Since these men from the Missouri Synod were the ones who taught in the educational institutions which provided training for the black workers, it was natural that the black pastors also would favor the Missouri position. Finally, the Missouri Synod provided over eighty percent of the funds for the black mission.

The one theological issue which did arise in the black mission work of the Synodical Conference occurred as the Synodical Conference Mission Board reacted to calls for integration within the church. When

⁷For a brief description of the Predestinarian Controversy and the later dispute over fellowship, see Appendix K.

faced with this challenge, they responded by attempting to provide a Scriptural justification for segregation. Even this, however, produced few repercussions, because their attempt did not receive widespread support.

There is a rich supply of primary sources for the study of the black mission work of the Synodical Conference. The Proceedings of the biannual meetings of the Synodical Conference, which were printed in German until 1932, always included a detailed report on the mission work. The minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board provided insight into the inner workings of the mission as well as into the attitudes of those who were to oversee the work. In addition, the personal papers of some of those who were involved in the mission are preserved in the Concordia Historical Institute.

There is also much that has been lost. There appear to no longer be any personal papers from some of the key individuals involved in the mission, such as Christopher Drewes⁸ and Louis Wisler⁹. Often references appear in the minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board to various documents and correspondence which now apparently no longer exist. Some of this material apparently was destroyed by the Synodical Conference Mission Board itself. The minutes of the July 17, 1951,

⁸Christopher Frederick John Drewes (1870-1931) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1892. Drewes held pastorates in Memphis, Tennessee, (1892-1895), Hannibal, Missouri, (1895-1905), and St. Louis, Missouri, (1906-1917). He was on the Synodical Conference Mission Board from 1905-1917, and then the executive director of the board from 1917-1931.

⁹Louis A. Wisler (1876-1945) was a 1901 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He was pastor of St. Matthew, St. Louis, Missouri, from 1901 through 1936, when he became the executive secretary of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.

meeting record that the executive secretary, Karl Kurth and board member Charles Groerich were authorized to check all the material which was stored in the vaults and discard what they considered unnecessary and worthless.¹⁰ The important minutes and records of significant organizations within the black mission, such as the General Conference, the Immanuel Conference, the Alabama Conference, and the Luther Conference, are either only partially complete or totally missing.¹¹

The present dissertation is divided into five chapters and a postscript. The first chapter sets the scene as it gives a very brief historical background. The chapter then continues with a description of the various fields of mission work which were either discussed or tried by the Synodical Conference, culminating in its decision to explore and then pursue mission work among the "Freedmen" of the South.

The second chapter provides an overview of the black mission work. Particular notice is taken of the manner in which this work spread, problems which plagued the mission, the effect of the changes in black America on the mission, and the nature of the supervision exerted within the mission.

Chapters three and four deal with two major problems which the Synodical Conference seemed to be incapable of solving. The first of these is described in the third chapter, which examines the various efforts which the Synodical Conference made to provide theological

¹⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 17, 1951, Concordia Historical Institute, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 2, St. Louis, Mo.

¹¹The largest collection, which is in the possession of Dr. Richard Dickinson, is far from complete. It consists of material from the Alabama Lutheran Conference from 1933, 1940-1943, 1946-1949, 1954, and the Immanuel Lutheran Conference from 1927-1936, 1938-1949.

training for black students who wanted to serve in the mission. The fourth chapter explores the long drawn out saga which sought to find a way for the black congregations to become part of an established church body.

Racism and an authoritarian approach to supervision were both problems that effected far more than just the Synodical Conference mission work. While the presence of either would obviously impact life and work in the black mission, when taken together, their effect was in fact compounded. Chapter five examines the disastrous effects which racism and the authoritarian supervision of the Synodical Conference Mission Board produced among the black congregations.

Finally, the postscript summarizes the conclusions which have been drawn after each chapter and gives a final evaluation. It will be noted that there were indeed significant problems which appear to have created obstacles to the spread of the Gospel. However, as God has promised, the proclamation of the Gospel was effective, as is witnessed by today's black Lutherans.

It is necessary to call the attention of the reader to two items of terminology. The home mission work conducted by the Synodical Conference was a mission to the "Freedmen" of the South, a mission to blacks. While the terms black or Afro-American are the preferred terms today, through most of the period during which the Synodical Conference conducted its mission, the terms used were colored or negro. In sections of the dissertation paraphrasing the reports or statements of that day, (as for example, a paraphrase of Christopher Drewes) the terms negro or colored will be used, because those are the terms which were used by that individual. In other cases the term black will generally be used. A

second problem of terminology involves the name of the board created by the Synodical Conference to supervise its mission work. The sources refer to this board by a variety of names, (such as Board, Mission Board, Negro Mission Board). For the sake of consistency, unless a direct quote is being made, in this dissertation the board will be designated as the Synodical Conference Mission Board.

Appendices A-K provide historical background for certain aspects of Lutheranism relevant for this dissertation. For the reader who is unfamiliar with the historical developments among Afro-Americans, Appendix L provides a brief overview of black America during the period of the Synodical Conference mission work. A knowledge of these trends is helpful in order to grasp the full perspective of the Synodical Conference black mission.

CHAPTER I

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNODICAL CONFERENCE GROPEs TO HEED JESUS' GREAT COMMISSION

Historical Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America was a federation of Lutheran Synods. When it was founded in 1872, six synods, the Ohio Synod (1818),¹ the Illinois Synod (1846),² the Missouri Synod (1847),³ the Wisconsin Synod (1850),⁴ the Norwegian Synod (1853),⁵ and the Minnesota Synod (1860),⁶ were charter members. Later four other synods also affiliated with the Synodical Conference. These were the English Synod (1888),⁷ which joined the Synodical Conference in 1890, the Michigan Synod (1860),⁸ which joined the Synodical Conference in 1892,

¹For a brief history of the Ohio Synod see Appendix A. When the Ohio Synod withdrew from the Synodical Conference as a result of the Predestinarian Controversy, a few pastors and congregations who were sympathetic to the position of the Missouri Synod withdrew from the Ohio Synod and in 1882, formed the Concordia Synod of Pennsylvania and Other States. The Concordia Synod became a member of the Synodical Conference in 1882. In 1886 it was disbanded and became part of the Missouri Synod.

²For a brief history of the Illinois Synod see Appendix B.

³For a brief history of the Missouri Synod see Appendix C.

⁴For a brief history of the Wisconsin Synod see Appendix D.

⁵For a brief history of the Norwegian Synod see Appendix E.

⁶For a brief history of the Minnesota Synod see Appendix F.

⁷For a brief history of the English Synod see Appendix G.

⁸For a brief history of the Michigan Synod see Appendix H.

the Slovak Synod (1902),⁹ which joined the Synodical Conference in 1908, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (1918),¹⁰ which joined in 1920. Prior to the formation of the Synodical Conference the leaders of the various synods had become acquainted with one another and realized that there was theological harmony among them. This in turn prompted them to explore the possibilities of the formation of some kind of an organization.¹¹

At the time of the formation of the Synodical Conference the constituting synods clearly delineated the purpose of their organization, stating in paragraph three of the original constitution:

The external expression of the spiritual unity of the respective synods; mutual strengthening in belief and confession; furtherance of unity in teaching and practice, and the elimination of potential or threatening disturbance thereof; common activity for mutual aims; the endeavor to fix the limits of the synods according to territorial boundaries, provided that language does not separate them; the consolidation of all Lutheran synods of America into a single, faithful, devout American Lutheran Church.¹²

In addition to its significantly stronger confessional foundation, the Synodical Conference had one distinctive feature in its basis for organization which differentiated it from the General Synod¹³ and the

⁹For a brief history of the Slovak Synod see Appendix I.

¹⁰For a brief history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod see Appendix E.

¹¹For a brief discussion of the process which led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, see Appendix J.

¹²Richard C. Wolf, ed., Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 196.

¹³The General Synod was organized in 1820, and was intended to foster a Lutheran consciousness, including in its goals a desire to check both rationalism and unionism. However, the actual commitment to the Lutheran Confessions was minimal.

General Council¹⁴, the other larger groupings of Lutherans. Both of these organizations were delegated various areas of responsibility by the individual member synods. In these delegated areas, the General Synod and the General Council had power to enforce their decisions. In contrast, the Synodical Conference had no such power. The Synodical Conference remained precisely what its name stated, (i.e.), a conference. It had no power to enforce its decisions over the constituent synods. The only power it possessed was the power of counsel and advice.

Synodical Conference Attempts at Joint Work

While the focal point of the Lutheran Synodical Conference was its character as an expression of theological fellowship, clearly, one of its purposes, as its founders envisioned it, was that this theological harmony would manifest itself as the various synods cooperated in the pursuit of common activity.¹⁵ The question was, "In what areas should we conduct these common endeavors?" As the leaders of the Synodical Conference groped to find an answer to this question a variety of attempts to carry on joint work were discussed or tried.

¹⁴The General Council was organized in 1867. It was significantly more confessional than the General Synod, reflecting the general movement toward confessionalism that had occurred in Lutheranism. However, it was not judged sufficiently confessional by the synods which formed the Synodical Conference.

¹⁵Two controversies shattered the unity of the Synodical Conference. Neither of these had a significant impact on the actual home mission work which was done by the Synodical Conference. The first came shortly after the black mission work had begun, and the second came after virtually all of the black mission work had been incorporated into the various districts of the constituent Synods. For a brief discussion of the two controversies which disrupted the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, see Appendix K.

At the very first convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872 Professor Matthias Loy¹⁶ of the Ohio Synod presented six theses which called attention to a responsibility which the synods belonging to the Synodical Conference were obligated to pursue. This responsibility was to develop a mission outreach to the those who spoke the English language. He stated his basic premise in his first thesis when he asserted that the proclamation of the Gospel in the English language is the unquestionable mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and to fail to do this is to disobey the commission of the Lord. Loy went on in the other theses to point out that just because they had to also reach out and gather the scattered German and Scandinavian immigrants did not relieve them of this responsibility to the English. He then noted additional practical reasons specifically mentioning that if this is not done, then our descendants will not remain in the Lutheran Church. He finally gave some suggestions regarding how this could be done, namely through contributions for English work, allowing their church buildings to be used for English services, producing Lutheran reading materials in the English language, and, if capable, pastors should preach in English.¹⁷ However, there is no evidence that any joint attempt to organize a mission outreach to those who spoke English was ever made by the Synodical Conference.

¹⁶Matthias Loy (1828-1915) graduated in 1849 from Capital University, the Ohio Synod Theological Seminary located in Columbus, Ohio. He was a Professor at Capital University from 1865-1902, and the editor of Lutheran Standard from 1864-1891. He twice served as president of the Ohio Synod, from 1860-1878 and from 1880-1894.

¹⁷Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodical - Conferenz von Nord - Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 10. bis zum 16. Juli 1872. (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckert der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, 1872), pp. 14-20.

While there were large numbers of immigrants from Scandinavia and Germany arriving in the United States during these years, there was no need to present theses about the necessity of gathering them into congregations. All the synods of the Synodical Conference were well aware of this need. However, at this first meeting of the Synodical Conference, the possibility of jointly conducting this home mission work was proposed and discussed.

President Walther appointed a committee of six men who were to consider the issue and give a report. After pointing out the need for doing this work the committee commented that the home mission work of gathering the immigrants must concern the Synodical Conference. In order to conduct this home mission work jointly, the Synodical Conference should choose a commission which would be concerned about raising money, wisely spending the same, and overseeing the individual missions. The committee specifically warned, however, that this joint mission cannot be opposed to the work of the individual synods. It was further acknowledged that this joint work would encounter some obstacles that must be overcome. These obstacles included the problem of which individual synod these newly formed congregations would join, as well as a tendency to look out for sectional advantage. The way to overcome these obstacles was to keep a correct perception on the health of the church as a whole, by working out ahead of time written procedures which precisely spelled out how this work will be superintended, and by choosing a committee for the actual oversight of the work, with representatives from all the synods of the Synodical Conference included on this committee. Some suggested procedures were then listed, including

the possibility of giving this committee the responsibility of the work of outreach to English speaking people.¹⁸

A lengthy discussion followed. On the one hand a variety of potential problems were raised. It was pointed out that there were still some wounds left among individuals and congregations from the discord which had existed between the various synods prior to their reaching doctrinal agreement and forming the Synodical Conference. It was stated that it was first necessary to work toward achieving greater trust within the Synodical Conference before beginning this kind of joint work. It was further pointed out that a shortage of men would be a significant problem. There were not even enough men to fill existing congregations. If we called experienced pastors from existing congregations, where would we get men to serve the new vacancies? The competition between the existing synods for the affiliation of the newly formed congregations would produce great envy and mistrust. It would be better for each synod to do its own work or else to form state synods. On the other hand arguments in favor of such a joint venture were also raised. It was pointed out that while there were indeed difficulties, if we constantly postpone beginning this joint work, nothing would ever be accomplished at all. The number of potential members that have already been lost can hardly be imagined. To delay would only make matters worse. The solution was to make a beginning and let God use our attempted service according to his good pleasure. God in his grace can take care of the antagonisms which occur between the synods.¹⁹

¹⁸Verhandlungen, 1872, pp. 69-71.

¹⁹Verhandlungen, 1872, pp. 71-73.

The matter was apparently dropped, as there is no record that such a committee for joint home mission work was ever appointed. In the 1873 Verhandlungen the theses on home missions are listed among the unfinished matters on which agreement had not yet been reached.²⁰ While the prospect was raised initially, it would appear that each of the synods preferred to do its own work rather than for the Synodical Conference to do it as a joint venture. This is verified by action taken by the 1877 Synodical Conference Convention. In that year Rev. Conrad Dreves (Drewes)²¹ appealed to the Synodical Conference to subsidize his missionary journeys in California. The Synodical Conference Convention declared that the Synodical Conference was not engaged in the matter of home missions. This work had been delegated to the individual synods.²²

Another possible area of joint venture was explored by the Synodical Conference at its second convention in 1873. This involved what was called the immigrant mission. The purpose of this mission was to assist immigrants as they arrived in the United States and perhaps even steer them to areas where there were existing Lutheran

²⁰Verhandlungen der zweiten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodical - Conferenz von Nord - Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 16. bis zum 22 Juli 1873. (Columbus, Oh.: Druck von John J. Gaszmann, 1873), p. 31.

²¹Conrad Dreves (Drewes) had been sent by the Wisconsin Synod as a circuit rider to reach the scattered Germans in California and Nevada. Prior to this Dreves had taught at the Hermannsburg Mission House in Hanover, Germany. In December 1876, Rev. Jacob Matthias Buehler, the Missouri Synod missionary in San Francisco, wrote and stated that Dreves was at that time being supported by his congregation, Saint Paulus. Dreves continued to work in California until October of 1879, when for an unknown reason he apparently returned to Germany.

²²Verhandlungen der sechsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodical - Conference von North - Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 18. bis zum 24 Juli 1877. (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri und anderen Staaten, 1877), pp. 50-51.

congregations. In 1853, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had taken over the work among the immigrants coming to New York which had up to this point been done and financed by its congregation in New York City under the leadership of Pastor Theodore Brohm.²³ After Pastor Stephanus Keyl,²⁴ who was the current Missouri Synod immigrant missionary in New York, gave his report concerning this work to the 1873 Synodical Conference Convention, a motion was made that this mission should now be conducted by the Synodical Conference as a joint endeavor.

The motion pointed out that while it was true that the Missouri Synod was already carrying on this work, since the concern for the immigrant belonged to everyone, this work should be conducted jointly by all. A plan was proposed in which the missionary and committee in charge of the mission would remain the same. The only difference was that now the committee would report to the Synodical Conference.²⁵ However, again no action was taken to follow through on this suggestion.

In 1874 with the encouragement of Pastor J. F. Buenger²⁶ an attempt was made to do mission work among the Chinese population in St. Louis. The opportunity came when Pastor Karl Vogel, who had been a

²³Theodore Julius Brohm (1808-1881) was the pastor of Trinity, New York, from 1843-1858. Roy Arthur Suelflow, "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866," (STM thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., 1845), pp. 179-180.

²⁴Stephanus Keyl (1838-1905) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1860. From 1867 he was the immigrant missionary in New York.

²⁵Verhandlungen, 1873, pp. 29-30.

²⁶Johann Friedrich Buenger (1810-1882) was an assistant pastor at Trinity, St. Louis, from 1844 to 1847, and then the pastor of Immanuel, St. Louis, from 1847 until his death. He was an ardent supporter of mission work and the prime mover behind the founding of a hospital, orphanage and Altenheim in St. Louis.

missionary in China from 1849-1852, took up residence in St. Louis. A mission committee was named with J. F. Buenger as chairman. It was hoped that a college could be started in which the Chinese could study theology, and that the work could be expanded to include the Chinese living in San Francisco.²⁷ However, Pastor Vogel died in 1875 bringing this mission to an end.

Joint Educational Institutions

A major potential area for joint work was the merging of higher educational institutions. Already prior to the formation of the Synodical Conference the prospect of conducting joint educational institutions, particularly seminaries, was discussed frequently among the synods which later formed the Synodical Conference. Such an arrangement had already been established between the Norwegian and Missouri Synods in 1857, when the Norwegian Synod authorized the training of its theological students at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In 1869 the Wisconsin Synod accepted the proposal of its president John Bading that they join with the Norwegian and Missouri Synods in a cooperative venture for the training of ministers.²⁸ In 1870, when the Ohio Synod took the initiative in proposing the formation of the Synodical Conference, one of

²⁷Verhandlungen der dritten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodical - Conferenz von Nord - Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 16. bis zum 21. Juli 1874, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri und anderen Staaten, 1874), pp. 44-49.

²⁸Verhandlungen der Neunzehnten Versammlungen der deutschen Evangelische-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin und andern Staaten Behalten in der ev. Luth. St. Petri-Gemeinde zu Helenville, Jefferson Co., Wis., vom 27. May bis 1. Juni 1869, (Milwaukee, Wis.: Druckerei des "Seebote.", 1869), pp. 22-23.

its concerns was the precarious situation existing in its own educational institutions.²⁹ One of the chief items of discussion at the Chicago Conference in 1871 was the desirability of the Ohio and Missouri Synods combining their educational systems. The Ohio Synod seminary in Columbus would be merged with the Missouri Synod seminary in St. Louis. The Ohio preparatory school would then be moved to Pittsburgh and would also be supported by the Missouri Synod.³⁰

After the Synodical Conference had been formed, interest continued to be expressed in this possibility. At the 1876 convention, in conjunction with a proposal to merge the German speaking synods of the Synodical Conference and to form state synods, the special committee also proposed that joint seminaries be conducted under the control of the Synodical Conference.³¹ From the responses reported to the 1877 Synodical Conference convention it became apparent that there was not widespread enthusiastic support of the proposal.³² The Wisconsin Synod established its own seminary in 1878, and while the issue of a joint seminary was further discussed both in 1878 (Verhandlungen, pp. 53-57) and 1879 (Verhandlungen, pp. 27-31), nothing ever developed. The

²⁹E. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia, Pa., 1975), p. 250

³⁰"The Chicago Conference," Lutheran Standard, 29, (February 1, 1871):20-21.

³¹Verhandlungen der funfsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodical - Conferenz von Nord - Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 19. bis zum 25. Juli 1876, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri und anderen Staaten, 1876), pp. 48-53.

³²Verhandlungen, 1877, pp. 37-44.

proposal then died with the eruption of the Predestinarian controversy which split the Synodical Conference.

The issue of conducting joint educational institutions was once more brought forward in 1915, again in conjunction with a suggestion of merging the synods of the Synodical Conference and forming state synods. This attempt also proved futile, in part as a result of the difficulties the Wisconsin Synod was experiencing between 1911 and 1917 as it worked to change from a federation of synods to a body in which these synods were organically united.³³

The Freedmen of the South

The decision to begin mission work among the "Negro of the South" was made at the 1877 convention of the Synodical Conference.³⁴ In one sense, the decision to begin a mission to the "Freedmen" of the South seems to have been made without thoroughly thinking through the implications of undertaking such a task. Unlike what happened at the first Synodical Conference Convention in 1872, when the proposal was made to jointly conduct their home mission work to the German and Norwegian immigrants, there was no thorough discussion of potential problems that might be encountered as the mission progressed.³⁵ As the committee presented its report, it stressed that the members of our congregations have a great interest in heathen mission. The chief question that the

³³Nelson, p. 380.

³⁴Verhandlungen der sechsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 18. bis 24 Juli 1877, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und Anderen Staaten, 1877), pp. 45-46.

³⁵See above pages 10-14.

Synodical Conference needed to address was not whether to begin a mission, but how should it begin this work and to which people should it go first?³⁶

On the other hand, mission work among the "Freedmen" of the South was not a novel suggestion. G. E. C. Ferdinand Sievers,³⁷ a vocal advocate for mission work in the Missouri Synod, had already in 1869 suggested work among the Negroes as a possible mission endeavor.³⁸ In the July 1, 1877, edition of Der Lutheraner, which was three weeks before the beginning of the Synodical Conference Convention, Sievers published an article in which he asked the readers, how can our synod include the petition "Thy Kingdom Come" when it prayed the Lord's Prayer and then do nothing to help spread the kingdom? Just because the synod is doing mission work among the German immigrant is no excuse for neglecting the

³⁶Verhandlungen, 1877, pp. 44-45.

³⁷Georg Ernst Christian Ferdinand Sievers was elected chairman of the Missouri Synod mission board in 1851 and continued to hold that position until 1893. He was the heathen mission conscience of the Synod, regularly urging that the Missouri Synod should begin its own heathen mission. [The date of 1851 was given by Joseph Schmidt in "Lebenslauf des sel. P. Ferdinand Sievers," Der Lutheraner, 51 (June 18, 1885):106. August R. Suelflow gives the date as 1850 for Sievers first election to this position. August Robert Suelflow, "The Life and Work of Georg Ernst Christian Ferdinand Sievers," (STM thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1947), p. 31.]

³⁸On March 22, 1869, as C. F. W. Walther answered a letter which Sievers had addressed to him, Walther touched on a number of mission concerns, which had undoubtedly been raised by Sievers. Concerning the possibility of a mission to the blacks, Walther indicated that it would be difficult as long as we do not have more strength in the English language. Ludwig Fuerbringer, Briefe von C. F. W. Walther an seine Freunde, Synodalgenossen und Familienglieder, Vol. 2, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1916), p. 156.

heathen God has placed on our doorstep, such as the Indians, Negroes, and Chinese.³⁹

When the Synodical Conference met from July 18-24, 1877, H. A. Preus,⁴⁰ the president of the Norwegian Synod, asked if now was not a good time for the Synodical Conference to begin a joint mission endeavor. He suggested that this mission reach out either to the "Indians" or the "Negroes" of the United States. A committee was appointed, the question studied, and a report was given and adopted to begin to work among the "Negroes" of this land. A committee consisting of Pastor J. F. Buenger, Pastor C. F. W. Sapper,⁴¹ and Mr. J. Umbach⁴² was chosen to carry out this endeavor.⁴³

As the mission began, the vast majority of clergy and laity in the churches of the Synodical Conference had little direct contact with blacks and little knowledge of conditions in the Southern states where the vast majority of blacks lived.⁴⁴ In 1877 the South was just emerging

³⁹August Robert Suelflow, "The Life and Work of Georg Ernst Christian Ferdinand Sievers" (STM thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1947), p. 65.

⁴⁰Herman Amberg Preus (1825-1894) was one of the organizers of the Norwegian Synod and its second president. He had also served as president of the Synodical Conference in 1876.

⁴¹Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Sapper (1833-1911), after having studied in Hermannsburg, was sent to America by Pastor Louis Harms in 1866. His first pastorate was in Carondelet (St. Louis), Missouri. He later served in Bloomington, Illinois.

⁴²John Umbach was a member of Immanuel, Pastor Buenger's congregation.

⁴³Verhandlungen, 1877, pp. 44-47.

⁴⁴See Appendix L, for a brief discussion of the status of Afro-Americans during the years of the Synodical Conference mission.

from the Reconstruction period, and the Northern white man, particularly if he spoke with a German accent, would hardly receive a hearty welcome.

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.⁴⁵

The first action of the new missionary board was to choose a missionary. The man called was Rev. John Frederick Doescher.⁴⁶ Doescher's instructions were to travel through the Southern states, preaching whenever he had the opportunity, and particularly observing the spiritual condition of the people and looking for the most promising places for establishing missions. On October 16, 1877, at the Convention of the Western District of the Missouri Synod, Doescher was installed as missionary to the Negro by Prof. W. F. Lehmann,⁴⁷ the president of

⁴⁵Richard D. Dickinson, Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 43.

⁴⁶Doescher, who was 37 years old at the time, was an experienced pastor and missionary. He had served parishes in Iowa for fifteen years, and at the time of his call from the missionary board he was serving as a Missouri Synod traveling missionary in the Dakota Territory. Doescher later left the Missouri Synod as a result of the Predestinarian Controversy and joined the Ohio Synod. Christopher F. Drewes, Half a Century of Lutheranism Among Our Colored People: A Jubilee Book 1877-1927, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 14.

⁴⁷William Friedrich Lehmann (1820-1880) graduated from the Ohio Synod seminary in Columbus, Ohio, in 1839. He became a professor at Capital University in 1846 and served as its president for 34 years. He also served several terms as president of the Synodical Conference.

the Synodical Conference, and Pastor Frank Julius Biltz the president of the Western District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.⁴⁸

After his installation Doescher journeyed to New Wells, Missouri, where a few blacks also heard his sermon. After traveling to Memphis, Tennessee, Doescher went to Little Rock, Arkansas. Sensing that the situation in Little Rock was hopeful, Doescher remained there for a longer time, and his work was blessed. By January there was a Sunday school of fifty children. When Doescher continued his reconnaissance journey in the Southern states, Pastor Karl Obermeyer,⁴⁹ from the German Lutheran Church in Little Rock, continued to serve the group. Doescher traveled through the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee. In March Doescher arrived in New Orleans, where he again stayed for a longer period of time before returning to St. Louis in April to give his report.⁵⁰

Even before Doescher's return, the Synodical Conference mission board had submitted a request for a candidate to the presidents of the seminaries in Columbus, Ohio, Springfield, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri. Apparently no one was suggested by the president of the

⁴⁸Verhandlungen der siebenten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 18. bis 24 Juli 1878, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei des Lutherischen Concordia - Verlags, 1878), p. 58.

⁴⁹Karl Ferdinand Obermeyer (1851-1926) while serving as pastor of the German Lutheran Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, also frequently cared for the black mission congregation during its frequent periods of vacancy.

⁵⁰Verhandlungen, 1878, pp. 58-60.

Columbus seminary. Candidate Louis Zahn,⁵¹ who was suggested by the Springfield Seminary, proved to be unacceptable because of a strong antipathy toward the colored. The St. Louis Seminary suggested Candidate Frederick Berg,⁵² who, after passing his examinations in 1878, was sent after Easter as missionary to Little Rock.⁵³

At the 1878 Synodical Conference Convention the results of this work were duly reported. The need and the opportunity were great. If the means were available, six missionaries could be used and they still would be overworked. The mission board also presented a number of ambitious resolutions. A mission newspaper and other literature, such as Luther's Small Catechism, worship orders, and tracts, were to be published in the English language. Missionary Doescher was to have his main residence in New Orleans, and he would receive other missionaries to assist him so that he could continue his missionary journeys in order to establish new posts and visit the existing ones. A number of young black men were to be sought who were timber for the ministry. These were to be trained briefly in New Orleans under Doescher until an educational institution could be established in Florida. Black congregations were to be loaned money to build churches. As this was gradually paid back over

⁵¹Louis J. Zahn graduated in 1878 from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. He took a call to Nokomis, Illinois, where he was installed on September 15, 1878.

⁵²Frederick Berg (1856-1936) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1878. He served as the pastor of the black congregation in Little Rock from 1878-1881, when he took a call out of the mission. From 1911-1936 he was a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro and also served as its president for eight years.

⁵³Verhandlungen, 1878, p. 59.

a ten-year period, the congregations would then own their own buildings and the money would be available to be loaned to other congregations. Finally, a mission was to be started among the French-speaking Negroes of New Orleans.⁵⁴

Some of the proposals were adopted by the Synodical Conference. In 1879 a German mission paper was begun, Missionstaube, as well as an English paper, Lutheran Pioneer. A committee was appointed to translate the catechism, and Doescher was to return to New Orleans; however, though the need was great, the means were not available to give him help. The matters of training black pastors and doing mission work among the French-speaking Negroes of New Orleans were tabled. In addition, it was stated that more information was needed before action could be taken regarding the making of loans to black congregations.⁵⁵

Conclusion

While it is apparent that some of the leaders of the Synodical Conference envisioned the prospect of the conference doing joint home mission work, and the potential for this was built into their constitution, the reality is that it proved to be difficult for the synods to overcome their individual loyalties and cooperate either in their outreach to the German and Norwegian immigrants coming to the United States or in education and training of future pastors. While these other possibilities were considered, some more seriously than others, the mission to the "Freedmen" of the South was the only successful joint home mission work of the Synodical Conference. On the

⁵⁴Verhandlungen, 1878, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁵Verhandlungen, 1878, pp. 62-64.

basis of this background it is now possible to describe and evaluate the one successful endeavor of the Synodical Conference at conducting joint home mission work.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONDUCT OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE BLACK MISSION

The First Stages of the Mission Development

During his travels, missionary John F. Doescher had preached every time that the opportunity presented itself. However, this was not intended to be the only means of mission outreach. In addition to conducting worship services, the missionaries opened schools. In September 1878, Rev. Frederick Berg, the second missionary to be called, opened a school in Little Rock, which met in the small chapel that had been constructed the preceding August. Initially the enrollment was forty-six, but by December the school had grown to ninety-three, and additional help was needed. At first, assistance came from students attending either the seminaries or synodical teacher training institutions, who were sent for a few months at a time. Later, as they became available graduates were sent to teach.¹ The same procedure was followed in New Orleans, where Missionary Doescher had opened a school in New Orleans in January, 1879.

Congregations were functioning and growth was occurring. The Christmas service at "St. Paul's Colored Lutheran Chapel" at Little Rock was described in the Lutheran Pioneer. The service included singing by the children who received gifts which had been hung on the Christmas

¹Christopher F. Drewes, Half a Century of Lutheranism Among Our Colored People: A Jubilee Book 1877-1927 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), pp 20-21.

tree.² The growth of the black mission was further demonstrated by the actions taken at the 1879 Synodical Conference Convention, where it was resolved to send a new missionary to New Orleans, open a mission at Mobile, Alabama, and, if possible, a second mission in Sherman, Texas.³ The work in Mobile, Alabama had been begun by Missionary Doescher. In March 1880, it was taken over by Rev. Leopold C. A. Wahl.⁴

The new missionary in New Orleans was needed because in March of 1879 Doescher accepted the call to St. John's Lutheran Church in New Orleans, which was the German congregation. While it was stipulated in the call that he would be allowed to continue to preach to the colored people, it was clear that another missionary would be needed. The new missionary was Nils J. Bakke,⁵ a Norwegian Synod student who graduated from the St. Louis Seminary in 1880, and was installed in New Orleans by Pastor Doescher on November 14, 1880.⁶

As the mission work expanded into Prince Edward County, Virginia, the impetus did not come from within the Synodical Conference, but from

²Fred Berg, "A Christmas Festival," Lutheran Pioneer 1 (May 1879):10-11.

³"Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference," Lutheran Pioneer 1 (August 1879):22-23.

⁴Wahl, from the Hermannsburg Missionary Society, had served in India for eleven years. When he left the society for doctrinal reasons and came to the United States, he was received into the Missouri Synod by colloquy and accepted a call to the black mission. After a year and a half he accepted a call to the German Lutheran Church in Mobile, Alabama.

⁵Nils J. Bakke (1853-1921) spent his entire ministry in the black mission. In 1911 he became the first field secretary for the mission.

⁶Nils J. Bakke, Illustrated Historical Sketch of Our Colored Mission (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914), p. 24.

Rev. W. R. Buehler,⁷ who had formerly been a missionary in Africa. Buehler served in Meherren, Virginia, until 1886.

In 1882 mission work among the blacks of Springfield, Illinois, was begun by Prof. Henry Wyneken.⁸

Prof H. Wyneken of our Lutheran Seminary at Springfield, Ill., is doing good mission work among the colored people of that city. The Sunday-school is very well attended and the children gladly learn the catechism, the Bible History, and the grand old Lutheran hymns. The professor is ably assisted by several students of the seminary who take a lively interest in this mission work.⁹

In 1890, after fourteen years of work among the blacks, there were seven stations - one in Little Rock, four in the New Orleans area, one in Springfield, Illinois, and one in Meherren, Virginia. A distinct tendency which characterized the mission throughout its history was already apparent. The growth that occurred came not from the initiative or planning of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, but because the Board took advantage of opportunities which presented themselves.

⁷W. R. Buehler was associated with the New York Ministerium but was unhappy with its theological position. Because of illness he had been forced to come to the United States. He and his wife purchased a farm in Green Bay, Prince Edward County, Virginia. The blacks of the region, learning that he had been a missionary in Africa asked him to instruct their children and preach. In response he contacted the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference and offered his services. After a colloquy examination, he was called to begin work. Initially the work was done in a donated building on his farm, but the location did not prove advantageous, so it was moved closer to Meherrin, Virginia.

⁸Henry C. Wyneken was a professor at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, from 1876-1890. His father was F. K. D. Wyneken, one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod.

⁹R. A. Bischoff, "The Outlook from the Editor's Window," Lutheran Pioneer 4 (April 1882):16.

Factors Hampering the Mission's Growth

Even as the mission grew during these years it was also evident that the task of evangelizing the blacks would prove to be difficult. A variety of factors combined to produce this difficulty.

A major factor was simple overwork, which in turn led to a short tenure for workers. A prime example of this is the experience of the church in Little Rock. Rev. Frederick Berg, the first pastor, who had come in 1878, left in October of 1881. One of the prime reasons was his frustration at having to teach school all day which prevented him from making the necessary calls on mission prospects. In 1882 Berg was succeeded in Little Rock by Rev. Ernst Meilander,¹⁰ who experienced the same problem and complained in a letter published in Lutheran Pioneer that he felt hampered by having to teach school, which kept him from doing the mission work he felt needed to be done.¹¹ By the end of 1884 Meilander had taken a call and was succeeded by Rev. George Allenbach.¹² In May 1885, a letter from Allenbach was published in Lutheran Pioneer, reiterating the same theme. Teaching school prevented him from doing the visiting that is required for the congregation to grow. He voiced the plea that the mission would have a teacher for the next school year.¹³

¹⁰Ernst Meilander (1859-1884) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1882.

¹¹Ernst Meilander, "Letter from Arkansas," Lutheran Pioneer 5 (May 1883):18.

¹²George Allenbach (1860-1938) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1884.

¹³George Allenbach, "Letter from Little Rock," Lutheran Pioneer 7 (May 1885):18.

Not only did the congregation suffer because its pastor couldn't make the visits, it also suffered from long and frequent vacancies.

Crowded and poor facilities also contributed to the problem. Even the best of the buildings used in the black mission would have been judged poor by the standards of the majority of the congregations of the Synodical Conference. One of the worst examples was the Old Sailors' Home in New Orleans, which had to be used for several years. In his plea for contributions so that the congregation could move out of the place, Missionary Bakke wrote in a letter dated April 13, 1882:

We are in a dangerous place. The lives of the teachers, children, and small congregation are endangered; for "Sailor's Home" is an old dilapidated building. It takes no heavy storm to blow it down, and should lives be buried in the ruins, "their blood is upon our hands."¹⁴

A lack of funds contributed to both the poor facilities and the shortage of workers. Already in 1878 the mission board indicated that six more missionaries could easily be used if the funds were available.¹⁵ Appeals were regularly printed in Lutheran Pioneer requesting money. One letter very bluntly stated that more schools and missionary stations were needed, which certainly the Mission Board would provide if it had the funds.¹⁶

¹⁴Nils J. Bakke, "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 4 (May 1882):18.

¹⁵Verhandlungen der siebenten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 18. bis 24 Juli 1878 (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei des Lutherischen Concordia-Verlags, 1878), p. 60.

¹⁶[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 6 (March 1884):10.

The following two examples from the pen of Missionary Bakke are typical of the appeals which were made.

At the last meeting of the Synodical Conference the Honorable Board of Mission was empowered to increase the missionary force in New Orleans as soon as sufficient means were on hand. It is to be hoped that the friends of our mission will at an early date send in their contributions and thus enable the Board to send us the much needed help.¹⁷

We are aware that the calls for your liberal contributions have been frequent of late. But we are willing to come in for a small share of your revenues, when the rest have been supplied. Like the Canaanite woman begging for the crumbs at her Saviour's feet, we ask you only for your crumbs. Give your dollars and your tens if you can to our Synodical Institutions, Home and Emigration Missions. Let the house of Israel, those of the household of faith, first of all be supplied. We grudge not their prerogative. But let us have the crumbs, your nickels and your dimes, and with these we will erect churches and schools for our colored people that shall stand for generations as monuments of "God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure."¹⁸

A curious attitude is displayed by Missionary Bakke. He acts as if the Synodical Conference black mission is an appendage. He identifies it with the Canaanite woman. It is not really Israel, and therefore it is willing to be content with the crumbs. This characterizes an attitude and problem experienced by the black mission work throughout its history. At the same time, the black mission work belonged both to all of the synods of the Synodical Conference and to none of them. There was no strong identification by the members of the various synods with this work so that they would say, "This is our mission." Consequently, for most, the black mission was far down the line of financial priorities.

¹⁷[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 7 (February 1885):6.

¹⁸[Nils] J. Bakke, "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 9 (February 1887):6.

Another major factor which made the work difficult was the prejudice which the white workers experienced. The case of Pastor W. R. Buehler, who experienced rejection and threats, was not an isolated instance.

As soon as he had begun to work among the colored people, the white neighbors broke off all neighborly intercourse with him and the members of his family. He and his loved ones were ostracized. Nor was that all. Those whites hatched a plot to beat Buehler so unmercifully that he would be glad to quit. However, having been among savages in Africa, Buehler was not afraid; and the Savior kept His promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."¹⁹

In 1886 Missionary Bakke wrote concerning Pastor August Burgdorf, the new missionary in New Orleans:

He has had and still has many difficulties, obstacles, and prejudices to contend with as every Lutheran Missionary among the colored people in the beginning will have. Some do not like him because he is white, others because he is Lutheran, and still others because he is too doctrinal and strict in his discipline.²⁰

Other opposition came from denominations which resented the presence of the Lutherans in the black communities, as was experienced by one of the New Orleans' congregations.

We have a good deal of opposition to contend with. License preachers, whose application for offices in our church have been decidedly but friendly declined, are persuading our members with "good word and fair speeches," to leave our church and join theirs. For this they certainly have no license. Their silly and groundless attacks on our church, its doctrine and practices have hitherto been ignored, but when they encourage men of ill repute, as it is supposed, to disturb our public worship, we have been forced to call on the city authorities for protection. One Sunday evening some four weeks ago a dozen or more men sneaked into the hall of the church and set up a roar like that of wild beasts, which, of course, struck the assembled congregation with terror. No sooner had the people recovered from the panic than the roar was repeated, and this time with greater violence. As some of the brethren appeared on the

¹⁹Drewes, p. 30.

²⁰"Our Mission in Meherrin, Vir.," Lutheran Pioneer 8 (October 1886):30.

scene they made a retreat into the street and assailed the church with brick bats. Since then two police officers have been stationed at the church every Sunday evening and peace reigns again.²¹

Four Significant Facts

In these early years it is necessary to take note of several significant facts about the black Mission. The first pertains to the degree of participation in the mission by the individual constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. In providing workers for the mission, other than for Pastors N. J. Bakke, L. C. A. Wahl, and W. R. Buehler, all the workers sent into the mission were both members of the Missouri Synod and graduates of its schools and seminaries. Even these three were only partial exceptions. Bakke, who came from the Norwegian Synod, had attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and both Wahl and Buehler were experienced missionaries, who for doctrinal reasons had severed their old connections and then were colloquized into the Missouri Synod.

In addition, the vast majority of the funding also came from the Missouri Synod. In the 1878 treasurer's report, the receipts from the six districts of the Missouri Synod was \$1,046.13. The total amount from ten other sources, which included sources not part of the Synodical Conference, was \$346.07. Of the Synodical Conference synods the following amounts were given: Wisconsin Synod - \$120.52, Minnesota Synod - \$47.11, Ohio Synod - \$21.25, Illinois Synod - \$5.65, and Norwegian Synod - \$1.00.²²

²¹[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 3 (August 1883):30.

²²Verhandlungen 1878, pp. 64-65.

A second significant fact concerns the faithfulness of the black Lutherans. Not only were they patient in waiting for funds for their buildings, but they were also patient during long periods of vacancy, even though these occurred shortly after the work had begun. Commenting on the long vacancy in Little Rock, after Pastor Berg left, Editor Rudolf Bischoff²³ of the Lutheran Pioneer writes:

Our Colored mission church at Little Rock has been without a pastor for some time. The Rev. Obermeyer, pastor of the German Lutheran Church of that city, kindly took charge of the mission during the vacation. [sic] We are glad to hear that the mission church will now be again supplied with a pastor who will devote all his time to the mission work among the colored people. May God bless the dear colored Lutherans of Little Rock who have remained faithful to their Church during the long time of vacancy.²⁴

The story of the little group of Lutherans in Meherrin, Virginia, demonstrates extraordinary faithfulness. Not only did the group remain faithful, it grew.

When the Pastor Buehler severed his connection with the mission in Virginia, the Synodical Conference, in 1886, at the suggestion of the Board, resolved to abandon the field and to advise the eight communicant members to move to Little Rock or to New Orleans, where there were Lutheran churches and schools. But they refused to do this. They preferred to gather with their children in the log schoolhouse on Sundays and conduct devotional exercises according to Lutheran practice. Occasionally Rev. C. J. Oehlschlaeger, of Richmond, visited them and administered to them the means of grace. At their request he frequently petitioned the Mission Board to send them another missionary. The Board decided to give Meherrin another trial and sent Student Hoernicke, from Springfield, to supply the station temporarily. Moved by the faithful adherence of these members to the Lutheran Church, the Synodical Conference, in 1888 resolved to resume the work, and empowered the Board to call a missionary. Meanwhile theological students from Springfield, D. H. Schooff, Alfred Brauer, and F. J. Lankenau, acted as supplies.

²³N[ils] J. Bakke, "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 4 April 1882):16.

²⁴Rudolf Adam Bischoff (1847-1916) Graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1870. He was a professor at Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He served as editor of Lutheran Pioneer from 1879 through 1912.

Their reports were promising. The little flock increased. In 1890, the Springfield graduate D. H. Schooff accepted the call of the Board. He was ordained by Rev. Oehlschlaeger in Richmond, Va., on the 14th Sunday after Trinity, in 1890, and a few days later he was introduced to his people at Meherrin. During the long vacancy the congregation had increased from 8 to 34 communicant members.²⁵

Generally the education level of the adults was minimal, and they wanted something better for their children. Thus, from the beginning, schools were an important part of the work of the mission, and were generally filled as quickly as they were opened.

It is simply appalling to think that only a few, a very few of the grown colored people are able to read or write, and their faith is therefore almost entirely dependent upon what others assert, without being able to examine the doctrine according to the Light of the Holy Writ.²⁶

They wanted better for their children and so were anxious for them to attend school, and their interest in the Lutheran schools was enhanced by the poor quality of the public schools. The scope of the need can be recognized when it is realized that in 1890 St. Paul's school in New Orleans had 100 students in a building 27 feet by 20 feet by 12 feet. The Lutheran Pioneer regularly reported on the large attendance at the schools and how they needed more teachers and facilities. In August 1883, Missionary Bakke wrote from New Orleans that the public schools were out of money and that the teachers had not been paid since March. If the public schools did open again, it would not be until November.²⁷ The fact that black parents were interested in the Lutheran schools was regarded as a God-given opportunity to bring children to Jesus.

²⁵Bakke, pp. 42-43.

²⁶George Allenbach, "Letter from Little Rock," Lutheran Pioneer 7 (May 1885):18.

²⁷[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from New Orleans," Lutheran Pioneer 5 (August 1883):30.

Almost daily admission must be refused a number of applicants, because there is no room for them. And what becomes of those who are turned off? The majority of them then attend other schools, where they hear little or nothing of the precious Gospel. Who knows how many of these, for whom Christ paid so dearly, are in this manner lost? Think of it, they may be lost, because we will not lay out a few paltry \$100 to erect larger buildings for our schools. How easily could the thousands of Lutheran Christians raise sufficient funds for this purpose, if they only desired to do so?²⁸

A final fact to note is the style of supervision, or perhaps lack of it, which appears to characterize the early work done in the black mission. The missionaries seem to have been left on their own to do their job.

North Carolina Becomes the Dominant Mission Field

The spread of the Synodical Conference black mission into North Carolina is another instance of an unplanned opportunity which greatly extended the field of activity. The opportunity came in 1891 in the form of a letter from Rev. W. Philo Phifer, who was secretary of what had been the Alpha Synod.²⁹ Missionary Bakke was transferred to North Carolina in

²⁸A. Scheffler, "Another Call for Help," Lutheran Pioneer 12 (March 1890):10.

²⁹There were black Lutherans in North Carolina prior to the Civil War. Some Lutheran plantation owners brought their slaves to church, where they would be baptized, instructed and confirmed, given the Lord's Supper, and all allowed to participate in the regular worship service, sitting in a special section of the church, usually the balcony. In the aftermath of the Civil War, these black Lutherans were for the most part lost to the Lutheran Church, both because they wanted nothing to do with the church of their former masters and because the Lutheran Church abandoned them. In 1888 the North Carolina Synod resolved to begin mission work among the few remaining black Lutherans. Four black men, J. W. <David> Koonts, W. Philo Phifer (his name also appears as Philo W. Phifer), Samuel Holt, and Nathan Clap, (sometimes also spelled Clapp), who were known as Lutheran and who had been preaching for years, were ordained and encouraged to form their own Synod. In 1890 these four, together with a few laymen, formed the Alpha Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Freedom in America, more commonly known as the Alpha Synod. However, the president, David Koonts, died that same year. In the beginning of 1891 Phifer wrote to the President of the Missouri

September of 1891 to take over the supervision and instruction of Phifer, Holt, and Clap. Bakke gave an interesting assessment of the situation in a lengthy letter, written on Easter Monday, 1892, and later published in Lutheran Pioneer. The letter also demonstrates the importance that conducting schools continued to have in the operation of the black mission.

We have entered on a new field, among new people and new surroundings. The new mission field has quite an extensive territory, embracing quite a number of stations in various parts of the state. For years a few colored men with very limited training and qualifications for the ministerial office, because of limited opportunities, have labored on these stations. The work has been of a rather superficial character, and the fruits, as may be imagined, in proportion to it. A synodical organization under the name of the "Alpha Synod" was effected. But this step was undoubtedly both premature and unwise. Not receiving the moral and financial support that was promised and which it deserved, the ministers naturally became discouraged. And when the presiding officer, Rev. J. W. Koonts, died, the "Alpha Synod", as an organization, died with him. Upon application of Rev. P. W. Phifer, this gradually starving mission was taken charge of by the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference and has been under its care since September last.

As Concord was considered to be the center of the field and one of fair promise for missionary work, we pitched our tent in this pleasant little town. Having gathered the few scattered members that remained of a small congregation, we set about to clear the old grocery store, in which we hold our services, of its rubbish, cracker-boxes, fragments of old benches and great many other things, which were no ornaments to a house of worship. Broken window-panes were replaced by new. Patent school-desks and an organ were furnished by the Board, and while the old "store" is neither churchly nor comfortable, it is habitable.

With the opening of the parochial-school, half a dozen children applied. It was a small beginning, but we are used to small

Synod, Dr. Schwan, requesting help. The request was then transferred to the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference, which promptly sent a delegation to investigate the possibilities. Even though the men lacked formal training, could not answer simple questions from the catechism in a satisfactory way, and equated Lutheran with anyone who acknowledged the real presence in the Lord's Supper, the Mission Board resolved to accept the offer and use them as best they could. The Rev. Nils J. Bakke was sent to take over the supervision of the three pastors and five preaching stations.

beginnings and do not despise them. Every week, however, as it came, brought new scholars, until the school at Christmas numbered forty. With the opening of the year a boom was promised. It came; but with it came la Grippe and laid the teacher low and the boom vanished. But we have gradually recovered lost grounds. The Sunday-school too has made good progress. We started with fourteen. Dropping those who joined the Sunday-school at Christmas for the sake of the "loaves and fishes" we still have eighty enrolled. Catechumen classes of both children and adults are being prepared for confirmation. With an increased attendance at our divine services-the "store" is at times crowded with worshipers-the outlook is brightening and the people are encouraged.

In Charlotte, a thriving city of 11,000 inhabitants, Rev. Phifer and wife are conducting a school, which is gradually being turned into a mission school. The number of pupils enrolled during the last term was ninety. The Sunday-school is somewhat smaller. The building in which school and services are held is an old uninviting structure belonging to the colored Odd Fellows. A dozen persons have in the course of time been confirmed, but as these members seem to be of a nomadic turn, no congregational organization has as yet been effected. Besides serving a small congregation once a month in Davidson county, near Lexington, Brother Phifer preaches occasionally in Greenville, a small suburb of Charlotte.

Near Burlington the brethren Holt and Clapp are serving small congregations. As we intend to spend some time with these brethren in the course of the summer, we shall have something more to write then.³⁰

The three pastors themselves recognized that their work had been floundering, and expressed gratitude that since the arrival of Missionary Bakke, their work had been given a sense of direction. In a letter, Pastor Phifer indicated that their work of the past thirteen years had born little fruit.

Therefore, I am proud to say, there has been more done for us and our work in the short while we have been a part of your honorable body, than in all the past, not financially only, but you have done more to get us into the right way and to make us true Lutherans.

Honorable Board, you have sent a missionary among us in the person of Rev. N. J. Bakke, and he is the right man in the right

³⁰[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer 14 (June 1892):22.

place, if we are able to judge. I am told of his Christlike action and he is much loved by the people he comes to serve.

Since we have united with the Synodical Conference I am sure the steps taken will help the church generally, both the white and the colored Lutherans.³¹

While it was possible for Phifer to continue in the mission, because of their inability to either read or write, in 1892 both Holt and Clap were convinced that it was best for them to retire. Phifer's service to the Synodical Conference was ended in 1900 when the Mission Board wanted to assign him to teach at some country congregations. He refused to move from Charlotte and established a second church, taking most of the congregation with him. By 1902 the majority of the members had returned to the Synodical Conference Church.³²

The work in North Carolina experienced significant, if not spectacular, growth. In April 1900, it was reported that the colored mission had twenty one stations, seventeen of which had been organized into congregations, which were served by eleven pastors and eight teachers. Of these, four stations were located in Louisiana, one in Illinois, and fourteen in North Carolina.³³

Black Lutherans Influence the Growth

During this period growth was not limited to North Carolina. As the mission work expanded, a key factor that continued to help produce

³¹W. P. Phifer, "Letter from North Carolina," Lutheran Pioneer 14 (March 1892):11.

³²A[ugust] B[urgdorf], "Our Mission Churches," Lutheran Pioneer 24 (September 1902):34. Eventually Pastor Phifer joined the Ohio Synod and served in Baltimore until his death in 1911.

³³R. A. Bischoff, "Outlook from the Editor's Window," Lutheran Pioneer 22 (April 1900):16.

this growth was the faithfulness of some of the black Lutherans to their church when they moved to other communities. The Synodical Conference mission spread to Yonkers, New York because, between the years 1890 and 1895, several members of the congregation in Meherrin, Virginia moved to Yonkers to work as domestic servants for wealthy families. As the number of Lutherans grew, they requested Rev. Alexander F. von Schlichten of the German Lutheran Church to serve them, which he agreed to do. For a period of years the Mission Board was requested repeatedly to provide a missionary. Finally von Schlichten organized Evangelical Lutheran Bethany Congregation on July 8, 1910. Because of the size of his German congregation, Pastor von Schlichten felt he could not care for the black congregation. Lest the new congregation fall into the hands of the sectarians, in 1911 the Mission Board finally called William O. Hill,³⁴ a recent graduate of Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina,³⁵ to Bethany.³⁶ To provide a place for worship, the German Lutheran Church made its parish hall available.³⁷ A similar sequence was responsible for the formation of St. Philip's, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1918. In this instance, the impetus came from a black family that had belonged to Bethlehem Lutheran Church in New Orleans.³⁸

³⁴William O. Hill (1889-1956) graduated from Immanuel Lutheran College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1910. He was the pastor at Bethany, Yonkers, New York, from 1911 until 1956.

³⁵Immanuel Lutheran College was operated by the Synodical Conference for the purpose of training black church workers. For further information see below, pp. 100-101, 107-129.

³⁶Bethany Lutheran Church, Yonkers, New York, was the first black congregation to be officially received into the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This took place at the 1946 LCMS Atlantic District Convention.

³⁷Bakke, p. 44. ³⁸Drewes, p. 52.

The spread of the Lutheran Mission into Mansura, Louisiana, is another example of how black Lutherans caused their church to spread.

Henry Thomas, a member of St. Paul's in New Orleans, was a bird-catcher by profession. This brought him to the neighborhood of Mansura for a while. He took with him his Bible and his Catechism. He found no Lutherans at Mansura. Whenever any one asked him to what church he belonged he said that he had once been a Roman Catholic, but by reading the Bible had become a Lutheran and had joined a colored Lutheran church in New Orleans.

About two months after Thomas had settled at Mansura, P. M. Lehman, Scott Normand, and Pete Batiest were repairing the chimney of Widow Lehman near Mansura. When their work was done, they sat down to rest and talk a while. The conversation drifted to the treatment which the colored people and their children were receiving at the hands of the priest. . . . Their children were being neglected, they said, If they only had a school for their children and a church! Thomas happened along. He told them of the work the Lutheran Church was doing in New Orleans and suggested to them that they invite his pastor, the Rev. Lanckenau. They requested Thomas to write to his pastor and invite him to come and preach to them.³⁹

Pastor Francis Lanckenau⁴⁰ came and preached, and in 1899 a congregation was formed. This congregation subsequently provided several black men who studied for the ministry.

As the work started in St. Louis, the same kind of persistency was exhibited by the black Lutherans there as had been demonstrated in Meherrin, Virginia. In 1903 Rev. Lucius Thalley⁴¹ began to preach in St. Louis. A school was opened in 1904, but in the summer of 1905, Pastor

³⁹Drewes, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁰Frank James Lanckenau (1869-1939) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1891. In that same year he became pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in New Orleans. In 1903 he began Luther College in New Orleans in order to train black workers for the Synodical Conference mission. He was a vice-president of the Missouri Synod from 1926-1939. (For further information on Luther College see below, pp. 101-107.)

⁴¹Lucius Thalley graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1902 and was called to the black mission congregation in that same city.

Thalley was called to Charlotte, North Carolina. An attempt was made to serve the mission by using students from Concordia Seminary, but the frequent changes of personnel this involved had an adverse effect on the mission. In 1908 the Synodical Conference Mission Board decided to discontinue the mission. However, when the members persisted in their desire to retain their church and school, the board transferred Rev. James H. Doswell⁴² to St. Louis from the Springfield mission.⁴³

The Obstacle of Prejudice and Segregation

As the mission expanded into North Carolina and locations farther North, both mission and missionaries continued to experience the effects of prejudice and segregation. In the first place, it is striking how the pastors of the German Lutheran Congregations in a city would serve a black congregation during a vacancy, as happened frequently in Little Rock, Arkansas, until the mission was closed in December 1895, or until a black congregation could be formed, but they seem not to have invited the black Lutherans to join their congregations. In this connection the situation at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Conover, North Carolina,⁴⁴ is especially interesting. When Prof. William H. T. Dau came to Conover in 1892, where he both served as professor at Concordia College and pastor of St. John's, Missionary Bakke would come and visit

⁴²James H. Doswell graduated from Concordia Seminary Springfield, Illinois, in 1904. His first call was to the North Carolina mission field.

⁴³Bakke. pp. 47-48.

⁴⁴St. John's Church, Conover, North Carolina, was a member of the English Synod. In 1890 the Synodical Conference accepted the English Synod as a constituent synod. The English Synod operated Concordia College in Conover, North Carolina.

him, since the two of them were the only Synodical Conference clergymen in the area. While in Conover, Bakke was often asked to preach to the black people, which he would do. St. John's congregation graciously offered the use of its church building for these services, which was an a highly unusual action for a southern congregation. But Bakke states, "This sentiment will be better understood when it is considered that five colored communicant members, who have been Lutherans 'from befo' de war,' belonged to this congregation."⁴⁵ This arrangement lasted until a well-to-do member of the congregation placed a large house at the disposal of Missionary Bakke. Two things are significant in this instance. One is the fact that St. John's had five black members. Another is the fact that they did not invite those other blacks interested in the Lutheran church to join their congregation. In this instance, even though there was some openness, there still seemed an evident desire to remain separate.

As the effects of prejudice made its impact on the missionaries, it made the work more difficult. Bakke described his experience after his arrival in North Carolina.

Neither the white nor the colored people took kindly to the stranger. A white man preaching the Gospel to the negroes is not an every day sight in this State, and he is looked upon with suspicion by some and as a crank to others. The Gospel, however, when rightly set forth, gradually breaks down prejudices and makes friends when other means fail.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Bakke, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁶[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer 14 (November 1892):42.

An interesting analogy is pointed out by Mrs. H. C. Monroe.⁴⁷ She compares the glory given those missionaries who travel to Africa to work among the Negroes, with the ostracism experienced by the missionaries who work among the Negroes of the United States.

Livingston is honored over the Christian world for his missionary work in Africa, and Dr. Day is honored all over the Lutheran church for his missionary work in that same country; yet when a Lutheran missionary, in free and enlightened America, tries to enlighten and lead the colored people to a higher and truer religious life, he often meets with contempt and scorn.

When the Rev. N. J. Bakke went to Concord, N.C., to start a Lutheran mission among the colored people there, he rented a house for his family; but when the owner of the house learned that the missionary (though he was an educated white man) was laboring for the welfare of the colored people of the town, he refused to let him have the house, and it then took him a month to secure even an humble shelter for his family. Then followed isolation, contempt, scorn, from the citizens of the town.

Rev. J. C. Schmidt, at Greensboro, with a highly accomplished wife, had a lonely time. Greensboro has no white Lutheran church and Rev. Schmidt was looked upon as starting a new religion. Pastors of other colored churches incited their people to commit indignities on the Lutheran place of worship, on the person of the preacher, on the few colored people who ventured to hear him - indignities which would disgrace heathen.

If Rev. Schmidt were sent to Africa, he would be followed by the love, prayers, and sympathy of the entire Lutheran church. Letters in the papers would herald his movements; he would be remembered at Christmas; but he and these other devoted men seem to have closed the doors of good society behind them, in laboring for these poor African people in the South; and amid an isolation which most of us would consider paralyzing, they are doing your work and mine for Jesus Christ.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Mrs. H. C. Monroe was a member of the United Lutheran Church and an avid supporter of mission work. After a visit to the North Carolina mission field, she wrote a letter which was first published in the Lutheran Observer, and then in the Lutheran Pioneer. In this letter she called on the readers to give financial support to this work, which demonstrates how the financial support of Synodical Conference black mission was not limited to the synods of the Synodical Conference.

⁴⁸"What Others Say," Lutheran Pioneer 19 (September 1897):34.

The impact of segregation also made the work more difficult both for the congregations and the missionaries. When the original delegation from the Synodical Conference, missionaries August Burgdorf,⁴⁹ of New Orleans, Dietrich H. Schoof,⁵⁰ of Meherrin, and Bakke, went to Burlington, North Carolina, for their initial meeting with the pastors of the former Alpha Synod, they were turned out of the only hotel in Burlington because they were negro missionaries, and had to conduct the conference in a negro cabin.⁵¹

When the congregation in Southern Pines, North Carolina, built its church building, the congregation decided that "discretion was the better part of valor" and built the church outside the city limits.

At present we are located within the corporate limits of the town, but since it is an "unwritten social law" that the colored man shall not own or possess any property within the town limits, we, in order to avoid friction with our white fellow-men, have been compelled, or rather concluded, to erect a building outside of town, which will also make it more convenient for our members, who, like all the colored people in this place, aggregate in a place known as "Jimtown." That it is best for us to act as we have concluded can not be doubted. The enmity shown to us by threats and acts which are not worthy of any man, show and prove this sufficiently.⁵²

⁴⁹August Burgdorf graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1895 and was sent to open a third mission station, Trinity, in New Orleans. He opened a fourth station, Bethlehem, in 1897.

⁵⁰Dietrich Heinrich Schoof (1860-1936) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois in 1890 and was assigned to the black mission congregation in Meherrin, Virginia. In 1907 he took a call to the English Lutheran congregation in Gravelton, Missouri.

⁵¹Bakke, p. 50.

⁵²Henry L. Persson, "News from Southern Pines, N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer 21 (May 1899):18.

Finding Funds for the Mission

Funding continued to be a problem. The letter from Mrs. Monroe, which also included an appeal for support from the readers of the Lutheran Standard, demonstrated that this financial support was not limited to members of the Synodical Conference. However, the major source of support remained the free-will offerings sent in by friends of the black mission. These appeals also demonstrate that the black mission was not an integral part of the work of the constituent synods nor does it appear to have been given high priority.

The Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference held its sessions at Milwaukee, Wis., August 8-14. Delegates from all the synods forming the Conference were present, and a delegation of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod brought the fraternal greetings of our Norwegian brethren. Two delegates were appointed to attend the next sessions of the Norwegian synod. Most of the time was devoted to doctrinal discussions. We have read in several papers that "aside from the discussions there was nothing of general interest," but these papers are mistaken. Their remark made our little Pioneer feel sad. An entire session was devoted to our Colored Mission, a very lengthy and encouraging report being presented by our Mission Board. Mission work ought to be of general interest. From the Report Conference [sic] learned that God has richly blessed our work among the colored people. The Report of our treasurer was not so encouraging. Our treasury has suffered from the hard times. It is true, \$26,715.77 were received for our mission during the past two years, but the debt resting on our mission could not be paid, and the necessary buildings could not be erected. Conference therefore resolved that our Mission Board send a circular to all our congregations, asking them to take up a Sunday collection for our mission, in order to enable the Board to pay the debt and erect the necessary buildings on our mission fields. May God move the hearts of our people to come to our aid in this time of need. Our mission work is the Lord's work. Let us enter more heartily into this work and give it our earnest support. We hope all our congregations will comply with the request of the Synodical Conference and will send in a Sunday collection for our mission work.⁵³

⁵³R. A. Bischoff, "The Outlook from the Editor's Window," Lutheran Pioneer 16 (September 1894):36.

Considerable ingenuity was used in generating interest in the mission and making appeals for funds. One example is a letter which was written by "Uncle Bob" and aimed at the school children of the Synodical Conference. Some of the following excerpts from the letter serve as a demonstration.

My Dear Nephews and Nieces: -

All of you love Jesus; and, of course, it's taken for granted that anything pertaining to His kingdom will certainly interest you all. To-day [sic] Uncle Bob wants to tell you something about Mount Zion, our oldest station in New Orleans. Sit down, then, my dear children, and listen.

Well, as I was going to say, we bought our present church property when you all were babies, and such sweet ones, too. It was then already 40 or more years old; and if you will add 13 years more to that, you will have its present age pretty correctly. It is a pretty big building, and looks just like an ark. But that would be all right, only Uncle Bob fears it's going to tumble down one of these days and kill somebody; then there's going to be a heap of trouble. Now, as all of you can't come down yourselves to see how rickety-crickety our ark is, Uncle Bob will tell you.

In the first place, there's no more paint on Mount Zion church, and it looks like a great big ugly bugaboo. Now there, I knew Johnny would whisper to Jennie and say: "Uncle Bob ought to have it painted, surely; and if every one of us Lutheran school-children would bring a cent a-piece, it could be done, and more." But, Johnny, I tell you that paint would fall when the building dropped. See here! Our dear Pastor and Uncle Bob got a crow-bar last Friday, and pried the weather-boarding open for about 30 feet along the sills - these are the thick timbers on which the building rests. I tell you, children, if the Lord wasn't holding up that building by the gable-ends all this while, it surely would be in a big heap now. I guess He wanted us to pry open the side of it, so we could see something must be done. . . . The inside of the church is as bad as the outside. The plaster is coming down all over. There are some bare patches as big as your kitchen-table. When it rains, it comes through the roof in a stream. . . . There's another spot where an old rat ate its way through the rotten floor. I've seen that rat during school hours and services. One little mouse comes out regularly, and runs underneath the organ. Now, I'm not telling you this for fun, but to show you that the whole place is rotten, and unfit for church purposes.

In the last years, many children staid [sic] away from school for various reasons. You know what I believe? Your parents would have kept you also on the safe side of that old building if they

were in our places. Really, it is the shabbiest building in our neighborhood!

Some time ago, we started to save up for a new church, and though we are poor, yet we managed to get several hundred dollars together; but that's not enough to build a church. Can't you help us? All of you, Uncle Bob would suggest, might talk this matter over during recess, and see if you can't agree to save your coppers for the next few months. Turn them over to your teachers, and they will send all contributions to the Mission Board. Now, dear nephews and nieces, that's Uncle Bob's story.⁵⁴

The funds did come in small amounts from school children. A letter along with \$1.75 was sent to the Lutheran Pioneer. The letter was from a teacher who described how the children had been moved by "Uncle Bob's" letter and wanted to give from their own money in order to help the colored mission in New Orleans obtain their new building.⁵⁵ The funds also came in large contributions from individuals.

An unknown benefactor, friend, and well-wisher of our missions visited our treasurer, Prof. A. C. Burgdorf, three times in the past two years, and each time handed him a check for \$500.00, without giving his name or residence. We also received a gift of \$1000.00 from a member of the Eastern District of the Missouri Synod, \$600.00 from N.N. in Brooklyn, a bequest of \$200.00 from F.K. in Wisconsin, and \$100.00 from Mrs. N.N. in California.⁵⁶

An Emerging Authoritarianism

As the mission grew and expanded, there seemed to be a hint of the growth of authoritarian tendencies on the part of the Mission Board. While there appeared to be little animosity, frequently pastors were described as being assigned to congregations or mission stations, rather than being called. It was just such an assignment which led Pastor

⁵⁴"Uncle Bob's Letter," Lutheran Pioneer 17 (June 1895):22.

⁵⁵"Letter from a Teacher," Lutheran Pioneer 17 (July 1895):26.

⁵⁶A[ugust] B[urgdorf], "Interesting Items," Lutheran Pioneer 24 (September 1902):36.

Phifer to resign in Charlotte in 1900.⁵⁷ Missionary Bakke described his move to North Carolina as a temporary transfer within the mission field, and used the same terminology again when he moved from Concord to Charlotte in 1898.⁵⁸

However, the terminology is not consistently used. Rev. Lucius Thalley, a son of the Greensboro congregation, who had graduated from the Springfield Seminary was called to the black mission in Springfield in 1892.⁵⁹ Rev. Nils Bakke, in his book, Illustrated Historical Sketch of Our Colored Mission, which was written to publicize the work of the black mission, was not consistent in his terminology. As he described the mission in Springfield, Illinois, he noted that Rev. James H. Doswell was "transferred to Springfield by the Board in January, 1907. In the fall, two years later, Rev. Doswell was called to take charge of the mission in St. Louis, . . ." ⁶⁰ However, when Bakke later described the mission in St. Louis, he used a different term for the same change in pastorates, stating that Doswell was transferred from Springfield to St. Louis.⁶¹

An increase in the structure of the Synodical Conference mission is further demonstrated by the fact that, due to the growth of the field, the Synodical Conference at its 1910 convention established the office of

⁵⁷See above, p. 39.

⁵⁸[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer 14 (June 1892):22., and Bakke, p. 52.

⁵⁹A[ugust] B[urgdorf], "Our Mission Churches," Lutheran Pioneer 24 (September 1902):34.

⁶⁰Bakke, pp. 46-47.

⁶¹Bakke, p. 48.

field secretary (German, Missionsdirektor).⁶² Missionary Bakke was called to fill that position in 1911. As field secretary his job was to superintend the mission and the missionaries.

The Beginning of Organizations in the Black Mission

Another result of the growth of the black mission was the formation of the Immanuel Conference. Shortly after coming to North Carolina in 1891, Missionary Bakke called a conference of the pastors of the field. However, after the pastors met in November of that year, no further meetings were held until 1900, when the conference was revived. In this year the missionaries serving in Virginia and North Carolina, together with laymen, met in Grace, Concord, from February 2-5. At this meeting the Immanuel Conference was organized.

Saturday morning conference again met in private session. A name was adopted, namely: "Immanuel Conference." Also a constitution was adopted and the programme for next conference. Whereupon the admittance of lay delegates to conference was discussed. It was resolved that the congregations be encouraged to send delegates, but that only one from each pastorate could vote.⁶³

The meetings of these conferences were intended to be both inspirational and educational. Usually several sermons would be preached by different pastors and papers presented. In addition, items of general interest to the missionaries would be discussed and actions recommended. The second conference, which met in May of 1900, included sermons by

⁶²Verhandlungen der dreiundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodalkonferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Seward, Nebr., vom 17. bis zum 22 August, 1910, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 46.

⁶³p. Engelbert, "Conference of Missionaries in North Carolina," Lutheran Pioneer 22 (April 1900):15.

Pastors W. Phifer, Paul Engelbert,⁶⁴ George Schutes,⁶⁵ D. Schoof, N. Bakke, and seminary student, Edward E. Stuckert.⁶⁶ The themes of the papers presented were, "How can our Parochial schools be made to gain members for Christ and His Church?", "The Benefits and Use of the Lord's Supper", and "On the Lutheran Church and its History".⁶⁷

The gatherings of Immanuel conference also provided opportunities for mission outreach as large festival services, which attracted many visitors, would often be held on Sunday in borrowed buildings. At the festival service in April 1902, over 600 came to the evening service. "In the entire history of our Colored Mission, there were, probably, never so many colored people brought under the influence of God's pure Word, as on this day, the 20th of April"⁶⁸

The worth of the Immanuel Conference was described in this way.

From the attendance and from the general interest manifested in our Conference by people of other denominations, we may safely entertain the hope that much good will result therefrom. Unquestionably, Immanuel Conference is a blessing to our mission. Next to the regular preaching of the Word and our parochial schools, it is a missionary factor of prime importance, though it may require some time to develop its true worth and value. It is exhilarating to the missionaries themselves. It serves to strengthen and

⁶⁴Paul C. Engelbert (1876-1946) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1899. He served the stations of Gold Hill, Rockwell, and Mount Pleasant, North Carolina.

⁶⁵George Schutes was pastor in Salisbury, North Carolina. (The correct German spelling of his name is Schuetz, which is the spelling used in the records of Concordia Historical Institute.)

⁶⁶Stuckert cannot be further identified. In the Verhandlungen of the of the Synodical Conference for 1902, (p. 70), he is mentioned as helping at the station in Mansura, Louisiana.

⁶⁷E. A. H. Buntrock, "Meeting of Immanuel Conference," Lutheran Pioneer 22 (June 1900):23.

⁶⁸E. A. H. Buntrock, "Immanuel Conference," Lutheran Pioneer 24 (June 1902):24.

establish those who are already Lutherans in the faith, and to make others who are ignorant of our church and her work acquainted with her pure doctrine and Christian practices. By attending the sessions of Immanuel Conference and seeing for themselves what the Lutheran church is doing, and hearing the pure doctrine, as set forth in Scripture, unselfishly proclaimed by our missionaries, many who are prone to cavil, calumniate, and accuse our church of bigotry and narrow mindedness are put to silence. Thus Immanuel Conference, by acquainting people with the doctrine of our church and with true Lutheranism, serves to lessen and destroy the bitter feeling of animosity which other denominations harbor against her; for when once they learn to know her they cannot help but speak well of and love her.⁶⁹

The missionaries in the New Orleans area also organized themselves into a conference. The Luther Conference was formed in 1903, but did not begin to meet regularly until after 1910.⁷⁰

Education

The December 1902, article in Lutheran Pioneer, mentioned above, listed the day schools as one of the chief factors leading to the growth the black mission. This had been true in New Orleans, and, as the Synodical Conference mission spread into Carolina, the day schools continued to play an important role in the mission. In these communities where Lutheranism was virtually unknown, the day school was a vehicle which could be used to reach people, so that as the pure Word was proclaimed to the children, they and their families would be drawn into the church. The report of the mission board to the 1910 Synodical Conference convention listed 25 congregations, 7 preaching places, and 17 day schools.⁷¹ These schools began a gradual process of decline

⁶⁹Stuart Doswell, "Immanuel Conference," Lutheran Pioneer 24 (December 1902):48.

⁷⁰Bakke, pp. 87-88.

⁷¹Verhandlungen, 1910, p. 36.

following World War I, as a result of the black migrations out of the rural areas of North Carolina. By the mid 1940s very few of them were still in existence.

The growth of the mission as it spread into North Carolina reinforced the earlier interest in establishing schools for training black youth for the work of the church. At the first meeting of Immanuel Conference in April 1900, the erection of such a college was clearly on the minds of those present at the conference.

Monday morning conference was taken out by Mr. Coleman, a wealthy colored man of Concord, to look at a site which he had promised to give for the erection of a college.

In the afternoon conference met in private session and passed the resolution to establish a Theological-Normal-Industrial college for the colored people and to kindly petition the Board of Mission to advocate the same, so that this much needed institution might be erected in the near future.⁷²

At its 1902 Convention the Synodical Conference resolved to establish one or two colleges for the education of Negroes.⁷³ In 1903 Missionary Bakke established North Carolina's first black Lutheran college, using the school building of Grace Church, Concord. Also in 1903 Rev. Francis Lankenau began Luther College in the vestry room of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, New Orleans.⁷⁴

⁷²P. Engelbert, "Conference of Missionaries in North Carolina," Lutheran Pioneer 22 (June 1900):15.

⁷³Verhandlungen der neunzehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodalkonferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 23. bis zum 29. Juli, 1902. (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1902), p. 74.

⁷⁴Bakke, pp. 79, 83. Immanuel college was operated by the Synodical Conference until 1961. Luther college was closed in 1932.

Expansion into Alabama

During the first few years of the Synodical Conference black mission, work had been conducted in Mobile, Alabama. Missionary Doescher had organized a Sunday school, which members of the German Lutheran Church operated until Rev. Leopold Wahl arrived in 1880. But when Pastor Wahl took a call to the German Lutheran Church in Mobile, the work came to an end.

As the year 1915 began, the Synodical Conference Mission Board had no plans to expand its work into new areas. Rather, their intention was to concentrate on strengthening the work that was already being done.⁷⁵ But God had other ideas, when, at the end of October 1915, another completely unexpected opportunity for expansion presented itself to the Synodical Conference Mission Board in the form of a letter from Miss Rosa Jinsey Young to Christopher F. Drewes, who was the chairman of the Synodical Conference Mission Board. In this letter she asked him to take over a negro school which she had organized.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Verhandlungen der sechszwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodalkonferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Toledo, Ohio, vom 16. bis zum 21. August, 1916. (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1916), p. 80.

⁷⁶Rosa Jinsey Young was born May 14, 1890. Her father was a preacher in the African Methodist Church. Rosa was educated at Payne University. From the beginning of her teaching career, she had the dream of building a religious school in the country for negro children who had virtually no opportunity to receive an education. After a process of soliciting and begging funds for the enterprise, in 1912, at age 22, she succeeded in fulfilling her dream when with other leaders of the African Methodist Church in her area she organized the "Rosebud Literary and Industrial School." She was able to continue operations from 1912-1914, but when the Mexican boll weevil destroyed the cotton crop in 1914, it looked like her school would be destroyed as well. In order to avoid closing the school, the trustees agreed to give it to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, of which all were members. However, they did not have the resources either. They told Rosa she should seek aid

Neenah, Ala., October 27, 1915

Rev. C. F. Drewes,
St. Louis, Mo.

Dear Friend:

I am writing you concerning a school I have organized. I began teaching here in 1912 with seven pupils in an old hall, where the cattle went for shelter. Since then I have bought [with money collected in the community] five acres of land and erected a four-room schoolhouse thereon beside our chapel which we are working on now; bought 45 seats, 5 heaters, 1 school bell, 1 sewing-machine, 1 piano, a nice collection of useful books, and 150 New Testaments for our Bible-training Department.

I am writing to see if your Conference will take our school under its auspices. If you will take our school under your auspices, we will give you the land, the school-building, and all its contents to start with. If you cannot take our school, I beg the privilege to appeal to you to give us a donation to help us finish our new chapel. No matter how little, any amount will be cheerfully and thankfully received.

This school is located near the center of Wilcox County, twelve miles from the county-seat, fifty-four miles from Selma Ala., two miles from the L. and N. Railroad, amid 1,500 colored people. The region is very friendly; both white and colored are interested in this school. I hope you will see your way clear to aid us.

Yours humbly,
Rosa J. Young.⁷⁷

Drewes instructed field secretary Bakke to investigate the matter and give a report. Bakke arrived in Rosebud on December 17 and after several days' meetings, returned home and gave a favorable report. At a special meeting of the mission board on January 3, 1916, it was resolved to take over this school. Missionary Bakke was instructed to return to

wherever she could to keep the school open. When she wrote Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute, he indicated that he had no funds either, but he suggested that she write to Christopher Drewes, chairman of the Mission Board of the Lutheran Synodical Conference.

⁷⁷Drewes, p. 56.

Alabama and organize the work, and Rev. William Harrison Lane,⁷⁸ who was an assistant missionary in St. Louis, was told to go and help him. Rosa Young was to be retained as a teacher in the school. Missionary Bakke arrived in Rosebud on January 13, 1916, to begin the work there. Lane arrived on February 6.⁷⁹

The work which began in Rosebud with one school spread rapidly. On Palm Sunday, April 16, 1916, eleven people were baptized, and forty-nine adults and twenty-one children confirmed. The following Sunday, five infants and forty-two children were baptized. Shortly after this, a congregation was organized, and Missionary Lane was called as pastor. By summer two new stations, Oak Hill and Vredenburgh, had been added.⁸⁰ By 1920 the number of stations had grown to nine stations and eleven schools, at which around nine hundred children were enrolled.⁸¹

This rapid growth was again helped by the efforts of the black Lutherans. Two girls, Mary and Sarah McCants, who had been students at Rosa Young's school and confirmed by Pastor Lane, were responsible for the expansion into Vredenburgh. When they returned home in June, they began a Sunday School and worked for the beginning of a day school in

⁷⁸William Harrison Lane was formerly a Presbyterian minister. In 1915, after he had been instructed by pastor L. J. Schwartz of Kansas City and examined by Prof. Andrew Baepler, he was temporarily placed as an assistant missionary in St. Louis. (Verhandlungen, 1916, p. 82.)

⁷⁹Drewes, pp. 56-57.

⁸⁰Verhandlungen, 1916, pp. 80-81.

⁸¹Verhandlungen der siebendundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodalkonferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 18. bis zum 23. August, 1920 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), p. 27.

their home. This resulted in Rosa Young being transferred to Vredenburgh to begin the school there.⁸²

Because of his age, this new work load drained the strength of Superintendent Bakke. In 1917 a new position was established, the Superintendent of Schools and Property, which was filled by Pastor George A. Schmidt,⁸³ who had been serving the black mission in St. Louis.⁸⁴ In October 1920, Missionary Bakke was named Publicity Secretary, and Rev. George Schmidt took over as superintendent.⁸⁵

The rapid growth of the Synodical Conference mission in Alabama was largely due to the day schools. The educational opportunities for the black children in the rural counties of Alabama were virtually nonexistent.⁸⁶ Into this void the Lutheran Church came and in Wilcox county, Alabama, established a network of Lutheran elementary schools. The Lutheran school "has been an effective magnet which attracts young

⁸²Drewes, pp. 59-60.

⁸³George A. Schmidt graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1914 and was called to serve the mission congregations in Springfield, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri.

⁸⁴Verhandlungen, 1920, p. 28.

⁸⁵Drewes, p. 66.

⁸⁶Prior to the Civil war, there had been no public education for anyone in the Southern states. When public education did get started, because the children in the rural areas were needed to work in the fields, even the children of poor white families had only limited opportunities. The black children were almost forgotten. What schools there were for black students had very poor facilities. Generally the school year was very short, perhaps lasting only three or four months. The teachers were often poorly trained, many not knowing much more than their students. In some areas, if a black school did not operate for a year, the small amount of money that it had been allocated would be transferred to the white schools and nothing would be made available in future years.

and old to use its services. It has impelled many to promote and support the church which sponsored the Christian day School."⁸⁷

As the Synodical Conference mission spread into Alabama, it encountered segregation in its most blatant form. This had an impact on the work, not only in the sense of what was experienced by the workers, but also in determining the placement of missionaries. DeWitt Robinson, who had been the pastor of King's Landing, Alabama, gave the following account when he was asked the name of the pastor who preceded him.

The name of the pastor was the Reverend George Schmidt, the organizer of the congregation. I don't know who preceded him, but he continued to serve that congregation from time to time. It was said that the white pastors from Selma could serve King's Landing, since it was so close to Selma. But the year before I came there, the Ku Klux Klan came to the church one night. They came expecting Reverend Schmidt to be there. But another white pastor was substituting for Reverend Schmidt that night. I was told that they came riding on their horses and with white hoods over their heads, that they surrounded the church and wouldn't let the people come out. Legend has it that one big member who must have weighed at least 250 pounds, was trying to get his foot out of the window when one of the nightriders, who was the plantation owner said: "Get back LITTLE JOHN, ain't nobody going to hurt you." They sat quietly on their horses until the church services were over. The pastor had the offering plate sent out to them and they made a liberal contribution. After the offering, a spokesman for the group asked the pastor to come out, they would like to speak to him. When the minister came out, they told him that they liked what he had said in his sermon that night, that his preaching was beautiful, that they like that kind of preaching, but that they did not want him to visit the colored people in their homes. I was told that as a result of this incident, the Reverend R. O. L. Lynn was sent to King's Landing.⁸⁸

Marmaduke Carter, who was the pastor in Camden, Alabama, was arrested and landed in the local jail. Apparently, the reason was that

⁸⁷Richard C. Dickinson, Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 135.

⁸⁸Dickinson, p. 81.

as he drove his car on a dirt road, the dust it raised had upset a white lady, who complained to the authorities. The superintendent thought it would be safer for Pastor Carter to serve the Lord in another location. After a lecture tour in the Midwest to raise money for the college in Selma, he was assigned to Chicago where he founded St. Philip's Church.⁸⁹

And All Points Beyond - Expansion / Change / Tension

Migration's Impact - A Changing Situation

A gradual tendency became apparent about the time of World War I, and, as it accelerated, it brought about a change in the face of the Synodical Conference mission work. This tendency was the migration of blacks to the cities, and especially to the cities of the North and West. Already in 1920 the mission board noted this in its report to the Synodical Conference convention. Great crowds of blacks had forsaken the South and migrated to the North. If the Synodical Conference did not want the loss to its mission to become even greater, it must serve the great gathering places of the blacks in the North with missionaries. But, it was pointed out, that will only happen if the friends of the mission give large gifts or the congregations in these Northern states furnish a large portion of the necessary means.⁹⁰

Requests came to the mission board from a variety of places suggesting that new congregations be started. In April 1926, it was reported at a meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board that requests are coming in from many Northern cities. The response given was that the Synodical Conference Mission Board prefers not to work in places

⁸⁹Dickinson, pp. 82-83.

⁹⁰Verhandlungen, 1920, p. 34.

which would be difficult to supervise. Rather, the suggestion was given that local conferences should begin this work.⁹¹

Expansion occurred, and soon, rather than having the vast majority of congregations concentrated in a few counties in North Carolina and Alabama, the black congregations became much more scattered. Requests continued to come. Some black Lutherans in Cleveland, Ohio, requested a pastor. The Central District of the Missouri Synod was willing to contribute \$900 for the support of the mission through its Home Mission Board, but wanted the Synodical Conference Mission Board to supervise the work. The board agreed and resolved to call a candidate.⁹² Growth continued, but the places that had once been the strongest began to gradually decline. One of the first areas to be affected was North Carolina. In the 1920s North Carolina was the strongest of the Synodical Conference mission fields. During the 1930s massive migration occurred from the rural counties in North Carolina where the vast majority of black Lutherans lived. The result was that as the young people moved away, the congregations not only became smaller, with mostly older members, but also there was little chance to find new members to replace those who moved and there was a large decrease in potential students for the day schools.⁹³ In addition, the state of North Carolina began to improve its public education for black children. The executive director of the Synodical Conference mission, Christopher F. Drewes, reported to

⁹¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 21-22, 1926, Concordia Historical Institute, 111.0R, Supplement VII, St. Louis, Mo. [Hereafter CHI - (city omitted)]

⁹²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 7, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁹³Dickinson, pp. 57-59.

the Synodical Conference Mission Board in February 1925, that the North Carolina schools are not as popular any more, due largely to the South waking up and giving the blacks better schools. "Our schools cannot compare with them in arrangement and equipment."⁹⁴ While the system was still segregated, both black and white children were now bussed to these new and larger schools. The little one or two room Lutheran schools could not compete, and, as a result the non-lutherans expressed little interest in the parochial schools and the schools lost their mission potential. Schools had to be consolidated and then closed. Often the close of the school was followed by the death of the congregation, especially when several congregations were served by a single pastor and the teacher was the only resident church worker in the community.

World War II brought the same massive migrations out of rural Alabama. In this migration there was a second factor in addition to the search for better jobs. A diversification of agriculture had occurred in the South, and the result was that fewer people were needed to do the work and land was fenced off for pastures. As a result the same process that had occurred in North Carolina was repeated. The congregations were made up of either the very young or the very old, and gradually schools and congregations began to be closed.⁹⁵

It was recognized that the clock could not be turned back and that this change was permanent. Requests were coming that missions be started. The situation had to be addressed.

⁹⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, February 17-18, 1925, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁹⁵Dickinson, pp. 69-70.

For almost fifty years, work among the Negroes has been practically confined to a number of States of the South, particularly to Louisiana, North Carolina, and Alabama. These were the logical places for our endeavors because of the existence of a very large Negro element in the population. But within recent years there has been a tremendous shift of population to the North, somewhat reminiscent of the migration of nations during the Middle Ages.

Moreover, in the North the Negroes have not scattered over the States, but have rather congregated in the larger cities. Thus New York City has now become the largest Negro center in the world. Manhattan Borough alone has 224,670 Negroes, practically all of whom are residing in Harlem.

Because in the North the Negro enjoys superior educational facilities, has political influence, and opportunities for advancement to better positions, there is, also in the opinion of Negroes themselves, every reason to believe that this change of habitat will be permanent. Hence we must cast longing eyes also on the North and trust that, as every larger Lutheran center has and supports a city mission, so within the next few years the Forgotten Man at our doors will also not be neglected.⁹⁶

A Changing Role for the Day School

The school had always played a crucial role in the mission work done in the South. In the Northern cities a different approach to mission work was required, because in these cities blacks were generally concentrated in specific areas of large cities, and had ample opportunity to attend school. While the schools for black children were normally not of equal quality with those provided for white children, these schools were better than the missionary board could provide with its budget.

The changing circumstances also called for a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of the day school in mission outreach.

The Christian day-school was from the very early beginning of the work an outstanding feature in our Colored Missions, and untold

⁹⁶Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Mankato, Minnesota, August 10-15, 1932 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), pp. 21-22.

blessings have come to many homes of the Negro race. At present there are 52 Christian day-schools with an enrollment of 2,705 children; 11 male and 38 female teachers. We can well understand that not all schools measure up to expectations. At no time was it difficult to open a school and to fill it to capacity within a short time. There were plenty of Negro parents eager to give their children a secular education, but many were not so eager to accept the Lutheran faith or have their children accept it since they already belonged to a sectarian church. To meet this problem the Missionary Board required of every pupil enrolled that it attend Sunday-school and our public worship. But even with this regulation in force the Board felt constrained to request the Plenary Board to fix a definite school policy for the so-called hopeless stations or such located in barren communities. At this meeting "each superintendent reported on the value and efficiency of the school in his respective field, also its deficiency and failure to produce results in a number of cases in a measure expected." It was thereupon resolved:

"Cognizant of the fact that the Christian day-school has been a great blessing to our mission, particularly in the Southern and Alabama fields, we believe that this institution should be maintained wherever possible and conducted on the highest possible plane, but that such schools which prove unproductive and whose fruits do not warrant the investment of men and money be discontinued whenever the Board and the respective superintendents are convinced of such necessity." (Minutes of Plenary Meeting, July, 1933)⁹⁷

The conclusion reached was that of all the children educated in the Lutheran day school, the vast majority of those who joined the Lutheran church and remained in good standing were ones whose parents were already members of the Lutheran church. It was further observed that the areas of growth are occurring in the black churches of the Northern cities where there are no schools.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 8-13, 1934 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 91.

⁹⁸Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Indianapolis, Indiana, August 6-11, 1936 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1936), p. 79.

The Nature of the Supervision

As the mission expanded, so did the need for additional supervisors. In February 1917, Rev. Christopher F. Drewes was named mission director by the Synodical Conference Mission Board. He was responsible for all the work except in Alabama, where Rev. Nils Bakke remained the supervisor. Bakke was assisted by Rev. George Schmidt until 1920, when Bakke retired, and Schmidt was named director of the Alabama Field. The Louisiana Field received its own director when Rev. Gotthilf M. Kramer⁹⁹ of New Orleans was named to the post in 1918. Rev. Frank Alston¹⁰⁰ was appointed superintendent of the Eastern field in 1926, first of the black workers and eventually over all workers. Not only did the number of supervisors increase, the nature of the supervision changed as well. As the mission continued to grow and expand, there was a definite deterioration in the role assumed by the Synodical Conference Mission Board and its supervisors and in the nature of the supervision. The study of this development is a sordid tale, for it clearly shows a bureaucratic, paternalistic tendency of the worst kind. At its low point the portrait painted is one of an omniscient, infallible board exerting absolute control over workers and treating them more like marionettes than humans.

⁹⁹Gotthilf M. Kramer (1882-1958) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907. He was pastor of Bethlehem, New Orleans, from 1907-1954.

¹⁰⁰Frank C. Alston graduated from the normal School of Immanuel College in 1907. After teaching for several years he returned to Immanuel in 1914 to study theology, graduating in 1915.

Absolute Control Over the Work of the Mission

The Synodical Conference Mission Board and its superintendents became a bureaucracy which sought to control every detail and expenditure of the mission. Matters of little significance were brought to the Synodical Conference Mission Board for decision. For example, in the October 1928, board meeting, "St. Philip's, St. Louis, was given permission to install four radiator hoods."¹⁰¹ In making any communication with the Synodical Conference Mission Board, the workers of the mission were to follow the specific procedure of going through their regional superintendent. "Resolved to inform our workers that they should not communicate with the Board, unless such action be an appeal from a decision of the superintendent."¹⁰² The procedure to be followed in the case of such an appeal is itself instructive. Having another superintendent as the arbitrator was hardly likely to generate confidence on the part of the worker or to encourage other workers to appeal a decision to the board.

3. Rev. Montgomery has resigned his position as missionary. He complains about the action of Superintendent Westcott. After reading and hearing the correspondence of both men, it was resolved to support the action of Superintendent Westcott in accepting the resignation of Montgomery. Since Rev. Montgomery is asking for an investigation, it was resolved to grant him a hearing. Supt. Gehrke was chosen to represent the board in the investigation. The concerned parties are to be informed.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 8, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁰²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 30, 1929, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁰³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, May 9, 1933, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

This bureaucracy was for all practical purposes really exerting absolute control. A significant dispute arose involving both Alabama Lutheran College in Selma¹⁰⁴ and Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro, North Carolina, over the relationship of the field superintendent to the president and faculty of the institution. In January 1930, Prof. Otho Lynn,¹⁰⁵ who was president of the Alabama institution, and the faculty were requested to submit copies of their minutes both to the Alabama superintendents and to the Board.¹⁰⁶ President Henry Nau¹⁰⁷ and the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College were equally dissatisfied with a proposal which placed the superintendent over their institution, and made this known to the Board. At its April 1931, meeting the Mission Board discussed this matter and saw no reason to delay instituting its policy, and, whether the faculties liked it or not, the policy was to go into effect immediately.¹⁰⁸ When the Alabama Lutheran College tried to get around the issue by giving the superintendent a last minute notification of the meeting, and the Immanuel Lutheran College

¹⁰⁴Alabama Lutheran College, Selma, Alabama, was begun by the Synodical Conference in 1922 for the purpose of training black students to work in the mission. For a detailed account of this institutions see below, Chapter 3, pages 129-137.

¹⁰⁵Robert Otho L. Lynn was the first instructor at Alabama Lutheran Academy and later its president. He graduated from Immanuel College in 1912.

¹⁰⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 28, 1930, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁰⁷Dr. Henry Nau (1881-1956) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1905. He was a missionary for the Missouri Synod in India from 1905-1914. He taught at Luther College from 1921-1925 and was president of Immanuel College from 1925-1950. He again served as a missionary in India from 1950-1954.

¹⁰⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 8-9, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

faculty repeated their protest, the Board in effect simply said, "We are the boss."

24. Regarding the renewed protest of I.L.C. faculty concerning regulations in re relation [sic] of faculty and superintendent, the Board regrets that the faculty does not accept these resolutions in the sense and spirit in which they were adopted.

25. Resolved that Prof. Lynn and the A.L.C. faculty be reproved for not giving the superintendent sufficient notice of faculty meeting.¹⁰⁹

This attempt to exert absolute control covered a wide variety of areas. A major area was salaries. There seems to have been no published salary schedule. Each individual case was determined by the judgment of either the board or superintendent. The device of threatening to withhold a portion of a worker's salary was used to insure compliance.¹¹⁰ Another aspect of retaining control involved the matter of calling workers into the field. Several issues were involved, including who should be called, who actually has the authority to call, and to what was the worker called. The superintendents felt they needed the authority to transfer teachers to whatever school the superintendent wanted. The board granted this power when it adopted the following recommendation of the superintendents. "That the practice of calling teachers be discontinued and they be henceforth appointed. This was made a policy of the Board. . . . A congregation when self supporting, [sic] may call its teachers."¹¹¹ When objections were raised to this policy, the

¹⁰⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, May, 12, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, February 9, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 11-12, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

Synodical Conference Mission Board showed no indication that it would change its position.

15. Regarding the resolution of Immanuel Conference that the Board "seek the means to prevent any encroachment on, or neglect of, the rights of the congregation in respect to calls," the Board expressed itself as unwilling to accept this criticism since it is always ready to consider the wishes of congregations. The Executive Secretary was instructed to meet with Immanuel Conference for the purpose of explaining this matter.¹¹²

In 1931 it was resolved that pastors who graduated from Immanuel College, (that is all the black pastors), would be ordained and installed at the time of their graduation but would not be given a call until they had done satisfactory work in their congregations for a year.¹¹³

In July 1933, the Synodical Conference Mission Board discussed whether subject to board approval, congregations should be allowed to call pastors themselves. The following resolution was adopted.

Since our congregations are now successfully operating on the budget system, so far as salaries are concerned, it was agreed that in the future the congregations, with the co-operation of the superintendent, issue calls, pledge themselves to pay a certain monthly amount towards the salary, and then forward this call to the Missionary Board for its approval and its statement of the amount of the subsidy. The call shall then be sent to the respective pastor from the office of the Board.¹¹⁴

This was apparently not followed totally. In 1934 it was reported to the board that the mission in Washington, D.C., had experienced a decrease in both church and Sunday school attendance. The reason given was that the Synodical Conference Mission Board had sent a white pastor,

¹¹²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 4, 1929, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 14, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 18-19, 1933, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

when two black pastors were already living in the Washington area and were without congregations at the time. The superintendent reported that he believed the Synodical Conference Mission Board acted properly in calling the pastor to the congregation and that it would work out in the end.¹¹⁵

Later this procedure was somewhat modified but the Mission board clearly still retained control.

New missionaries are to receive a call into the Mission as missionary-at-large. They shall serve at such places and for such periods of time as the Board may see fit to decree and direct. In the event of a vacancy in an organized congregation, the congregation is to call in conjunction with the Missionary Board. The latter in all cases shall determine the salary. Only such missionaries are to be called whose nomination is sanctioned by the Board.¹¹⁶

When anything happened in the mission without their sanction, the Synodical Conference Mission Board made its displeasure known. When it was reported at the March 1928, meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board that the Immanuel Conference had begun a home mission of its own, it was told to discontinue this action.¹¹⁷ At the April 1928, meeting a new policy was established.

2. Resolved that our missionaries concentrate on the upbuilding of their congregations and discontinue inner mission work (institutional and social service work) with such exceptions only as shall hereafter be authorized by this Board.

3. Resolved that our missionaries refrain from assuming any obligations, financial or otherwise, which will interfere with giving full time service to parish work.

¹¹⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October, 9, 1934, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 27-28, 1940, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 28, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

4. Resolved that our conferences refrain from opening new preaching stations upon their own account.¹¹⁸

When the Immanuel Conference chose Rev. William Hill as visitor, the Synodical Conference Mission Board objected because this was done "without the knowledge or approval of the Missionary Board."¹¹⁹ Pastor Clemonce Sabourin's¹²⁰ call from the Atlantic District to St. Matthews in New York, a congregation which was part of the black mission, prompted a resolution from the Synodical Conference Mission Board asking the Atlantic District for further information.¹²¹

Control over the Person of the Worker

The supervision also spilled over into what should have been personal and family matters. When it was notified student Osborn Smallwood,¹²² who was about to graduate from Immanuel College, wished to pursue an advanced degree rather than take a call, the Synodical Conference Mission Board bluntly stated that it did not approve.¹²³

¹¹⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 11-12, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 2, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹²⁰Clemonce Sabourin graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1935. He was first assigned to teach at Concord, North Carolina. In 1936 he was ordained and installed at St. Paul's Congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina.

¹²¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 12, 1943, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹²²Osborn T. Smallwood graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1936. He continued his studies and received an M.A. He was ordained in December 1943, and in March 1944, installed as pastor of St. Matthew's, Baltimore, Maryland.

¹²³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 28, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

When professors Nau and Meibohm¹²⁴ requested permission to teach three periods a week at Guilford College so that their sons could attend this institution free of charge, their request was refused.¹²⁵

The Synodical Conference Mission Board policy forbidding the wives of pastors to work intruded into what should have been decisions of individual families. To make matters worse, this policy was not consistently followed, exposing the board to charges of favoritism. When Rev. Karl Stoll was called to work at Luther College in New Orleans, he asked that his wife be given a chance to teach in one of the mission schools. The answer was a simple no.¹²⁶ Yet at times the Synodical Conference Mission Board itself employed wives as teachers when there was no one else, stipulating in that case that they should be paid the regular amount for a teacher.

11. Policy regarding Teaching of Pastors' Wives in Schools: Res., that the Board adhere to its policy of not employing them in school; if by its own volition and initiative the Board employs them, they are to receive the regular salary.¹²⁷

In September of 1941 the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved "that the salary status of pastors whose wives have an income

¹²⁴Hugo Friedrich Theodore Meibohm (1876-1944) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1899. In addition to serving as a professor at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, He taught at two of the Synodical Conference institutions, Luther College (1911-1924) and Immanuel College (1928-1944).

¹²⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 12, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹²⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 12, 1923, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹²⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April, 11-12, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

shall hereafter be that of unmarried missionaries."¹²⁸ Thus Rev. Moses Dickinson was not to get a raise because his wife was employed.¹²⁹ However, the board was not willing to apply this same standard to Rev. R. F. Jenkins.¹³⁰ Pastor Jenkins had sent a letter to the Synodical Conference Mission Board explaining why his wife had taken a job. This was discussed by the board in its June 1942 meeting. It was pointed out that this did not conform to board policy, implying that she better quit. However, at this same meeting the salary of Rev. Ernst G. Mueller, who was white, was increased to \$165 a month so that his wife could quit her job.¹³¹ In August 1942, it was reported that even though Superintendent Westcott¹³² had tried to convince him otherwise, Jenkins insisted that his wife had to work in order to pay all their bills. It was stated, "He may not remain in our service."¹³³ The result was that Jenkins tendered his resignation.

17. Rev. R. F. Jenkins informed Supt. Westcott to the following effect: "I am afraid that there is no more to say save I offer my resignation effective Sept. 27, 1943. Many thanks for your personal and brotherly kindness. I am sure it is better this way.

¹²⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 3-4, 1941, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹²⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 10, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹³⁰R. F. Jenkins graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1933.

¹³¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 2, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹³²Edward August Westcott Sr. (1895-1964) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1920, and was assigned to the Alabama field. He became the superintendent of the Alabama field in 1931.

¹³³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, August 11, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

Your reports will be on time." He offered his resignation as of September 27, 1943. This means that three circuits are now vacant in Alabama.¹³⁴

The dissension within the Carolina mission field, which was created as a result of the refusal of the mission board to allow the wives to work, reached such proportions that President George Spilman¹³⁵ of the Southeastern District of the Missouri Synod contacted the Synodical Conference Mission Board and asked their reasons for this ruling. At its August 1942 meeting the following reasons were given:

- a) The breaking up of home-life
- b) Danger of birth control and other evils.
- c) Temptations to infidelity
- d) Danger of giving offense to laymen and other workers.

The Board, however, stated that justifiable exceptions to the rule will always be made.¹³⁶

The Synodical Conference Mission Board and its superintendents wielded tremendous power in the professional lives of the workers. One example is the power given Superintendent Schmidt in the Alabama field to determine which teachers would be allowed to attend summer school at board expense and which would not.¹³⁷ Teachers were told that they were expected to purchase the manuals for catechism instruction.¹³⁸

¹³⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 12, 1943, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹³⁵J. George Spilman (1875-1964) was the president of the Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1939-1945.

¹³⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, August 11, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹³⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 26, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹³⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 9, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

The Worker as a Pawn

Without doubt the greatest power of the Synodical Conference Mission Board over its workers was the power to move them wherever and whenever they pleased. The power to simply assign people to a congregation or preaching station was nothing new. This appears to have been what happened with Rev. William Hill when he was sent to Alabama. Superintendent Bakke reported in 1919 that Rev. Eugene Berger¹³⁹ was to be transferred to Tilden where he would also teach school.¹⁴⁰ When Rev. Wiley Lash¹⁴¹ was to be transferred to Spartenberg and responded that he could not go, Director Drewes informed him that then there was no place for him.¹⁴²

At times transferring workers was done for disciplinary reasons. When the Synodical Conference Mission Board was unhappy with the work of Rev. Carrington March,¹⁴³ Superintendent Frank Alston wrote to the board, "Possibly if we ship March and thus impress him with the seriousness of things, he would better keep his promise. A shock might do him good."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹Eugene R. Berger graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1911.

¹⁴⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, December 18, 1919, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁴¹Wiley H. Lash graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1904.

¹⁴²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 15, 1920, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁴³Carrington R. March graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1911.

¹⁴⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 28, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

At that same meeting it was also reported that when Prof. Lehman,¹⁴⁵ who was teaching at Alabama Lutheran College, was informed that the Board was considering transferring him to Buffalo, he replied that he would be satisfied to stay at the college, but would obey the board if they decided to send him that far North.¹⁴⁶ He was not sent to Buffalo.

The evidence seems to indicate that usually there was no prior consultation with the workers. Rather it was simply announced to them that this would be their next place of service. If this was not suitable to them, there was little recourse they could take, other than to appeal to the same board which had ratified their assignment in the first place.

6. Rev. W. Tervalon of Napoleonville, La., was notified the end of May that he has been transferred to Alabama and that he may live in Beatrice. As one of his children is being treated by a doctor in New Orleans, he asked for about a month's time. Granted.¹⁴⁷

When Rev. Frank Alston was to be transferred and shorn of his position as superintendent, he tried to resist and declined the calls to the congregations to which the Board wished to assign him. Finally, he was reissued one of the calls a second time and told that if he did not take the call, he would be sent to another location and in either case relieved of the superintendency.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵Paul D. Lehman graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1918. In 1923 he began to teach at the Alabama Lutheran Academy.

¹⁴⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 28, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁴⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 26, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁴⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, December 11, 1928; December 14, 1928; December 27, 1928; December 10, 1929; January 28, 1930; February 11, 1930, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

As the financial picture grew worse because of the depression, and without any apparent consultation with the workers involved, changes in assignment were made in the interest of economy. Rev. Charles Peay¹⁴⁹ was transferred to Lamison, Alabama, in order for the Mission Board to save money.¹⁵⁰ Rev. Fred Foard¹⁵¹ was told that he was expected to teach school at Rockwell, North Carolina.¹⁵² Whether workers wanted to move or not, they had little choice in the matter. When the superintendents asked what they should do when a missionary refused to move, the response was, "When this happens they are to report to the Board, which will act."¹⁵³

Gross Insensitivity

Another characteristic of the attitude of the Synodical Conference Mission Board was an apparent insensitivity to the effect of its decisions on the workers. One example is the way in which assignments were handled by E. A. Westcott, the superintendent of the Alabama field.

. . . the Alabama Conference met from Thursday through Sunday. Usually the placements were read by the superintendent on Sunday evening. Sometimes a teacher or a pastor did not know if he, or she, would return to the former field of labor until the end of the annual conference. The conference had nothing to do with

¹⁴⁹Charles D. Peay graduated in 1909 in the first class of pastors from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

¹⁵⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, August 11, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁵¹Frederick Hiram Foard graduated in 1909 in the first class of pastors from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

¹⁵²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 8, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁵³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 25-26, 1934, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

deciding the placement. The superintendent used the conference as a platform to announce the decisions which he had made.¹⁵⁴

A variety of other decisions by the Synodical Conference Mission Board reflect this same insensitivity. Because of the severe financial constraints caused by the depression, a monthly deduction was to be withheld from the salary of missionaries to make repairs on the parsonages they occupied, which were the property of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.¹⁵⁵ Vicars were to automatically have \$10 deducted from their salary each month so that they would have money to buy books for their personal library when they graduated.¹⁵⁶ In order to save money as a result of the extreme financial shortages caused by the depression, the monthly allowances for the children of black pastors and teachers were cut, and the matter of cutting the allowance for their wives was referred to executive board by the full Synodical Conference Mission Board with the recommendation that these be cut as well.¹⁵⁷ There appears to have been little thought given to the hardships this might produce for the families, especially since it was board policy that the missionaries' wives were not supposed to work. In addition it should be noted that this cut applied only to the black workers. When Luther College in New Orleans was closed and it was discovered that some students still owed debts to the college, a policy was adopted stating that if these are not

¹⁵⁴Dickinson, p. 86.

¹⁵⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, February 11, 1930, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁵⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 10, 1930, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁵⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 7-8, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

paid, the amount should be deducted from the salaries of the pastors of the congregations where the student was a member.¹⁵⁸

When there was a difference of opinion between a superintendent and a worker, the Synodical Conference Mission Board consistently gave little credence to the position or feelings of the worker. The dispute between Rev. Walter Hart¹⁵⁹ of Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Superintendent William Gehrke¹⁶⁰ is typical.

19. Rev. Hart, Spartanburg, has assumed an insolent attitude over against Supt. Gehrke and to this date has not met the requirements set forth by the latter. Resolved that Rev. Hart be required to meet these demands.

6. Rev. Hart asks that the arrangement in regard to his salary be reconsidered. We do not deem it important or necessary to heed this plea.¹⁶¹

In his disagreement with Superintendent Gehrke, Rev. Isaac Alston¹⁶² did not fare any better.

11. Rev. Alston, who has been requested to serve Salisbury and adjacent stations, expressed his dissatisfaction with the manner in which Supt. Gehrke advised him of this new charge and presented other objections. We believe Rev. Alston's attitude is

¹⁵⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 10, 1933, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁵⁹Walter C. Hart is listed as the pastor in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in the Proceedings, of 1936. In the 1932 Proceedings, Rev. G. S. Roberts is listed as the pastor. Hart must have come to Spartanburg shortly after the 1932 report was written. Since the 1932 report is very thorough, Hart apparently entered the mission in 1932.

¹⁶⁰William Herman Gehrke (1894-1982) graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1917. He was superintendent of the eastern field from 1931 until 1948.

¹⁶¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 12-13, 1932; May, 9, 1933, CHI 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁶²Isaac John Alston studied briefly at both Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota and Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. He graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in the first class of pastors 1909.

entirely unjustified and Supt. Gehrke shall be advised to disregard his complaints.¹⁶³

Pressure Changes the Tone

A final example shows how a little pressure from above could significantly change the manner in which the Synodical Conference Mission Board addressed a worker. When Luther College in New Orleans was closed,¹⁶⁴ Rev. Paul Scherf¹⁶⁵ lost his position as an instructor. The Board decided that he was to serve in New Orleans. He wrote to the Synodical Conference Mission Board indicating that he was disappointed, since he had expected to be called to Immanuel Lutheran College. In its January 1933, meeting the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved to notify Scherf that things will stay as originally planned and that the Board had dealt with him most generously during the period.¹⁶⁶ For the 1934/1935 school year the Synodical Conference Mission Board decided to send Scherf to Immanuel Lutheran College to substitute for Prof. Beck,¹⁶⁷ who was to be away on leave. Scherf was not to take his family with him. Scherf had also requested to be sent north where he might obtain a call. In the meantime he had obtained a position as instructor in a New Orleans

¹⁶³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 11, 1934, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁶⁴See below, pages 103-106.

¹⁶⁵Paul S. Scherf (1877-1972) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1912.

¹⁶⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 10, 1933, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁶⁷Walter Herman Beck graduated from the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in 1922. He was the first mission worker who had come out of the Wisconsin Synod. He was called to be a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1926.

high school. He wrote for permission from the Synodical Conference Mission Board to continue to serve his congregation part time for \$50 per month. At its October 9, 1934, meeting the board reached its decision.

a) In as much as Rev. Scherf has chosen to accept this high school position in preference to going to I.L.C., where he was to substitute during Prof. Beck's year of absence, it was resolved that we concur in Pastor Wisler's letter of September 15, informing Rev. Scherf that "we cannot see our way clear to make such a promise (subsidy of \$50.00 per month). We could hardly justify such action in the face of present conditions." Also Rev. Wisler's letter of September 29th, "I hope you have turned over to the superintendent the mission-charge you have held," was supported.

b) It was therefore unanimously resolved that we consider Rev. Scherf as one, who by his own action and choice, has terminated his connections with our mission as of October 1st.¹⁶⁸

Scherf protested the Synodical Conference Mission Board's action to Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer,¹⁶⁹ the president of the Synodical Conference, and requested that the case be re-opened. In September 1935, the Synodical Conference Mission Board agreed and indicated that President Fuerbringer would advise Pastor Scherf that the board will grant the hearing.¹⁷⁰ The matter came up again at the December 1935, board meeting. There was a distinct difference in tone in the resolution passed at this time from what had been passed in 1934.

2. Dr. Fuerbringer informed the board as to his correspondence with Rev. Scherf and thereupon considerable discussion was devoted to a possible solution and settlement of this case since Rev. Scherf has petitioned the Board for a re-consideration of the same.

¹⁶⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 9, 1934, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁶⁹Ludwig Ernst Fuerbringer (1864-1947) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1885. He became a professor at St. Louis in 1893. He was president of the institution from 1931-1946. He was president of the Synodical Conference from 1927-1944.

¹⁷⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 7, 1935, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

In view of Rev. Scherf's request, it was resolved to inform Rev. Scherf that we are ready to meet with him for a personal conference, to be arranged at his convenience, and that we also express our willingness to defray his traveling expenses from New Orleans to St. Louis in the event that the latter should be found necessary.¹⁷¹

Infallibility?

This episode with Rev. Paul Scherf illustrated a final unfortunate characteristic that plagued the Synodical Conference Mission Board. It was very difficult for the members of the board to entertain the idea that their actions were tainted with fallibility. This becomes even more apparent in the way the charge made by Rev. Henry Grigsby¹⁷² was handled. There is no indication that there was any intention to investigate his charge. It was assumed that he was in the wrong.

10. In a letter under date of November 3, 1942, Rev. H. W. Grigsby, Alabama, stated the following: "I cannot do my work with joy and confidence any more, and whereas the Missionary Board does not uphold its end of the 'Call', permitting all kinds of abuses to its black pastors, I am herewith, with sincere regret, announcing my resignation, effective November 6, 1942."

Resolved that we express our regrets to Rev. H. W. Grigsby for taking this action, and since he resigned without valid cause he shall be informed that he is not eligible for a call.¹⁷³

Dr. Nau, the president of Immanuel Lutheran College and therefore under the Synodical Conference Mission Board, had many differences of opinion regarding the policies, attitudes, and actions of that board, frequently leveling a variety of accusations against it. At the June 7-

¹⁷¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, December 10, 1935, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁷²Henry W. Grigsby graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1931 and was assigned to the Alabama field. He later became a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod.

¹⁷³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 10, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

11, 1944, meeting of the General Conference of the colored workers, Nau had publicly leveled a variety of charges against the Synodical Conference Mission Board. At its June 13, 1944, session the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved that since Dr. Nau had made these charges, he was to be requested to meet with the board to discuss them. This meeting was arranged on July 11, 1944. After listening to Dr. Nau, the board simply declared his charges not proved and attempted to prove their point.

1. This meeting was called for the express purpose of having a conference with Dr. Nau for the purpose of having a full and complete discussion of the "charges and accusations" which Dr. Nau made against the Missionary Board during the convention of General Conference in Philadelphia.

a) The first charge taken up was that "the Missionary Board always has its face turned towards the Synodical Conference and its back towards the Mission."

After lengthy discussion of this statement, Dr. Nau apologized for making this accusation and also agreed to submit a written apology to General Conference and to the members of the General Conference, who were present at the convention.

b) The next charge discussed was that we "cannot get justice from the Missionary Board, neither from Synodical Conference." Dr. Nau cited instances which, in his opinion, proved his case. The Board did not agree that proof had been submitted.

The matter was discussed at length and ultimately Dr. Nau retracted his statement relative to the impossibility of obtaining justice in the Synodical Conference. With regard to the statement that "we cannot get justice from the Missionary Board," Dr. Nau finally declared that he no longer accuses the Board of "injustice" and agrees that it was unfortunate that this remark was made.

c) Next the statement, "Give us the \$100,000 and we will spend it and then tell you what we did with it," which implies the abolition of the present Board, was interpreted by Dr. Nau as expressing his views on the administration of the Mission, according to which he believes that the Missionary Board should consist of members in the Mission instead of outside of the Mission.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 11, 1944, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

"Them and Us"

Given these conditions and attitudes, it should come as no surprise that significant tensions developed between the workers and the Board and its superintendents. The tension comes through in the various letters of resignation which were sent to the Synodical Conference Mission Board. A "them and us" attitude developed. When Andrew Schulze¹⁷⁵ wrote My Neighbor of Another Color, the Synodical Conference Mission Board regarded it as a very personal affront. Dr. J. T. Mueller¹⁷⁶ wrote a very critical review of the book, but when Schulze asked to be given a copy of the review, the Synodical Conference Mission Board refused. President Henry Nau also asked for a copy of the review. In a letter, which Nau wrote to Pastor Schulze on November 21, 1942, informing Schulz that he also had been unable to obtain a copy of the review, the tension between worker and board is obvious.

I have asked Dr. Mueller for a copy of his review of the book. He wrote me he had passed on my request to Wisler, but although more than two weeks have passed I have heard nothing from Wisler. I shall not hear anything from him, and do not desire to hear anything. We are not safe enough to be entrusted with Mueller's opus. No better proof for the fact that there exists not a shred of confidence anymore between the Board and its workers can be furnished than this fear of the Board that its opus may get into the hands of its workers.

¹⁷⁵Andrew Schulze (1896-1982) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1924. He spent his whole ministry in the black mission.

¹⁷⁶John T. Mueller (1885-1967) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907. He taught at Luther College in New Orleans from 1907-1911 and was on the faculty at St. Louis from 1920-1964.

I doubt whether there will ever be any real changes in the interest of a better development of our work as long as the present Board is in power.¹⁷⁷

Observations made by a variety of individuals who attended the Carolina Conference, Linn-Haven, August 26, 1942, are recorded in notes taken by Rev. Theodore Graebner.¹⁷⁸ These observations, coming both from men in the black mission and men not, reflect the same deep antagonism. Included are such statements as, "Chairman of Mission board has a one track mind. Refers to the poor quality of colored students at Greensboro." "General distrust in the field of Gehrke and Wisler." "Negro preachers feel they are not wanted."¹⁷⁹

The Manner of Supervision Changes

By the end of 1945 two significant changes had occurred in the personnel of the Mission Board. Superintendent Edward Westcott accepted a call to become the administrator of the Bethesda Lutheran Home for the Mentally Retarded at Watertown, Wisconsin. The Synodical Conference Mission Board replaced him as the superintendent of the Alabama field with Rev. Walter Ellwanger.¹⁸⁰ The Rev. Louis Wisler left this vale of

¹⁷⁷Letter from Dr. Henry Nau to Rev. Andrew Schulze, November 21, 1942. CHI, Schulze Material, Box 1, Folder 13.

¹⁷⁸Theodore Conrad Graebner (1876-1950) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1897. He joined the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1913.

¹⁷⁹Notes on a discussion at Carolina Conference, CHI, Theodore Graebner Material 200-G, Box 90, File 6.

¹⁸⁰Walter Henry Ellwanger (1897-1982) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1928. He wrote to the Synodical Conference Mission Board indicating a willingness to serve in the mission and was called to take the place of Superintendent Westcott.

tears and the Mission Board selected Rev. Karl Kurth¹⁸¹ to replace him as the executive director of the black mission. These two changes resulted in noticeable differences in attitude.

Black missionaries returned, who had previously left the ministry with recriminations only a few years previously. Some came on their own and others were sought out and brought back. Rev. Peter Hunt¹⁸² was received back in October 1945. At the same meeting it was noted that efforts were to be made to seek former Pastor Grigsby, now working in Detroit, and bring him back into the ministry.¹⁸³

When the Synodical Conference convened in November 1946, a report was given of a meeting, held November 19, 1946, in which Superintendents Ellwanger and Gehkre met with Pastor Albert Dominick¹⁸⁴ and former pastor R. O. Lynn to adjudicate the difficulty which had occurred between the two of them and which had resulted in the Synodical Conference Mission Board's July 1934, dismissal of Pastor Lynn from the ministry. "It was resolved that Brother Lynn be reinstated with the understanding that his

¹⁸¹Karl Kurth, who was the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in St. Louis was elected to the Synodical Conference mission Board in 1943. In April 1946, he was called as Executive Secretary of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.

¹⁸²Peter Roosevelt Hunt graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1931 and was assigned to the Alabama field.

¹⁸³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 15, 1945, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹⁸⁴Albert Dominick graduated in 1930 from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina. He was assigned to the Alabama field. He also served on the Faculty of Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma.

long over-due debts be canceled and the entire case be considered closed. The Lord be praised for a peaceful settlement!"¹⁸⁵

The change meant decisions were handed down in which the missionary was supported rather than the superintendent. In June 1944, after Pastor Joseph Lavalais¹⁸⁶ had taken a call to the black congregation in Philadelphia, he requested a \$250 reimbursement from the Synodical Conference Mission Board, for car repairs, which he had paid out of his own pocket. Since the car was the property of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, and Pastor Lavalais could not take it with him to his new call, he felt the money was owed to him. "Supt. Westcott, who was present at this meeting, explained the true status of the car and, accordingly, Rev. Lavalais owes the Board money. The latter shall be advised to this effect."¹⁸⁷ In April 1948, the matter was brought up again and the decision was reversed.

30. The committee which was appointed some time ago to bring about a satisfactory adjudication, if possible, of the Westcott-Lavalais controversy concerning the latter's automobile which was taken over by the Missionary Board through Supt. Westcott at the time when Rev. Lavalais left the Alabama Field for a new pastorate in Philadelphia, submitted its report of a meeting held in Chicago, Tuesday, April 20th. Our committee, consisting of President Schlueter, Pastors Kurth and Unseth, the latter substituting for Pastor Daniel, after hearing the oral testimony of Rev. Westcott and Rev. Lavalais recommended that - the Missionary Board pay Rev. Lavalais the sum of \$200.00 to reimburse him for the new motor

¹⁸⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 26, 1946, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁸⁶Joseph George Lavalais, 1913-1983) graduated from Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1913.

¹⁸⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 13, 1944, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

which he had installed in this car five months before he left the field. This recommendation was unanimously adopted.¹⁸⁸

The Impact of Racism in the Spread of Black Missions

In the Northern cities a major cause of the growth of black Mission work was the prejudice of whites against blacks. The many offers, which were received by the Synodical Conference Mission Board, to purchase church buildings as congregations moved to a new location, bear mute testimony to this reality.

That white Lutherans discriminated against black Lutherans is glaringly obvious in the way the Synodical Conference itself did its work. When it could be suggested that the way to improve the quality of the ministerial candidates graduating from Immanuel Lutheran College was to temporarily place them under the supervision of experienced white pastors before they are given their own charge,¹⁸⁹ this was sheer prejudice. Even if it can be assumed that it was a good idea to let the graduates spend a year under an experienced pastor, why did it have to be a white pastor? What else can it be called when the Synodical Conference Mission Board directed that a white candidate should be sent to the congregation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, since it looked like this was an area with significant potential for the development of a strong congregation.¹⁹⁰ When it was viewed as perfectly normal that white

¹⁸⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 21-22, 1948, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁸⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 16, 1941, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁹⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, May 14, 1936, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

workers should be paid more than black workers, the discrimination was obvious.

10. Salary adjustment. - The discussion of this subject brought to light that among the colored workers the sentiment seems to be growing that they expect to be on the same salary basis with the white workers. It was regarded as self-evident that in view of decidedly different standards of living among the respective races, and in view of other considerations, that the equalization of salaries of colored and white workers is impossible.¹⁹¹

While there were exceptions in the 1950s, such as the church in St. Paul, Minnesota, of which Herbert Lindemann was pastor, and a few congregations in the Northwest district to which black Lutherans had transferred when they moved into the area, the general tendency was that when black Lutherans, who had migrated into an area, came to worship, they experienced discrimination. The presence of black Lutherans created a sudden intense interest in the formation of a black mission. A glaring example of this occurred in Milwaukee. In the February 17, 1953, issue of The Lutheran Witness the following news item was printed.

In Milwaukee the Wisconsin and the Missouri Synod, both members of the Lutheran Synodical Conference are sharing the expenses of St. Philip's Mission, Milwaukee's first interracial Lutheran church, designed to serve the large Negro population of the city's Sixth Ward. The mission will "refuse membership to no one just because he happens to be of a different color." St. Philip's occupies a building which formerly housed a Seventh-Day Adventist congregation.¹⁹²

While the news release is presented in a way designed to give the impression that something great has occurred, in reality it is a terrible indictment of the Lutheran churches in the immediate area of St. Philip's. If it was necessary to establish a special Lutheran church

¹⁹¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 31-April 1, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁹²"News," The Lutheran Witness 72 (February 17, 1953):12.

that was interracial, and if it was necessary to specifically state that St. Philip's does not refuse membership on the basis of race and color, the obvious implication was that these other congregations must have refused membership to those who were of a different color. The fact was that there were other Lutheran congregations within walking distance of St. Philip's. What happened was some black Lutherans had tried to "barge" into one of the Milwaukee Missouri Synod congregations.¹⁹³

A similar scenario was repeated in Minneapolis, as black people were beginning to move into an area of the city. The Synodical Conference Mission Board was asked to help start another "cosmopolitan" congregation. While another St. Philip's was founded, there were again several Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod churches in the area, and a large Wisconsin Synod church several blocks away.¹⁹⁴

There can be little doubt that racism played a major factor in the formation of black Lutheran churches in urban centers. The report of the Synodical Conference Mission Board to the 1954 Synodical Conference Convention spelled it out clearly.

The Negro population in St. Louis is increasing and moving into areas where heretofore they were sparsely represented or not at all. As a result four of our white congregations now find themselves in areas where Negro people are increasing considerably. Meetings have been held with the pastors and lay representatives of these congregations for the purpose of discussing the problem of integration. But so far none of these congregations are ready for integration. They rather favor fulfilling our missionary obligation

¹⁹³Andrew Schulze, Race Against Time: A History of Race Relations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from the Perspective of the Author's Involvement 1920-1070 (Published by The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America Valparaiso, Indiana, Printed by North State Press, Hammond, In., 1972), p. 75.

¹⁹⁴Schulze, p. 76.

toward the many Negroes in their territories by starting more new Negro missions.¹⁹⁵

The End of the Synodical Conference Black Mission

The Synodical Conference began to get out of the business of doing mission work in 1946, when, at the request of the black mission congregations and pastors themselves, a resolution was passed granting permission to the black congregations to affiliate with one of the districts of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.

Whereas, It has been and still is the privilege and the prerogative of any congregation, pastor, and teacher in good standing of a constituent synod of the Synodical Conference to apply for membership with any of the constituent synods or their respective Districts; and

Whereas, It has been and still is the policy of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference and their respective Districts to receive into membership any congregation, together with their pastor and teachers in good standing and duly released;

We believe it to be within the rights and privileges also of our Negro churches, pastors, and teachers in good standing and under the jurisdiction of the General Board to apply for membership with a given synod or a District affiliated with the Synodical Conference; and

We believe it to be within the rights of the constituent synods (or their Districts) to receive such applicants in good standing into membership within their District and synod after they have been duly released by the General Board.

We further recommend that congregations, both white and Negro, exercise discretion, wisdom, and love in putting this plan into operation.

Action by the Convention: The recommendations of the committee were adopted, but the convention further adopted a resolution to add the statement: "The Synodical Conference convention suggests that all

¹⁹⁵Reports and Memorials for the Forty-Third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Detroit, Michigan, August 10-13, 1954 (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Mo., 1954), p. 60.

these recommendations be referred back to the constituent synods."¹⁹⁶

In some areas this amalgamation occurred quite quickly, particularly in the Northern, Eastern, and Western areas. In Alabama and Louisiana it took much longer, not being completed until January 1, 1962, when the black Lutheran churches in these two states were received by the Southern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Conclusion

In the 85 years that black mission work was done by the Synodical Conference, the lives of a significant number of blacks were touched by its work and they did hear the Gospel message proclaimed. While the expansion of the mission was slow, there was a steady growth. In large part this growth occurred because the Synodical Conference Mission Board took advantage of unforeseen opportunities. There had been no prior plan or resolution from the Synodical Conference to expand mission work into North Carolina, or Alabama, or Northern and Western cities. The situations happened and the Synodical Conference Mission Board took up the task and the Synodical Conference later gave its sanction.

World War I started forces of change in the United States which affected the whole of society. The migrations of the black citizens out of the South opened new fields of work for the black mission of the Synodical Conference in diversified places. There was also a significant change in the attitude of black citizens toward their role in society. While, from the very beginning of the black mission work, there had been

¹⁹⁶Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 6-9, 1946 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 45-46.

problems with prejudice both inside and outside of the Lutheran Church, the refusal of the blacks to be satisfied with a second class status¹⁹⁷ brought with it heightened tensions within the Lutheran Church in general which also affected the Synodical Conference Mission.

However, as the black mission expanded the foremost tension was between the missionaries in the field and the Synodical Conference Mission Board and its superintendents. It was this hostile relationship between board and worker which set the mood of the work, changing only near the end as the Synodical Conference black mission, when with but few exceptions the black mission work was gradually incorporated into the work of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

¹⁹⁷See Appendix L, pp. 301-314.

CHAPTER III

TRAINING BLACK WORKERS FOR THE MISSION

A Hesitant Beginning

On the basis of the reports given by the Synodical Conference Mission Board to the first several conventions, it is obvious that the members of the board recognized the need to train blacks to work in the mission. It is also clear that the members of the board were unsure of the best way to proceed in order to accomplish this goal.¹

The first report of the mission board to the 1878 Synodical Conference Convention described the conclusions that had been drawn on the basis of the reports of their missionary, John F. Doescher. Pastor Doescher had been sent to tour the South and to gather information pertaining to the conditions he found there and to determine the places where mission work would be most likely to succeed. On the basis of its

¹Prior to the civil war the vast majority of the slaves were deliberately kept uneducated. The state governments established on the basis of the reconstruction acts passed by congress drew up constitutions which granted all citizens the right to vote and provided free public education to all children. However, even the presence of the Union army during this period did not guarantee integrated schools, and the blacks were well aware that under segregation their separate schools were inferior. Within 10 years the political climate in the North had changed and in 1877 the last of the Federal troops were withdrawn from the Southern states. This brought about a rapid loss of rights for black people, particularly in the field of education. In 1896 the United States Supreme Court handed down the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision which made the separate but equal doctrine the law of the land. The reality was that the segregated schools provided for the black children, when they were even provided, were very definitely separate but hardly equal. For further information see Appendix L.

evaluation, the Synodical Conference Mission Board presented several recommendations to the convention for adoption. Among these recommendations was one to begin to train a number of young black men for the pastoral office. This was to be begun temporarily by Pastor Doescher in New Orleans, who would educate, observe, and watch over them until a full educational institution could be established somewhere in Florida.² No action was taken, since the matter was tabled.³

However, the Synodical Conference Mission Board remained convinced that it was necessary to train young black men for the pastoral office, and one year later, stated in its report to the 1879 convention of the Synodical Conference that they had discovered that it was very difficult to get white missionaries for service to the blacks, nor could black sectarian preachers be quickly turned into Lutherans. The solution suggested was to get young black students out of the mission school in Little Rock, where a preparatory school could get them ready for entrance into one of the Synodical Conference seminaries.⁴ While the Synodical Conference indicated a willingness to go along with the suggestion, no tangible results came because Pastor Frederick Berg was burdened with teaching school and left Little Rock in 1881.

²Verhandlungen der siebenten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., vom 18. bis 24. Juli 1878 (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei des "Lutherischen Concordia Verlags", 1878), p. 61.

³Verhandlungen, 1878, p. 64.

⁴Verhandlungen der achten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Columbus, Ohio, vom 16. bis 22. Juli 1879 (St. Louis, Mo.: "Lutherischen Concordia Verlag", 1879), pp. 38-39.

The actual arrival of the first black student to study for the ministry in the Synodical Conference mission occurred without an official decision by the Synodical Conference regarding training black workers. This first student was Nathanael Berkhalter, who was instructed and confirmed by Pastor Friedrich Lochner⁵ in Springfield, Illinois, and since Berkhalter desired to become a missionary to his own race and he could somewhat read and speak German, plans were made in 1881 for him to enroll in Concordia Seminary, Springfield.⁶

Soon other black students were attending the educational institutions of the Synodical Conference church bodies. In the fall of

⁵Friedrich Johann Carl Lochner (1822-1902) was sent to the United States by Wilhelm Loehe in 1845. Lochner was pastor in Springfield, Illinois and instructor at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, from 1876 through 1887.

⁶Verhandlungen der neunten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Chicago, Illinois, vom 4. bis 10. Oktober 1882 (St. Louis, Mo.: "Lutherischen Concordia Verlag", 1882), p. 94.

The precise story of Nathanael Berkhalter is somewhat unclear, as there are conflicting reports. According to the Lutheran Pioneer, [9 (February 1887):8], Berkhalter did not complete his education at Springfield, but was then receiving private tutoring in Zanesville, Ohio, from Pastor Charles (Carl) Frank. He also taught briefly for a time at Mount Zion in New Orleans, [Proceedings, 1890 p. 22.], and apparently also in North Carolina, [Lutheran Pioneer, 23 (April 1901):14], but then gave up, or was asked to give up, mission work. A letter from P. N. L. Berkhalter was published in the February 1901 edition of Lutheran Pioneer, p. 6, which gives a slightly different version than had been printed in the 1882 Proceedings of the Synodical Conference.

Student Philip N. L. Berkhalter is listed in the treasurer's report presented to the Synodical Conference convention in 1888, (p. 49) as having received \$50. This, together with the reference in the 1890 Proceedings (p. 22) that he had come from Springfield would imply that Berkhalter had been a student at Concordia during the 1887-1888 school year. When the mission board had removed him from his teaching position at Mount Zion, New Orleans during the 1888-1889 school year Berkhalter asked about the possibility of attending the teachers seminary in Addison. The Mission Board apparently agreed to this, since in 1892 he is listed among the students receiving aid. (Proceedings, 1892, p. 46.)

1890, Emanuel Burthlong⁷ expressed a desire to attend the teachers' seminary in Addison, Illinois.⁸ However, it is uncertain if he actually attended that institution. According to the 1894 Proceedings Burthlong and student John McDavid were attending Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, and both received financial support.⁹ The report also stated that another student was attending Concordia, Springfield, but did not require support. Black students also attended other institutions of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. In 1894 a black student, J. N. Pope, who was attending Concordia, Conover, N.C.,¹⁰ a school of

⁷Emmanuel Burthlong (1871-1897) was confirmed in 1894 by Rev. Nils J. Bakke at St. Paul's, New Orleans. In 1892 he enrolled in Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. After he assisted the Synodical Conference missionaries in North Carolina during the 1894-1895 school year he returned to Springfield to complete his education. While in his last year at the seminary he became ill. In November 1896 he was diagnosed as having consumption and died the following April. Francis J. Lankenau, "Emmanuel Burthlong," Lutheran Pioneer 19 (April 1897):16.

⁸Verhandlungen der dreizehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu St. Paul, Minn., vom 13. bis 19. August 1890 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1890), p. 22.

⁹Verhandlungen der funfzehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 8. bis 14. August 1894 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1894), p. 63.

¹⁰Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina had been founded in 1877 by Pastor Polycarp C. Henkel and was at first operated by the Tennessee Synod. In December 1891 the Board of Trustees offered the institution to the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States, and the offer was accepted. Since the English Synod had become a member of the Synodical Conference in 1890, Concordia College, Conover, was an acceptable place for Synodical Conference students to attend if they wanted to study for church work. When the English Synod became the English district in 1911, Concordia College became an institution of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The main college building burned on April 16, 1935 and the Missouri Synod resolved to close Concordia College, Conover. Baepler, Walter A. A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod 1847-1947. (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 197, 226, 284.

the English Synod, was also receiving support.¹¹ The first black graduate from the teachers seminary in Addison was E. A. H. Buntrock, who is listed as the teacher in Greensboro, North Carolina in the 1898 Proceedings. John McDavid apparently interrupted his studies at the Seminary in Springfield, for in the same Proceedings he is listed as teaching school in Springfield, Illinois.¹² In 1903 Evan W. Reid graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College at New Ulm, Minnesota,¹³ and taught in Charlotte, North Carolina.¹⁴

It was not until 1902 that the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference was able to place any of the young men from its own congregations as pastor in the mission field. In 1902 two black students, Stuart Doswell and Lucius Thalley, completed their pastoral training at Concordia, Springfield, and were placed into congregations in the Synodical Conference mission. The black candidate, Stuart Doswell, was called to Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, and from there was to serve

¹¹Verhandlungen, 1894, p. 77.

¹²Verhandlungen der siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Cincinnati, Ohio, vom 10. bis 16. August 1898 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1898), p. 47.

John McDavid entered Concordia Seminary Springfield, Illinois, in 1892. After teaching school in Springfield, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri, he went to Charlotte where he was ordained and installed July 23, 1905. After serving a variety of congregations he was installed as the pastor of the black congregation in Los Angeles in 1925.

¹³Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, was established in 1883 as an institution of the Minnesota Synod. With the incorporation of the Minnesota Synod into the Wisconsin Synod it then became an institution of the Wisconsin Synod in 1892.

¹⁴Verhandlungen der zwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Winona, Minn., vom 17. bis 23. August 1904 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1904), p. 58.

the stations at Reimerstown and Dry's Schoolhouse. Black candidate, Lucius Thalley, was called to Springfield, Illinois.¹⁵

Two other candidates graduated later from the Missouri Synod's Springfield Seminary.¹⁶ The 1902 convention authorized the beginning of a new strategy in the effort to train black workers for the mission field.

Black Institutions of Higher Learning

Even as the missionaries were sending their young people whom they had recruited to work in the mission to the various institutions of learning operated by the church bodies of the Synodical Conference, the missionaries seem to have preferred an alternative approach. In July 1892, Missionary Bakke wrote from Concord, North Carolina, that an offer had been made by a wealthy colored merchant, who was going to donate four acres of land so that a Lutheran College and Seminary could be built in Concord. Missionary Bakke notes that a colored Concordia is a need that has been felt for a long time.¹⁷ In another letter published in August 1892, Missionary Bakke noted that other denominations had good training institutions in North Carolina for colored pastors. He then asked if it

¹⁵Verhandlungen der neunzehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 23. bis 29. Juli 1902 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1902), pp. 67-69.

¹⁶James Doswell and Wiley H. Lash graduated from the Springfield seminary in 1904.

¹⁷[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer, 14 (July 1892):26.

was not time that we had one also?¹⁸ It was not simply that a college needed to be located in the South to help recruit black students. The English Synod already operated Concordia College in Conover, where black student J. N. Pope had been a student in 1894, and Missionary Bakke had close ties with the president of the institution, William Dau. This was to be a college specifically for black students.¹⁹

When the Immanuel Conference²⁰ met for the first time from February 2-5, 1900, in Concord, North Carolina, they resolved to request the Synodical Conference Mission Board to present a petition to the 1900 convention of the Synodical Conference, which requested that an educational institution be established in North Carolina for training black workers for the mission field.²¹ The matter of founding a college for the education of black pastors and teachers, as had been suggested by the Immanuel Conference, was mentioned in the report given by the Mission Board to the 1900 Convention, but the Mission Board reported that they

¹⁸[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord N.C.," Lutheran Pioneer, 14 (August 1892):30.

¹⁹Since this desire is expressed two years prior to the Plessy-Ferguson decision, which legalized the separate but equal approach to race relations, the desire for separate Negro institutions in the Synodical Conference cannot be attributed to this decision of the supreme court.

²⁰The Immanuel Conference was made up of the missionaries serving in North Carolina and Virginia.

²¹Nils J. Bakke, Illustrated Historical Sketch of Our Colored Mission (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914), p. 78.

had not yet found time to consider this highly important matter and therefore had no recommendation to make to the honorable convention.²²

On the basis of the report of the Synodical Conference Mission Board it was recommended that the matter be brought before the Convention at one of the sessions to allow both sides to speak to the issue. It was further recommended that during the next two years the Synodical Conference Mission Board be authorized to present the question to the pastors and congregations for discussion and to make a survey regarding a possible location for the institution.²³ When the discussion was held, it became apparent that there was not sufficient consensus to reach a decision. While Missionary Bakke, especially, spoke for the establishment of a black seminary, the missionaries in New Orleans did not concur. Therefore, a decision on the recommendation authorizing the Synodical Conference Mission Board to present the matter to congregations and pastors for discussion and to search for a possible location was postponed until the 1902 convention.²⁴

A New Direction

At the July 1902, convention of the Synodical Conference the Mission Board was authorized to organize one or two institutions for black workers as soon as possible.²⁵ When the Immanuel Conference met on

²²Verhandlungen der achzehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Bay City, Michigan, vom 3. bis 14. August 1900 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1900), p. 51

²³Verhandlungen, 1900, p. 52.

²⁴Verhandlungen, 1900, p. 53.

²⁵Verhandlungen, 1902, p. 74.

August 12, 1902, they resolved to petition the Synodical Conference Mission Board to temporarily open a preparatory school in Concord, North Carolina.²⁶ The Synodical Conference Mission Board was unable to grant the request in time for the beginning of the school year because it was unable to find someone willing to take the call to serve as professor. Finally, Missionary Bakke agreed to accept the call, and on March 2, 1903, with five young men enrolled, Immanuel College was opened in makeshift facilities on the second floor of Grace School, Concord. The larger of the two rooms served as the classroom, study room, and sleeping quarters for the boys, and the smaller room was Missionary Bakke's living quarters. An old, dilapidated house on the rear of the church grounds was the kitchen and dining hall.²⁷

In September 1903, a second institution, Luther College, was opened in New Orleans, Louisiana, by Francis J. Lankeau, pastor of St. Paul's Church, using the vestry room of St. Paul's Church for its classroom. Since the students were all from New Orleans, there was no need for a dormitory.²⁸

In 1904 these institutions were placed on a more firm basis and expanded in their focus. It was reported to the 1904 convention of the Synodical Conference that, during the 1903-1904 school year both of the newly organized institutions had admitted young women to the schools. Thirteen were attending the school in New Orleans, and twelve were

²⁶N[iles] J. B[akke], "Mission News from North Carolina," Lutheran Pioneer 24 (October 1902):40.

²⁷Bakke, p. 79. Also 1904 Proceedings.

²⁸Bakke, p. 83. Also 1904 Proceedings.

attending Immanuel.²⁹ Nor were students limited to Lutherans. Of the twelve girls attending Immanuel College, eight were churchless and two were Methodist. This was clearly perceived as an opportunity for mission work, as it is further reported that two churchless boys were confirmed and three young women declared that they wished to become Lutheran.³⁰ At this convention the Synodical Conference resolved that black young women should be admitted to these institutions to train as teachers for the Mission.³¹ The convention further authorized spending \$10,000 to \$15,000 to erect a building for the institution in North Carolina.³²

In addition, the Synodical Conference Mission Board authorized the purchase of a portion of the property of St. Paul's congregation in New Orleans and the construction of a two-story building for Luther College. Additional teachers were called to assist in the instruction at the institutions. Candidate Fred Wahlers, from the St. Louis seminary, was called to Immanuel College, and a student from the St. Louis seminary³³ was appointed to assist with the teaching load at Luther College.³⁴

²⁹Verhandlungen, 1904, pp. 55, 64.

³⁰Verhandlungen, 1904, p. 66.

³¹A similar resolution authorizing the training of women teachers in church run colleges was not adopted by the Missouri Synod until 1926, although women had been attending Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska, since 1919. Gude, George J. "Women Teachers in the Missouri Synod," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly. 44, (November 1971): 164-165.

³²Verhandlungen, 1904, p. 68.

³³This student cannot be identified. His name is not given in Bakke's book, nor is it mentioned in the Synodical Conference Verhandlungen of either 1904 or 1906.

³⁴Bakke, pp. 80, 83-84.

Luther College

Luther College offered instruction on three levels, operating a high school department, normal school department (teacher training), and a theological seminary. Luther College led a tenuous existence. In its report to the 1908 Synodical Conference Convention, the Synodical Conference Mission Board stated that it was convinced that the way conditions were in the Synodical Conference mission, two theological institutions were too many. The theological training of black pastors should be conducted at Immanuel, with Luther College serving as a preparatory and teacher training school. The convention adopted this recommendation.³⁵ The seminary department was officially closed in 1910, after its only graduate, Calvin Peter Thompson, completed his studies.³⁶

A further threat to the existence of Luther College occurred in September 1919. Although at this point no action was taken, the Synodical Conference Mission Board discussed the advisability of closing Luther College.³⁷ In February 1925, the Synodical Conference Mission Board recommended closing the institution at the end of the school year.³⁸ This was not the final chapter, however. When the Synodical

³⁵Verhandlungen der zweinundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu New Ulm, Minn., vom 19. bis 24. August 1908 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1908), pp. 54,56.

³⁶Christopher F. Drewes, Half a Century of Lutheranism Among Our Colored People: A Jubilee Book 1877-1927 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 90.

³⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 5, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, 111.OR Supplement VII, St. Louis, Mo. [Hereafter CHI - (city omitted)]

³⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, February 17-18, 1925, CHI, 111.OR, Supplement VII.

Conference met in August 1928, it directed the Synodical Conference Mission Board to reopen Luther College and authorized \$1,000 be spent for repairs. At its first meeting after the Synodical Conference Convention the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved:

. . . to request Supt. Kramer to report on the number of boys and girls that are willing to enroll as students, on equipment, and also regarding willingness of Rev. Luecke to serve as professor and Director of the institution.³⁹

At this point the institution was not reopened, and again in September 1928, the Synodical Conference Mission Board struggled with the issue. There was no clear consensus regarding the need of the institution. The pastors and congregations of New Orleans were to be advised that the school might be reopened and asked, in addition, if they felt such an institution was needed.⁴⁰ One week later the board turned down an offer by Rev. Oscar Luecke,⁴¹ in which he indicated a willingness to make sure that the seven prospective boys and girls, who had expressed an interest in attending a reopened institution, would be boarded and taught. The board stated:

It was resolved to notify Rev. Luecke that we appreciate his good will, but in view of the fact that the conference of New Orleans advised not to open Luther College this fall, and since the Board is awaiting further information from the conference, no definite action can be taken at this time.⁴²

³⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, August 21, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁴⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 11, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁴¹Oscar W. Luecke (1890-1969) was a professor at Luther College New Orleans from 1923-1925, and then the pastor of Mt. Zion in New Orleans from 1925-1950.

⁴²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 18, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

In the fall of 1929 Luther College was revived as a preparatory school for Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro. When Rev. Arthur J. Doege of Lincoln, Nebraska, declined the call to serve as professor at the institution, the Synodical Conference Mission Board accepted the offer of Pastors Eric Wildgrube⁴³ and Oscar Luecke, who were serving black mission congregations in New Orleans, to teach until a new professor could be called.⁴⁴ Luther College was authorized by the 1930 Synodical Conference Convention to add the tenth grade and make provisions for female students.⁴⁵

In 1932 a Synodical Conference Mission Board subcommittee, consisting of Professor J. T. Mueller and Pastor Louis A. Wisler, conducted a survey and evaluation of the educational institutions operated by the Synodical Conference. In early March the subcommittee gave their report to the board, which included a recommendation that Luther College in New Orleans be discontinued. At a meeting of the full Synodical Conference Mission Board at the end of March, it was resolved that at the close of the 1931-1932 school year Luther College would cease

⁴³Eric Herbert Wildgrube Sr. (1895-1978) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. After serving a congregation in Renault, Illinois from 1919-1922 he was the pastor of St. Paul's in New Orleans from 1922-1968.

⁴⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 4, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁴⁵Verhandlungen der zweiunddreiszigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Quincey, Ill., vom 6. bis 11. August 1930 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1930), p. 63.

operations.⁴⁶ This action was subsequently ratified by the 1932 Synodical Conference Convention.⁴⁷

Why was Luther College closed? The immediate cause was the severe shortage of funds that occurred as a result of the depression. Rev. Gotthilf M. Kramer, who was the pastor of Bethlehem in New Orleans and superintendent of the Luther Conference throughout the period, attributed the closing to a lack of foresight and support by the Synodical Conference. He believed that New Orleans had the potential to be for black Lutheranism what St. Louis was to the history of the Missouri Synod. In his superintendent's report to the 1952 Synodical Conference convention, he wrote:

The Lutherans were the first of all denominations to have a college, even a seminary, for the training of teachers and preachers in New Orleans. We lost it. Why? False economy! It was erected in the back yard of St. Paul's Church; no room for college life, no room for any sort of athletic activity; just classrooms. We were in those days way ahead of the Catholic Church. Now they have a university, high school, wonderful church and school buildings, and the largest Negro Catholic congregation in the U.S. here in the city.⁴⁸

While it is true that the financial support provided by the Synodical Conference to the black mission was meager at best, the cause of the demise of Luther College lies elsewhere. The simple fact remains that there was an insufficient number of potential Lutheran students to make Luther College a viable institution. Large enrollments in the

⁴⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 8 and March 30-31, 1932 CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁴⁷Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Mankato, Minnesota, August 10-15, 1932 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 22.

Lutheran elementary schools did not translate into large gains for the Lutheran Church. Richard Dickinson's assessment is correct.

There was no Lutheran constituency in New Orleans large enough to support a Lutheran secondary school, college, and seminary. At this time (1903) there were only three established congregations in the city, and St. Paul's Little Rock, Arkansas, was already in decline. 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 church⁴⁹ [sic]

Immanuel College

Immanuel College remained in Concord through the 1904-1905 school year. Land was purchased in Greensboro and construction was begun in July 1905. Thinking that the construction would be completed during the course of the year, the college moved to Greensboro in September 1905, where two homes were rented to serve as temporary facilities. In the 1905-1906 school year three young women and two young men declared their intention to enter professional church work. On May 20, 1906, the policy of admitting non-Lutherans paid a dividend as eight students, four boys and four girls, were confirmed and joined the Lutheran Church.⁵⁰

The actual construction took considerably longer than anticipated and cost over \$28,000, almost double the maximum amount allotted in 1904,

⁴⁸Proceedings of the Forty-Second Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Concordia College St. Paul, Minn. August 12-15, 1952 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 92.

⁴⁹Richard C. Dickinson, Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 161.

⁵⁰Verhandlungen der einundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Chicago, Ill., vom 15. bis 21. August 1906 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1906), pp. 50-58.

a fact which affected the finances in the mission field for several years. The dedication service was finally held on June 2, 1907.⁵¹ The reason for the great increase in cost was not only because labor and material were more than expected, but primarily because the building was made larger than had originally been planned.⁵² On June 2, 1909, the first pastors, John Alston, Fred Foard, and Charles Peay, graduated from Immanuel College.⁵³

Immanuel College was divided into the same three departments as Luther College, four year high school, one year normal school (teacher training), and three years of theological education. The number of students enrolled fluctuated. In the 1919-1920 school year, enrollment reached one hundred and the Convention of the Synodical Conference was told that they desperately needed more room.⁵⁴

The Saga Of Immanuel College

Throughout its history Immanuel College was beset by a variety of problems. One of the most noticeable problems was the poor facilities of the institution. In 1920 it was reported that there were four white professors and two houses on campus. One of the professors was forced to live in the city and two of the professors and their families had to

⁵¹Drewes, p. 88.

⁵²Verhandlungen, 1908, p. 52.

⁵³Verhandlungen der dreinundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Seward, Nebr., vom 17. bis 22. August 1910 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), pp. 36-37.

⁵⁴Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 18. bis 23. August 1920 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), pp. 30-31.

share a seven room house.⁵⁵ The following is a description of the campus buildings when Henry Nau became president in 1925:

Immanuel's Administration building was a monstrosity. A government survey of the original Administration Building of Immanuel Lutheran College described it in the following words: "The building is a two-story granite structure of an inconsistent mixed and wasteful type of architecture. It is heated by stoves. The interior shows bad workmanship, inexperienced planning, and poor material." It had numberless small towers gracing the roof, with an enormous tower in the center. It was a very ornate and picturesque building; but, as stated in the documents of the school systems of North Carolina, a building which was an excellent example of how not to build a school. In the basement were the commissary and the boiler room. On the second floor, which was also the ground floor, were the offices of the faculty members, a large hall for devotional services, several classrooms, and a small library. On the second floor were more classrooms, and the third floor housed male students. Most of the third floor was finished on the inside with beaverboard, which was in terrible condition.

The only other building on the campus housed the girls. Conditions there were so bad that the Health Department of the City of Greensboro had condemned the use of the building. Yet somehow the members of the board and the faculty had received permission to continue its use.

The campus itself made as bad an impression as the buildings. Not a single stretch of pavement graced the place. All the streets were of dirt covered with the ashes that came from the large furnaces which heated the buildings. The driveways leading to the professors' homes and into the garages were all covered with ashes from the same source. There was no blacktopping for the road leading from East Market Street to the entrance of the Administration Building. Even Luther Street was not paved. Such was the picture at Immanuel when Henry went to work. The entire physical plant reflected the spirit with which the work had been done among the black people of the South by the white Lutherans of the Synodical Conference.⁵⁶

In addition to the poor conditions which resulted from insufficient funding, Immanuel College was plagued by repeated deliberations which both questioned the need for its continued

⁵⁵Verhandlungen, 1920, p. 31.

⁵⁶John F. Nau, Nau! Mission Inspired (St. Louis, MO: Clayton Publishing House, 1978), p. 55.

existence, and pondered the idea of limiting the scope of its educational program. While the matter does not seem to have been seriously pursued, in 1918 the Synodical Conference Mission Board, in the process of evaluating its higher educational system, discussed the possibility of limiting its institutions to only the training of pastors and teachers.⁵⁷ After the closing of Luther College, a resolution was adopted by the 1926 convention of the Synodical Conference which recommended that the institution in Greensboro should remain open.⁵⁸

More serious attempts were made as the depression began to take its toll. In March of 1932 the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved to recommend to the next Synodical Conference Convention that, "the work at I.L.C. be limited to the training of pastors and teachers and such confirmed Lutheran students of the Synodical Conference as are willing to pursue the regular course of study."⁵⁹ This would obviously involve a reduction of the number of instructors at the institution. The executive board was to determine the exact course of study and decide on faculty personnel. Not only was this recommendation directly contrary to the wishes of the faculty, it was also opposed by the men in the black mission. When it met in June 1932, the Immanuel Conference voted to

⁵⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 21, 1918, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁵⁸Verhandlungen der dreiszigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Lockport, N.Y. vom 18. bis 23. August 1926 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 37.

⁵⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 30-31, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

appeal directly to the Synodical Conference convention and request that these changes not be made at Immanuel College.

1. Memorial to Syn. Conf. - In view of the fact that the shortness of time makes it impossible to submit this matter to the Missionary Board for prior consideration and action, as well as further action by Immanuel Conference, before this matter comes before Synodical Conference; and in view of the fact that the resolutions of the Board concerning Immanuel College are not only to come before the Synodical Conference for ratification, but have already been pondered by the Board and carried out at the college as well as published in all Synodical publications and made known over the field;

And in view of the fact that this matter as herein presented has been fully presented to the Board by the faculty before final action was taken by the Board in regard thereto; and in view of the fact that the urgency and necessity which makes it imperative that the reasons herein advanced against the ratification of the Board's action be fully weighed by Synodical Conference: Immanuel Conference begs leave to submit directly to you, as well as to the Board, the following Petition and appeal, unanimously adopted by this Conference and the Superintendent of the Eastern Field.

Whereas the Missionary Board in its last plenary session, resolved "that the work of our educational institutions, (particularly Immanuel College), be limited to the training of pastors and teachers and such confirmed Lutheran students of the Synodical Conference as are willing to pursue the regular course of study;"

And, Whereas this action of the Board seriously endangers the future and destroys the efficiency and value of the institution by cutting down the size of an already small enrollment and, consequently soon also the size of the faculty (six men); by making it thereby impossible to have a satisfactory program and class organization, covering the required eight years of work, and as a result disrupting a necessary, satisfactory, and efficient program which the faculty has finally established after many years of labor and trial, as a consequence of which disruption the school will completely fail to carry out the very purpose for which it is to exist, namely, for the purpose of proper preparation of pastors and teachers;

By furthermore causing the school to lose accreditation of its high school work and making impossible the accreditation of its Junior College-Normal work, which is positively essential for the proper preparation of teachers who prepare for our schools and who, since they are not guaranteed permanent or regular work in our schools, must also be of necessity able to secure proper recognition and certification for other educational work, or for admission to other institutions.

By making the school, therefore, of no value and use to such Lutheran students who do not intend to prepare for work in our mission field; And

Whereas this institution is serving the very purpose for which our institutions are created and at the same time and at the same expense is able to serve a further purpose, namely, to give girls and boys within and without the Lutheran Church a thorough Christian training, in keeping with the program and policy of similar institutions, also within the Synodical Conference synods and thereby helping to advance the work on the Mission field, as in all mission fields in all lands And

Whereas to eliminate the non-Lutheran students for "economic" reasons effects no financial saving whatsoever, but rather increases the per-capita expense, since the overhead remains the same, - the present course of study being the minimum for the proper preparation of pastors and teachers, and the size of the present faculty (6) being the minimum able to carry out this program, - while the Commissary costs, which heretofore have fully paid for the cost of food, light, water, and heat making boarding of students entirely self-supporting, now will instead be increased:

Be it therefore resolved

1. That Immanuel Conference considering it its duty and feeling conscience bound, register its disapproval of this "closed-door policy."

2. that it urge upon the Missionary Board the need and wisdom of revoking this policy.

3. that the venerable Synodical Conference be and is hereby petitioned to look further and thoroughly into this matter; and

4. that the venerable Synodical Conference permit Immanuel College to continue its present program as it has been developed by the faculty with the approval of the Board and Synodical Conference.⁶⁰

No change was made in the admissions policy at Immanuel College, and Immanuel continued to admit general students. However, this was not the only threat faced by Immanuel College. During the 1930s serious consideration was given to the complete closing of Immanuel. One resolution concerning Immanuel College, which had been discussed by the

⁶⁰Minutes of the 46th Session of Immanuel Conference Greensboro, N.C., June 1932. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

executive board at its March 8, 1932, meeting was not presented to the March 30-31, 1932, meeting of the full board, mentioned above, which had resolved, subject to ratification of the 1932 Synodical Conference Convention, that only professional church workers be trained at Immanuel. This omitted item illustrated the uncertainty which surrounded the existence of Immanuel. The omitted resolution stated, "and eventually place all our institutions on the market with the view of relocating and building up one suitable institution at a convenient location."⁶¹

At the September 1935, meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Rev. Frank Streufert,⁶² the Executive Secretary of Missions of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, reported on the visitation which he had made to Immanuel College, and proposed that the education of black pastors be transferred to Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

a) The possible transfer of the theological department from I.L.C. to Springfield, . . . were touched upon. Because of the merits of these suggestions and the possibilities involved, it was resolved that a special committee be elected to study these proposals. Pastors Wisler and Wilson⁽⁶³⁾ were elected.⁶⁴

⁶¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 8, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁶²Frank Carl Streufert (1874-1953) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1895. He was the executive secretary of missions for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1932-1953.

⁶³Edwin Luther Wilson (1895-1973) graduated from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in 1918. He was the pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in St. Louis from 1918 through 1969. He was the secretary of the Synodical Conference Mission board from 1928 through 1954 and then the chairman from 1954 through 1964.

⁶⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 7, 1935, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

After studying the possibility, Pastors Louis Wisler and Otto C. Boecler,⁶⁵ the chairman of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, met with the faculty of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, to discuss the possible transfer of the Immanuel theological department to Springfield. Pastors Wisler and Boecler reported to the January 30, 1936, meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board: "While no definite action could be expected, it appears that the faculty regards the proposal with favor."⁶⁶ When the president of Immanuel, Dr. Henry Nau, who was about to leave for Africa,⁶⁷ learned of the proposal, he was upset and wrote requesting the board to make no radical changes in his absence.⁶⁸ The workers in the black mission also rallied to the support of Immanuel College. At the March 1936 meeting of Immanuel Conference the matter of the possible transferring of the theological department of Immanuel to Springfield, Illinois, was discussed. "Resolved That [sic] a Committee

⁶⁵Otto C. Boecler (1875-1942) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1898. He served as a professor both at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, (1909-1917) and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, (1925-1929) In 1929 he took a call to be pastor of Immanuel, Des Plains, Illinois.

⁶⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 30, 1936, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁶⁷In 1934 the Synodical Conference had sent a delegation to explore the possibilities of mission work in Western Nigeria. As a result of the report it was decided in 1935 to begin as soon as possible, and have the 1936 Synodical Conference Convention ratify the action. Dr. Henry Nau, who, prior to World War I, had been a missionary in India for the Missouri Synod, was given a one years leave of absence from Immanuel and left for Nigeria March 4, 1936, to get this new mission organized. He did not return to Immanuel until 1938.

⁶⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 10, 1936, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

be appointed to prepare for the defending of the Seminary of Immanuel College against the idea of moving it, [sic] to Springfield, . . ."69

None-the-less the Board proceeded with its plans. The recommendation was presented to the Synodical Conference Convention in 1936, although the only action taken was to create a special committee which was to report to the 1938 convention.⁷⁰ The Synodical Conference Mission Board was hesitant to replace Prof. Fred Berg when he retired because of the "Proposed plan of transferring the theological department to the Springfield Seminary, . . ."71 In November 1937, Rev. Louis Wisler attended the meeting of the Missouri Synod Board of Directors, and submitted two questions:

. . . the first: whether we favor the opening of our colleges to colored students, and, secondly whether we favor selling Immanuel Lutheran College at Greensboro. The immediate reaction appeared to be negative, but the question will be given further thought.⁷²

The Missouri Synod Board of Directors gave its final decision one month later.

The questions submitted by the Executive Secretary of the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference at the last meeting (Resolution 371109-HH) were again taken up and it was declared as our opinion that we would advise against the arrangement of opening our colleges to colored students and therefore the closing of the Greensboro

⁶⁹Minutes of the 52nd Session of Immanuel Conference Chapel of Immanuel Lutheran College, Greensboro, N.C., March 1936. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

⁷⁰Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Indianapolis, Indiana, August 6-11, 1936 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1936), pp. 112-113.

⁷¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 8-9, 1936, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁷²Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, November 9, 1937, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

college would be out of the question as long as no other provisions are made for the training of colored workers.⁷³

Whether for better or worse, the matter had been decided for the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the result was that Immanuel was given a new lease on life. It was reported to the convention that the theological department would remain at Immanuel rather than be transferred because that would reopen the race question at Springfield⁷⁴.

However, its lease on life remained tenuous with a variety of contradictory opinions being expressed. Already in September of 1939, it was again resolved to study the whole Synodical Conference educational system for training pastors and teachers, and a committee was appointed.⁷⁵ In January 1942, the Synodical Conference Mission Board discussed the impact on Immanuel College of a resolution which had been passed by the General Conference of the Negro mission. This resolution had called on the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to open all of its educational institutions to black students.⁷⁶

As a result of a request made by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod made 1942, the executive staff of the Synodical Conference appointed a committee to review the work of the Synodical Conference mission. The committee, which consisted of Rev. E. Benjamin Schlueter,

⁷³Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, December 20, 1937, CHI.

⁷⁴Reports and Memorials for the Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Watertown, Wisconsin, August 4-9, 1938 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 60.

⁷⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 6-7, 1939, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁷⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 14-15, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

vice president of the Synodical Conference, Rev. William Lochner,⁷⁷ Secretary of South Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod, and Rev. Frank C. Streufert, Secretary of Missions of the Missouri Synod, thoroughly studied every facet of the black mission and presented a detailed report to the 1944 Synodical Conference Convention. In regard to Immanuel College, it was stated:

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.⁷⁸

The committee further recommended that, wherever feasible, the training of black students for church work should be done in the existing educational institutions of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference, and requested these synods to open the doors of their institutions to black students.⁷⁹ For a variety of reasons, including the desire of the pastors serving the black mission, and the hesitancy of the synods to open their schools to blacks, the Synodical Conference convention resolved to have the committee give the matter additional study, consider the re-location and re-organization of Immanuel College,

⁷⁷William O. Lochner (1890-1971) graduated in 1912 from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. He served as secretary of the South Wisconsin District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1939-1948.

⁷⁸Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio August 1-4, 1944 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), pp. 76-77.

⁷⁹Proceedings, 1944, p. 81.

and request the constituent synods to open their educational institutions to black students. If, after further study, the committee found it best to close Immanuel College, it was empowered to do so.⁸⁰

While the workers in the black mission earnestly wanted the opportunity to have students trained at the institutions of the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod, they were well aware that until this was a reality it would be necessary to retain Immanuel College. This sentiment was stated explicitly by Dr. Nau in the August 1945, meeting of the Immanuel Conference. "As for the Theological Department, we should not consider its discontinuance until all of our seminaries and preparatory schools have been officially opened to all of our black boys and girls. . . ." ⁸¹

When the 1944 recommendations regarding the closing of Immanuel College were re-studied by the committee, they reached the same conclusion. Immanuel College should be closed, and the doors of the theological institutions of the constituent synods should be opened to black students. However, two members of the committee, Clemonce Sabourin and Andrew Schulze (both pastors in black congregations), issued a minority report in which it was pointed out that, "Since our Negro church and mission work is in a state of transition, . . . we deem it unwise, at least at this time, to close or relocate Immanuel Lutheran College." ⁸²

⁸⁰Proceedings, 1944, p. 85.

⁸¹Minutes of the 62nd Session of Immanuel Conference St. Paul's Charlotte, N.C., August 19-22, 1945. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

⁸²Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin August 6-9, 1946 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 40.

Another resolution was presented which had been adopted by unanimous vote on July 26, 1946, by the General Conference of the Negro Churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. This resolution requested that Immanuel College be allowed to remain open and that it be placed under a local board of control.⁸³ The floor committee recommended that Immanuel Lutheran College be given one more chance to recruit and train theological students, which was its primary and original purpose. This was adopted by the convention.⁸⁴ Immanuel was kept alive again only to die a lingering death.

Efforts were made to revive the institution. Some government buildings which had been constructed during World War II and declared surplus after the war, were purchased by Immanuel College. In April 1947, Immanuel College was placed under a local board of control, which operated in conjunction with the Synodical Conference Mission Board. When another professor was needed, a black man, Rev. Ortho Lynn, was called as professor and "dean of the college." The college was urged to raise its standards so that it could give merited degrees, which it was hoped would enable it to attract additional Lutheran students from the North. In 1950 the college was authorized to grant a Bachelor of Divinity Degree to current graduates and past graduates who met the requirements.

For all the changes, nothing changed, and the enrollment stayed low, with only a small percentage of the students being Lutheran. In 1956 the call was again raised to close Immanuel. However, the call was

⁸³Proceedings, 1946, p. 42.

⁸⁴Proceedings, 1946, p. 47.

again rejected. The floor committee in its report called attention to several facts. Forty-seven of the forty-eight black pastors, who were then serving the church, had graduated from Immanuel. Although the other schools of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference were open to black students, the workers from the field testified that the black students from the Southern field preferred to attend an institution such as Immanuel, and that the Southern field had produced the great majority of black pastors. Closing Greensboro at this time would result in the loss of the majority of black ministerial students. It was also pointed out that while promises had been made for years, only recently had attempts been made to improve the facilities.⁸⁵

In 1958 the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod sent a memorial to the Synodical Conference Convention requesting that the theological department of Immanuel College be transferred to another institution and that Immanuel be developed into a strong preparatory school. The convention responded by appointing a Study Commission on Ministerial and Teacher Training, which after thorough investigation was to give a report to the 1960 Convention of the Synodical Conference.⁸⁶

The report regarding Immanuel, given in 1960, was essentially the same as what had been recommended in 1944. Immanuel was to be closed.

⁸⁵Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Convention of the Evangelical Synodical Conference of North North Assembled at First St. Paul's Church Chicago, Illinois, December 4-7, 1956 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), pp. 119-120.

⁸⁶Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference Assembled at Saints Peter and Paul's Lutheran Church Lakewood, Ohio, August 5-8, 1958 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 104-105.

A sword has been hanging over I.L.C. for years. Memorials were presented at each Synodical Conference convention, calling for the closing of "Greensboro." This uncertainty did not enhance the prestige of this institution, neither did it induce young men to come forward and declare their intentions to study for the ministry. The Missionary Board, after prayerful study of this entire situation, finally came to the conclusion (prompted also by the constant decrease in enrollment and the fact that relatively few Lutheran young men and women availed themselves of the opportunity to study at Greensboro) that it could no longer justify the large expenditure of moneys for the continuation of I.L.C., which serves so few Lutheran young people;⁸⁷

The convention adopted the following resolution of the floor committee.

Whereas, It has become increasingly evident that despite the many and incalculable blessings showered upon our church by our gracious Lord through the medium of Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro, N.C., and despite the increasing and consecrated efforts of its president and theological faculty this school is no longer fulfilling our expectations; and

Whereas, The enrollment in this school is showing a constant decline, all three departments during the past school year having a total enrollment of but 72 students, of whom the greater majority are non-Lutheran; and

Whereas, There is no immediate prospect of enrolling new ministerial students after the close of the 1960-1961 school year; therefore

We Recommend, in concurrence with the findings of the Study Commission, the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference also agreeing thereto,

1) That Immanuel Lutheran College be permanently closed effective June 30, 1961;

2) That the property (buildings, grounds, and equipment) be sold at the best possible price;

3) That the library and the records of this institution be transferred to Alabama Lutheran Academy and College at Selma;

⁸⁷Reports and Memorials for the Forty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America at Wisconsin Lutheran High School 330 N. Glenview Ave. Milwaukee 13, Wis., August 2-5, 1960 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), p. 13.

4) That upon completion of the 1960-61 school year the three faculty members with permanent tenure be honorably retired;

5) That contractual agreements with staff members on impermanent tenure be honored in cases where they extend beyond June 30, 1961;

6) That prospective Negro pastors thereafter receive their terminal ministerial training in the existing institutions of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.⁸⁸

Why Did Immanuel Close?

In the most basic terms it closed because it could not recruit enough Lutheran students. But to make that statement does not really answer the question. There were several major factors which made it very difficult for Immanuel Lutheran College to attract students. It is in the combination of these factors that the cause is found which led to the closing of Immanuel.

Throughout its history there was a certain amount of ambiguity relative to the purpose of Immanuel. Was it an institution operated for the purpose of training workers for the mission field, or was it also to be operated as a mission institution for the general good of black youth and as a way to also bring them into the Lutheran church? It is apparent that there were non-Lutherans in the school from the beginning. Yet already in 1910 questions were raised about the scope of the Synodical Conference institutions. When the future of Luther College was being debated, it was pointed out that the Synodical Conference was not a "college society" (Collegengesellschaft). Only if there was room, was it

⁸⁸Proceedings of the Forty-Sixth Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference Assembled at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 2-5, 1960 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 137-138.

acceptable to admit other students.⁸⁹ Already in 1918 the Synodical Conference Mission Board was contemplating whether or not their system of higher education should admit only students who were planning to work in the mission field.⁹⁰ This desire to implement a closed door policy remained the consistent goal of the Synodical Conference Mission Board. In contrast, the faculty and the majority of the missionaries consistently advocated an open door policy which would allow the admission not only of Lutheran general students, but non-Lutheran as well. Typical of this tension was the 1932 action of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, in which the policy was adopted that from henceforth Immanuel Lutheran College be limited to training professional workers for the mission, and that the necessary reductions be made in the school.⁹¹ The faculty then later presented their response which advocated the retention of the open door policy.⁹² In spite of this constant tension, the open door policy was retained until the close of Immanuel Lutheran College.

One clear factor behind the closing of Immanuel was the fact that Immanuel was clearly a second rate institution, both in terms of its facilities and in the quality of education given. While the board did

⁸⁹Verhandlungen der dreiundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Seward, Nebr., vom 17. bis 22. August 1910 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 10.

⁹⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 21, 1918, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁹¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 30-31, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁹²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 1, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

not come right out and say that we run a second rate institution, minutes of board meetings demonstrate that they were aware Immanuel Lutheran College provided an inferior education. In a discussion pertaining to training women teachers, the following admission was recorded in the board minutes.

- a) Alabama allows no credit for courses at I.L.C.;
- b) In only exceptional cases recognized Negro colleges will allow graduates of the I.L.C. college department full credit;
- c) I.L.C. is powerless to remedy this situation;
- d) Alabama may at any time enforce its laws regarding teachers and thus close every Lutheran day-school;⁹³

When the report on the Synodical Conference system of higher education was given to the 1944 convention, its comments regarding the conditions at Immanuel Lutheran College were devastating. "The equipment and facilities offered at I.L.C. can in nowise compare or compete with similar public or private schools at Greensboro or in the North Carolina area." "No northern Negro will send his son or daughter to Greensboro. There is nothing to attract them."⁹⁴

The curriculum offered was clearly designed to provide a practical education. Immanuel College was trying to function as a high school, junior college, teacher training institution and seminary. In the detailed analysis of Immanuel College prepared for the 1944 Synodical Conference convention it was noted that while Immanuel's curriculum was patterned after the training offered in the colleges and seminaries of the constituent synods, Immanuel was trying to accomplish too much in one

⁹³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 8, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁹⁴Proceedings, 1944, pp. 41, 46.

institution, especially considering the heavy teaching load carried by its instructors.⁹⁵ The assessment of Immanuel made in 1960 in connection with its closing pointed out major weaknesses of the institution, some of which involved the kind of education students received. One example was the library, which even if it was for a secondary school, was judged woefully inadequate. Concerning the faculty and curriculum the following judgments were made. "The staff is inadequate (not incompetent) the result is overloading The curriculum is nonfunctional. It is a diluted version of the curriculum at other institutions."⁹⁶ The committee bluntly stated:

The Synodical Conference has, moreover, never given the institution even the minimum support required for the operation of a second-class, much less a first-class school. In fact, the physical plants, salary schedules, libraries, and general conditions at Greensboro and Selma make it extremely difficult to understand how the staffs of these institutions could work with pleasure to themselves and profit to their students through the years. Both institutions stand as dismal monuments to the neglect, lack of vision, and stepchild approach of the supporting synods in the area of Negro education.⁹⁷

Another factor which contributed to the closing of Immanuel College was its location. The very fact that it was in the South, where segregation was practiced much more seriously than in the North, made Northern students disinclined to attend the institution. They wanted no part of the Southern segregation system. This is demonstrated by the case of Samuel L. Hoard, a member of St. Philip's Lutheran in St. Louis.

⁹⁵Reports and Memorials for the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio, August 1-4, 1944 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 44.

⁹⁶Reports and Memorials, 1960, p. 82.

⁹⁷Reports and Memorials, 1960, p. 82.

He had desired to study for the ministry from his early teens, and, after he was discharged from the Marines in 1945, examined the options that were available. There were three possible routes into the ministry, the seminary in Springfield, the seminary in St. Louis, and the seminary in Greensboro. His first choice was the seminary in Springfield, but, because he was black, he was refused admittance and referred to Greensboro.

Although, and perhaps because he had experienced the sting of the segregation system in St. Louis and in the armed services, he knew the horror stories that other Negroes who had come from the South had told him. He would have none of it. He wouldn't consider Immanuel College, a thousand miles away in the South.⁹⁸

Beyond the fact that its Southern location made it difficult to recruit Lutheran students from the North and West, Immanuel College's recruitment problem was made worse by the fact that the Synodical Conference mission in North Carolina was too small to provide enough students for the college to be accredited. While North Carolina had once been the strongest field, following World War I, the migration of blacks out of the rural areas of North Carolina, which was the area where the Lutheran church was the strongest, had greatly weakened this mission field. The 1944 report on the Synodical Conference system of higher education stated the potential. In North Carolina, the basic area of support for Immanuel College, there were eighteen stations with a baptized membership of 1,371 and a communicant membership of 1,020. There were four day schools with 330 students, and sixteen Sunday schools

⁹⁸Andrew Schulze, Race Against Time: A History of Race Relations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from the Perspective of the Author's Involvement 1920-1970 (The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America Valparaiso, Indiana, Printed by North State Press, Hammond, Indiana, 1972), p. 21.

with 651 students.⁹⁹ The enrollment in the day schools and Sunday schools was at least fifty percent non-Lutheran. The most telling figure is the 351 difference between baptized members and communicant members. In contrast, the Alabama field, where the Alabama Lutheran Academy was located, had thirty day schools with 1,145 students. More significantly, in Alabama the baptized membership was 3,067 and the communicant membership 1,590, a difference of 1477. Immanuel had an obvious recruitment problem, the potential numbers were not there.

Another major blow to the existence of Immanuel Lutheran College was unintentional, but none-the-less devastating. It came in the form of a resolution adopted in the 1946 convention of the Synodical Conference, which allowed the congregations of the black mission to affiliate with any of the districts of a constituent Synod.¹⁰⁰ While most Lutheran institutions of higher education at that point in time refused admission to black students, it could hardly be long before that changed. Once black congregations became members of the Missouri Synod, it would become increasingly more difficult for any Missouri Synod higher educational institution to reject students from member congregations just because these students happened to be black.

Perhaps the biggest problem that affected Immanuel's ability to recruit students to study for the ministry had nothing to do with the institution itself. The problem was what the black pastors experienced after their graduation. In the 1944 report to the Synodical Conference Convention it was stated that no sons of black pastors had studied for

⁹⁹Proceedings, 1944 p. 72.

¹⁰⁰Proceedings, 1946, pp. 45-46.

the ministry.¹⁰¹ Indeed the black pastor had few options. He could serve in the black mission here or the black mission there, but that was about it. Even within the black mission, the black worker was given the less desirable positions.

Traditionally, the Black workers were relegated to the poorer congregations. Formerly these were in the rurals, and the white workers were in the cities, as a rule. Today most of the poorer congregations are in the inner core of the declining cities of the land.¹⁰²

Prof. William Kampschmidt¹⁰³ of the Immanuel Lutheran College faculty sent a letter to the Synodical Conference Mission Board in December 1945. In his letter Prof. Kampschmidt stated, ". . . I believe the boys are available and could be persuaded to serve the Lord if certain conditions in the mission fields are rectified."¹⁰⁴ The Mission Board's response was "Prof. Kampschmidt shall be kindly requested to inform us what he has in mind when he speaks of 'if certain conditions in the mission fields are rectified.'"¹⁰⁴ Even though the Mission Board was oblivious to a very basic problem, those in the mission were not. Henry Nau's assessment of the situation touches the heart of the matter of the problem of recruiting black young men for the ministry.

¹⁰¹Proceedings, 1944, p. 72. Between 1946-1947 Othneil Thompson whose father was a black pastor was enrolled briefly at the Springfield seminary. He was, however, referred to Greensboro. (Schulze, pp. 21-22).

¹⁰²Dickinson, p. 169.

¹⁰³William H. Kampschmidt (1894-1965) was confirmed in 1907 by Christopher R. Drewes and graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1917. He served as a traveling missionary in Northern Minnesota until 1920. He was called to Immanuel College in 1924. In 1937 he received an MA in history. He became president of Immanuel in 1951.

¹⁰⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, December 18, 1945, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

The low salaries paid to black ministers, the paternalistic spirit of the white superintendents in the field, the general relationship between workers in the field and the members of an all-white and absentee mission board, and the general attitude of white workers toward black workers contributed to the school's inability to attract the desired number of ministerial students.¹⁰⁵

To put it another way, why would a black Lutheran from the North or West want to go to the South, where segregation was practiced much more strictly, study at a second-rate school like Immanuel Lutheran College, and then in all likelihood be called to serve a congregation in rural Alabama?

While Immanuel Lutheran College was faulted because it produced so few black pastors during the course of its history, the criticism was not fair.

We must realize, when the question of the limited number of graduates is raised, that the constituency on which Greensboro draws for its students numbers only a little over 3,000 communicant members. By comparison with the rate at which ministers have been produced in the Missouri Synod, Immanuel College would be on a par if it produced only one ministerial candidate every two years.¹⁰⁶

Closing the institution was a wise move, it had outlived its need. However, the closing of Immanuel brought the Lutheran church no closer to a solution of recruiting and training an adequate number of black pastors.

Alabama Lutheran Academy

There was yet one more institution operated by the Synodical Conference for the training of workers for the black mission. The mission work in Alabama, which was begun in 1916, experienced rapid growth as a result of the spread of the Lutheran day schools. In 1920

¹⁰⁵Nau, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶Proceedings, 1956, p. 120.

the workers in Alabama requested that as soon as possible a high school and normal school for training teachers be established in each region of the black mission work.¹⁰⁷ A cottage was rented and a school was opened in Selma, Alabama, on November 13, 1922, with nine Lutheran girls as students. The Rev. Robert Otho L. Lynn was the instructor, assisted by Mrs. Netti Moore.¹⁰⁸

As the school grew, 13 acres of ground were purchased in the spring of 1925 and a dormitory and classroom building were constructed. The new high school and normal school were intended to be girls' schools to provide training for future teachers. An elementary school was built for children in the area, and it also provided an additional opportunity for the future teachers to get practical experience. Any boys desiring to prepare themselves to study for the ministry could also attend. They were housed in a cottage which had been on the property at the time of its purchase.¹⁰⁹

The economic struggles experienced by the Synodical Conference during the depression nearly closed Alabama Lutheran College. In March 1932, the program of Alabama Lutheran College was drastically reduced, being limited to grades eight and nine. It was to serve as a girls' preparatory school for Immanuel Lutheran College. In June consideration was given to the complete closing of the institution. The superintendent of the Alabama field, Rev. Edward Westcott, was asked to give his advice about this possibility. In July he reported that he was against the

¹⁰⁷Verhandlungen, 1920, p. 40.

¹⁰⁸Drewes, p. 92.

¹⁰⁹Drewes, p. 93.

complete closing of Alabama Lutheran College, and the Mission Board decreed that its previous resolution would stand.¹¹⁰

As a result of severe reduction in the size of the institution, the majority of the instructors were released and it was necessary to restructure the administration of the school. Prof. Otho Lynn, who had been the head of the institution, was reassigned, and Superintendent Westcott was named as the principal of both the grade school and what was left of the high school.¹¹¹

Gradually the school expanded back to its original number of classes. In 1937 Superintendent Westcott pointed out to the Synodical Conference Mission Board that it would soon be time to again operate Alabama Lutheran Academy as a full high school. He indicated that there was an increasing demand for this among the people. The board was receptive to the idea and directed Superintendent Westcott to draw up a definite plan which would describe what was needed and estimate the cost.¹¹²

To benefit the school, some of the Synodical Conference pastors in Alabama took the initiative and started the Lutheran Association for Higher Education in 1937. Their goal was to raise money to pay the salary of one teacher for the 1938-1939 school year and to request the Synodical Conference Mission Board to pay the salary of another teacher.

¹¹⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 8, 1932; March 30-31, 1932; June 7, 1932; July 12, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 28, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹¹²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 31 and April 1, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

The mission board agreed to this arrangement, and a full high school course was again offered.¹¹³ The association fell short the first year by \$90, and requested the Synodical Conference Mission Board to pay the salary for both additional teachers for the second year in order to allow the association an opportunity to establish itself financially. The Synodical Conference Mission Board grudgingly agreed to do this.¹¹⁴ In the report given to the 1944 convention of the Synodical Conference,¹¹⁵ which thoroughly analyzed the higher education system of the Synodical Conference, Alabama Lutheran Academy faired quite well. Concerning the Alabama institution the report recommended:

that Normal School students be trained at Alabama Lutheran Academy. Such, however, as desire to enter the Normal School of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference may do so. Be it therefore suggested

¹¹³Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Chicago, Illinois August 1-7, 1940 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1940), pp. 59-60.

¹¹⁴Minutes of the Lutheran Association for Higher Education, September 22, 1939; December 29, 1939. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

¹¹⁵There is a discrepancy in the dates of when actions took place between what is recorded in the 1944 Proceedings and what is recorded in the minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the Lutheran Association for Higher Education. The Proceedings indicate that in 1932 the institution was reduced to grades nine and ten and that an eighth grade was added in 1939. The minutes of the Synodical Conference Negro Mission Board specifically say that the school was to consist of eighth and ninth grades. The Proceedings also indicate that the Lutheran Association for Higher Education was founded in 1939. There are minutes of this association going back to at least March, 25, 1938, and this was clearly not the first meeting, since a chairman, secretary, and treasurer had already been elected, mention is made to a prior meeting, and a committee reported that it did not have the constitution ready yet.

to continue the Alabama Lutheran Academy at Selma, Alabama, for the training of teachers for our Lutheran day schools in the Negro Missions.¹¹⁶

The call for normal school students to be trained at Alabama Lutheran Academy implied additional years being added to the course of study. When conditions in the day schools of Alabama were described in 1946, the need of having a normal department at Alabama Academy was emphasized. It was pointed out that over forty percent of the day school teachers had received no training beyond their four years of high school at the academy.¹¹⁷ In view of this, the 1946 Synodical Conference Convention adopted a proposal to restore the two years of normal school to Alabama Lutheran Academy.¹¹⁸ The first year of normal school was added in 1947, and the second in 1950.

One of the key contributions of the Alabama Academy was the number of young men attending who were planning to study for the ministry. A boys' dormitory was built in 1949. As a result of continued growth, during the 1950s the facilities of Alabama Lutheran Academy-College were scheduled to be further improved. While several buildings were authorized, they were not built because the costs proved to be considerably more than had been allotted. By 1956 there was severe overcrowding, and the situation was becoming desperate. The following resolution was adopted by the convention:

In 1950 the Synodical Conference recognized the need for classrooms at Selma and granted \$20,000. In 1952 (Proceedings, p. 129) it granted \$100,000 for the erection of needed buildings and equipment at A.L.A. In 1954 (Proceedings, p. 175) the convention

¹¹⁶Proceedings, 1944, p. 77.

¹¹⁷Proceedings, 1946, pp. 20-21.

¹¹⁸Proceedings, 1946, pp. 44-45.

urged quick completion of the building program and authorized an additional \$25,000 in view of rising costs.

In 1956 the Academy is still without new buildings. We send our Negro children to school under conditions which we would never tolerate in any of our synodical institutions.

The Missionary Board has expressed hope that the LWML may provide funds for the erection of a girls dormitory.

The Alabama Field is raising money for a boys' dormitory.

The Board of Directors of A.L.A. has architect drawings for a \$90,000 classroom-library-administration building and a \$45,000 chapel.

The Missouri and Slovak Synods have set aside their share of the \$125,000 previously authorized; therefore be it

Resolved, That this convention request the synods which have not set aside their proportion of this building fund to inform the Missionary Board as to the time when such funds are to be expected;

That this convention instruct the Missionary Board to proceed immediately to erect the administration building with funds made available by the Missouri and Slovak Synods;

That we authorize an additional \$50,000 to be spent at Selma in order that both buildings may be completed and equipped;

That the Missionary Board proceed with the erection of the chapel as soon as these funds become available;

That we implore God to bless the efforts of the Alabama Field in raising money for the boys' dormitory;

That we express our sincere hope that the LWML will see its way clear to vote funds for the girls' dormitory.¹¹⁹

In 1957 the Lutheran Women's Missionary League did vote to build a girls' dormitory for Alabama Lutheran Academy and College. However, at the 1958 convention of the Synodical Conference a memorial was presented and adopted calling for the relocation of the college to a different site in the city of Selma, and authorization was given to proceed with the

¹¹⁹Proceedings, 1956, p. 119.

construction of the buildings previously authorized on this new site.¹²⁰ That same convention also called for a restudy of the whole Synodical Conference system of higher education.

After the 1958 convention a new site was located; however, because it was felt that the entire college should be constructed on this new location and that authorization had not been given for an expenditure of this magnitude, construction was again delayed. The following description and evaluation of the Selma institution was given to the 1960 Synodical Conference Convention.

The physical plant at Alabama Lutheran Academy presents an even less pleasing prospect than that of Greensboro. Many of the observations made in regard to Greensboro are applicable to Selma. One basic difference between the two institutions, however, lies in the indisputable fact that Alabama Lutheran Academy satisfies a "felt and real need" in the church. Located in the heart of an area densely populated by Negro Lutherans, it has a comparatively large constituency, which enables the school to recruit a sizable student body made up entirely of Lutherans. While the commission is committed to integration, its members recognize the need for having a school that will be predominantly Negro at least for the next 25 years in that area which is so densely populated by our Negro brethren.¹²¹

The study commission examining the higher educational institutions of the Synodical Conference made several recommendations regarding Alabama Lutheran College. They recommended that a completely new campus be built at Selma, that the present campus be sold and the proceeds used to erect an elementary school on the new campus, that Alabama Lutheran Academy offer a six year program consisting of four years of high school and two years of junior college, and that a Board of Control be created

¹²⁰Proceedings, 1958, pp. 106-107.

¹²¹Proceedings, 1960, p. 130.

which would be fully responsible for the running of the school.¹²² With the exception of the construction of an elementary school on the campus of the Academy, the convention adopted these recommendations concerning Alabama Lutheran Academy.¹²³

Since the Southern District of The Lutheran-Church Missouri Synod was preparing to take responsibility for the black mission work in its region, (Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana), which was the only region still supervised by the Synodical Conference, it was recognized that there was an inconsistency in having the Missouri Synod responsible for the mission field and the Synodical Conference responsible for Alabama Lutheran Academy. With the agreement of both the Synodical Conference Mission Board and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a resolution was adopted to accept the offer of the Missouri Synod to take over the institution and to take the necessary steps to accomplish the transfer.¹²⁴ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod took over the administration of the Academy on January 29, 1962, incorporating it into its system of higher education, and the final actions involved in the sale of the property were accomplished on March 21, 1963.¹²⁵

¹²²Proceedings, 1960, p. 131.

¹²³Proceedings, 1960, p. 139.

¹²⁴Proceedings of the Recessed Forty-Sixth Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference Assembled at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 17-19, 1961 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), pp.24-25.

¹²⁵Proceedings of the Forty-eighth Regular Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference Held at Concordia Lutheran Junior College Ann Arbor, Michigan July 28-29, 1964 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1964, p. 52.

In looking at all three of the higher education institutions which were operated by the Lutheran Synodical Conference, one factor stands out which kept the Alabama Lutheran Academy alive. This factor was aptly stated in the 1960 report of the Survey Commission mentioned above. Alabama Lutheran Academy fulfilled a recognizable need for the large number of black Lutherans who lived in the region and who were deeply committed to Lutheran education. This constituency wanted and actively supported their institution. It was also this region that produced the majority of black Church workers in the recent decades.

A Desire for Another Way

After the Synodical Conference began its own institutions, all were not satisfied that the educational choices of blacks who wanted to serve the church as missionaries should be limited to these institutions. The case of Carl Stoll is an interesting example. After completing his studies at Concordia College, Bronxville, Carl Stoll came to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, sometime between 1910 and 1912. Apparently the administration of the seminary was unaware that Stoll was black.¹²⁶ Sometime in March of 1913 student Stoll was sent to teach school in New Orleans at St. John's, a newly founded mission station. He taught there until November 1913, when he went to Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro to complete his theological education.¹²⁷ Stoll graduated

¹²⁶William H. Eifert, "I Would Do It Again" Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, 37 (January 1965):152. In this article Eifert mistakenly refers to student Stoll as Charles rather than Carl.

¹²⁷Verhandlungen der funfundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conference von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 12. bis 17. August 1914 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1914) p. 47.

from Immanuel College in 1916.¹²⁸ Of particular interest in the experience of Carl Stoll is that he had been accepted at Concordia, Bronxville, and while he was allowed to attend the St. Louis Seminary, he was not allowed to complete his education there.

In 1923 a student at Immanuel College, John Quincy Adams Martin, wanted to transfer to Concordia, River Forest, and to continue his studies there. He asked the Synodical Conference Mission Board for a recommendation, but they refused, stating that he ought to remain in Greensboro.¹²⁹

As described above¹³⁰ the Synodical Conference Mission Board of the Synodical Conference had itself, in 1936, tried to arrange for all black pastors to be educated at Concordia Seminary in Springfield. This was discussed with the faculty of that institution, and their initial response was apparently favorable. However, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors rejected the idea. While similar, this attempt of the Synodical Conference Mission Board was not a call to allow black students, particularly those living outside of the South, to attend the closest institution to their home. Rather it was an attempt to shift the whole theological department of the school.

Even though this desire for another way into the ministry seemed to be rebuffed on every side, it remained strong. In 1938 Albert J. C.

¹²⁸Carl (Karl) Stoll served as a pastor in the Negro Mission. His first parish was St. Marks in Atlanta, Georgia. He also served in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and as a teacher at Luther College in New Orleans.

¹²⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 11, 1923, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹³⁰See above, pp. 113-116.

Moeller, the president of St. Paul's College, Concordia, Missouri, sent a form letter to all the pastors on the roster of the Western District, encouraging them to send gifted boys for the ministry to study at St. Paul's. Rev. Andrew Schulze, who was the pastor of a black congregation in St. Louis, wrote back on May 12, 1938, pointing out to President Moeller that his congregation was black. Schulze also stated that there were gifted boys in his congregation that he would like to send to St. Paul's. Within two weeks he received a letter from the college in which he was told that the Missouri Synod Board of Directors had decided not to allow black students to attend its institutions.¹³¹

In reality what the Missouri Synod Board of Directors had done was to reaffirm the decision made in 1937 advising against opening Missouri Synod colleges to black students. In 1938 the Board of Directors stated:

380518-AA: The Board of St. Paul's at Concordia would like to know whether colored students coming from our St. Louis mission may be enrolled in their college as ministerial students. It was resolved to abide by our policy agreed upon in similar cases not to open our preparatory schools to colored students but to refer them to Greensboro. This was an endorsement of the answer which President Behnken had already given in this matter.¹³²

Several protests were made to the Missouri Synod Board of Directors, asking it to reverse this policy. One came from the General Conference of workers in the Negro mission. In 1941 the General Conference asked Rev. Louis A. Wisler, the executive secretary of the Synodical Conference mission, and Rev. Gotthilf Kramer, the superintendent of the Louisiana field, to go to the Missouri Synod Board of Directors and present their arguments regarding why this should be changed. The Board of Directors agreed to hear them, but hesitated to

¹³¹Schulze, pp. 16-17.

make a decision and tried to pass the buck by saying it was a problem of the Synodical Conference.

411216-I: Pastor G. M. Kramer and L. Wisler, elected by the General Conference of workers and congregations of our Negro Missions, came in to plead for the rescinding of a resolution of the Board of Directors passed in May, 1938, barring all negro students from Synod's preparatory schools, colleges, and seminaries. It was brought out that as soon as our work among the negroes was begun provisions were made for the training of negro workers. They were at first sent to Springfield. The Synodical Conference than [sic] gave the [sic] thought to the problem of providing for the education of its colored workers at that time. All were agreed as to the advisability and necessity of educating the workers, but while some advocated the erection of separate schools others favored the sending of students to our Northern colleges. In 1904 a beginning was made to train the workers in separate schools in the South. In a certain sense this was claimed to have been a mistake. No outstanding leaders have been developed and boys from our Northern congregations will not go to those schools, while they would be willing to enter one of our colleges in the North. The resolution of the board of Directors stood in the way of changing the policy, and therefore the conference agreed that it should be rescinded. It was said that it puts our Synod in a bad light and will prejudice especially the educated negro against us. The question, it was said, is too weighty to be decided off hand. It was suggested to turn over the whole question to the Survey Committee now at work. The thought was injected that after all this is a problem for the Synodical Conference, which maintains its schools for the training of this work. No action was taken at this time, but the matter will be considered later.¹³³

The policy appears to have been administered selectively. Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois, chose to enforce it. Ruth Smith was one-quarter black, and very light skinned. Her father was white and her mother of mixed blood. She had been converted to Lutheranism through the "Lutheran Hour" Radio Broadcasts, and joined

¹³²Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, May 18, 1938, CHI.

¹³³Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, December 16, 1941, CHI.

Trinity Lutheran Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin, which belonged to the Wisconsin Synod. Desiring to become a teacher she enrolled at Concordia Teachers College. She arrived on September 2, 1941, wrote an entrance exam, paid her fees, received her schedule, and was assigned her dormitory room. While she was in her room after lunch, finishing unpacking, she was summoned to the office of President Arthur W. Klinck. President Klinck had the picture which had been sent in with her application.

When Ruth sat down, President Klinck back and forth between her and her picture. After a few moments he asked Ruth, "Are you colored?" She replied, "Partly." Klinck then inquired, "Well, who sent you here anyway?" Ruth responded, "My pastor in Waukesha." President Klinck then declared, "You can't stay here. It just won't work out. In fact, you cannot spend the night here."¹³⁴

In contrast to what Ruth Smith had experienced in her attempt to attend Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Jefferson Johnson, a third generation black Lutheran, was admitted to Concordia College in Oakland, California, in 1942 to do post graduate work. Since Jefferson Johnson wanted to attend Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in the fall of 1944, President Theodore C. Brohm of Concordia, Oakland, wrote to the Missouri Synod Board of Directors regarding this issue.

431108-A: The President's Report.

c. Correspondence with President Brohm of the college at Oakland bring [sic] up the question of admitting a negro student, a certain

¹³⁴Stephen C. Hintz, "The Odyssey of Ruth Smith" WELS Historical Institute Journal, 7 (Spring 1989):7. When he learned of the incident, Dr. Walter A. Maier, the "Lutheran Hour" speaker, wrote a letter of apology to Ruth Smith and a letter of reprimand to Dr. Klinck. Ruth Smith was admitted that fall to the Wisconsin Synod institution, Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. However, upon graduation her color prevented her from being placed in a congregation of the Wisconsin Synod. She was eventually placed by the Synodical Conference Board for Negro Mission in a colored congregation in Cleveland, which she served briefly.

Jeff Johnson, now taking post graduate work at this college, to our Seminary next fall. The policy involved was to be taken up with the Board for Higher Education the next day.¹³⁵

The minutes of the Missouri Synod Board for Higher Education for November 9, 1943, referred only to the fact that a study was being conducted by Valparaiso University¹³⁶ regarding admitting negroes to the educational institutions of the Missouri Synod.¹³⁷ While other references were made to this issue, no decisions were recorded in the minutes of either the Missouri Synod's Board of Directors or Board for Higher Education, prior to the fall of 1944 when Jefferson Johnson was to enter the Seminary.

Apparently Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, also acted on its own, in allowing Jefferson Johnson to enter the seminary. He graduated in 1948 and served a variety of congregations in the Missouri Synod before becoming a member of the faculty of Valparaiso University.¹³⁸

Concordia Seminary, Springfield, however, even as Jefferson Johnson was attending Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, adamantly refused to admit black students. Beginning in 1946 strong efforts were made to persuade that institution to admit black students. Two men from Rev. Andrew Schulze's congregation in St. Louis, Samuel Hoard and Lindsey

¹³⁵Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, November 8, 1943, CHI.

¹³⁶The Board for Higher Education Minutes of September 10, 1943 authorize a committee to be appointed from among the faculty members of Valparaiso University, who are "to study recent trends in higher education of the negroes in America and to report the results of this study to the Board." Missouri Synod Board for Higher Education, minutes, September 10, 1943, Concordia Historical Institute, 111.1 0.09 Box 1.

¹³⁷Missouri Synod Board for Higher Education, minutes, November 9, 1943, CHI, 111.1 0.09 Box 1.

¹³⁸Schulze, p. 18.

Robinson, requested to enter and were refused, as were Jerry Wyatt, the brother-in-law of Rev. Clemonce Sabourin, a black pastor of the Synodical Conference mission serving in Harlem, and Othneil Thompson, whose father was a black Synodical Conference Mission pastor in New Orleans. All four were referred to Immanuel, Greensboro.¹³⁹

When a letter was sent in 1943 to the Rev. Leroy C. Rincker, president of Concordia College in Milwaukee, asking if that institution would be willing to accept black students, he reported that he had written to the Missouri Synod Board of Directors indicating that unless he heard to the contrary, he would enroll black students if the opportunity arose. He apparently received no response. In the same year the Wisconsin Synod institution in Watertown indicated a willingness to admit black students.¹⁴⁰

The lack of direction in the matter of admitting black students to the institutions of the Missouri Synod becomes painfully clear in the contradictory descriptions of the policy at Concordia, Fort Wayne, Indiana. The September 11-12, 1946, minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board state that in the opinion of the Fort Wayne Board of Control it would not be feasible for a black boy to be admitted to that institution.¹⁴¹ However, on September 10, 1946, as the Missouri Synod

¹³⁹Schulze, pp. 21-22. Hoard, Robinson, and Wyatt were ex-G.I.'s. However, the fact that Othneil Thompson had a M.A. when he applied for admission demonstrates that a lack of educational background could not be given as an excuse. Wyatt and Thompson attended Immanuel Lutheran College, while Hoard and Robinson enrolled in one of the preparatory schools and eventually attended the St. Louis Seminary.

¹⁴⁰Schulze, p. 19

¹⁴¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 11-12, 1946, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 2.

Board of Directors were discussing that same institution, it was reported that Concordia, Fort Wayne, had that fall enrolled a young man from the black congregation in Fort Wayne as a day student. It was further stated that the board was in agreement with the Synodical Conference 1946 decision to give Immanuel Lutheran College one more chance and to urge everyone to concentrate on helping it succeed by sending it more students. However, it was also true that the Synodical Conference could not dictate the admission policies of Missouri Synod institutions of higher education. Then it was stated that, "Colleges that receive negro students will do this on their own responsibility."¹⁴²

Conclusions

In looking at the various approaches to the training of black workers for the mission, which were attempted by the Synodical Conference, the impression given is that of a lack of direction. In essence, the higher education system happened; it was more by chance than direction. Immanuel College was begun because there was an immediate need felt by the workers in North Carolina. In beginning this institution, apparently little thought was given to possible alternatives that might prove more beneficial in the long run. In the 1960s Alabama Lutheran Academy was to be continued in its present location and enlarged with little apparent thought about the impact that future population

¹⁴²Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, September 9-10, 1946, CHI.

trends might have on the future of an institution in that location.¹⁴³ Already in the mid-1930s the Synodical Conference Board for mission seemed to sense that what they were doing was not working very well. But, they could find no way out; they were stuck with the system.

In a large measure the educational opportunities offered to the black men and women who wanted to study to be pastors and teachers were determined by the racial attitudes of the white Lutherans who made up the Synodical Conference. If the Missouri Synod had been willing to welcome black students into its schools, as it was requested to do in 1936, the course of black education would have undoubtedly been far different. It is also interesting that the Wisconsin Synod seminary at Thiensville, Wisconsin, was apparently never approached. The fact remains that the continuation of the totally separate system of higher education was the direct result of the refusal of the Missouri Synod to allow black students to enroll in its institutions.

It was an awareness of these racial attitudes on the part of the majority of white Lutherans that prompted men such as Andrew Schulze and Clemonce Sabourin, who were working to convince The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to open its institutions to black students, to at the same time consistently advocate that both Immanuel Lutheran College and Alabama Lutheran Academy be retained. They were aware that passing a resolution in 1946 was not going to produce a mass change in attitude and

¹⁴³It is understandable that Rev. Nils Bakke and other leaders in those in the early years of the twentieth century did not consider the impact of large shifts in population. These were yet to come. However, by 1960 two such migrations of blacks people out of the rural areas had already occurred.

an open arm welcome to black students. The reality of the situation was that, for the time being, those black institutions were necessary.

One cannot denigrate the dedication and the efforts of the individuals who taught and studied at these black institutions. They did the best they could with what was available to them. Yet in the final analysis, the history of the professional training, which the Synodical Conference offered to its black church workers, is not an example of foresight and progressive thinking. It is rather a demonstration how the commonly accepted attitudes of the day hampered the work of training black workers for the church and placed obstacles in their path.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE TO BECOME A "CHURCH"

A Church in a Vacuum

The Afro-American Lutheran congregations, because they consisted of men, women, and children who knew and confessed Jesus as their Savior, were the church in its basic Scriptural sense, the gathering together of people who know and believe that Jesus is their Savior. However, at the same time, they were not part of any "church." They were in a sense a non-entity. The individual congregations of black Lutherans held membership in no existing church structure; they were on the outside. The black Lutherans were well aware of this. In the 1940s, Rev. Albert Dominick, a long time pastor in the black mission and professor at Alabama Academy, described the black Lutheran Churches in this way: "We are where the handle is on the jug, boy. And that's completely on the outside."¹ What they needed was both an organization and affiliation.

On the basis of the early Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, it is not possible to determine what, if any, thought had been given to the kind of relationship these newly formed congregations would have with the church bodies that had brought them into existence. The first larger organizations were gatherings of the workers in a particular vicinity. Shortly after he arrived in North

¹Richard C. Dickinson, Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 173.

Carolina, Rev. Nils Bakke convened a conference in 1891, which eventually became the Immanuel Conference. After this first meeting the Immanuel Conference did not meet again until 1900. It was not given a formal constitution until 1926.² The workers in New Orleans formed the Luther conference in 1903, but did not begin to meet regularly until 1910.³ The Alabama Conference probably met for the first time in 1921. These conferences, however, were clearly local. They were intended to edify the workers and laity and to provide an opportunity for the discussion of mutual concerns.

Incessant Pressure for Affiliation

The first documented request that the black mission congregations be given a formal organization as a church occurs in the Proceedings of the 1920 convention of the Synodical Conference. In a report to the convention it was noted that two conferences of black workers had petitioned the Synodical Conference Mission Board for permission to found their own synod, since the black workers in the mission had no synodical affiliation. This important matter was referred to the Mission Board, who, along with other individuals, were to see what could be done.⁴

The precise manner in which these deliberations were carried out is unclear. However, in September 1921 the director of the black

²Minutes Immanuel Lutheran Conference, Immanuel Lutheran College, September 24-26, 1926. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

³Nils J. Bakke, Illustrated Historical Sketch of Our Colored Mission, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914), pp. 87-88.

⁴Verhandlungen der siebenundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 18. bis zum 23. August 1920, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), p. 41.

mission, Christopher F. Drewes, reported to that board that only one of the workers was in favor of a black synod. Drewes stated that the workers recognized that it would be impossible to found a synod under the present conditions since they were under a commission and were not in a position to do what synods normally do. "A Synod under a commission is an impossibility."⁵ The report to the Synodical Conference Mission Board did not specifically state what the present conditions were which made it impossible, nor does it state what synods normally do, but the implication was that the key reason was the fact that the black congregations were not self supporting. This report, however, appears inconsistent with the original request. Director Drewes stated that only one worker could be found who favored the establishing of a Synod. Yet, the 1920 request had come from the two conferences of workers in the black mission.

That there was more than one worker in favor of a Synod became abundantly clear in a 1925 resolution passed by the General Conference.⁶ In this resolution not only did the General Conference express the intention to organize itself, it also explicitly stated that the workers in the black mission were discontent with their lack of affiliation and that they desired to form their own synodical body.

⁵Synodical Conference Missionary Board, minutes, September 6, 1921, Concordia Historical Institute, 111.0R, Supplement VII, St. Louis, Mo. [Hereafter CHI - (City omitted)]

⁶The General Conference was organized in 1920, but had no constitution or official status. It was made up of workers from all three of the individual mission fields. At this August 12-16, 1925 meeting of the General Conference, it was also resolved to appoint a constitution committee to officially organize the General Conference. This committee was to report to the next conference. (Andrew Schulze papers, Concordia Historical Institute, Box I, file 5, General Conference minutes, August 12-16, 1925, at Grace Lutheran Church, Concord, N.C.)

The conference resolved to declare its intention of becoming a permanent organization. It must be remembered that the colored churches, which are the fruit of the labors of Synodical Conference, have no synodical affiliation. All that understand the work and have the success of our mission at heart, are living in the hope that some time in the future (we know not when) the colored churches will be in a position to form their own synodical body, which will then be able to become a member of Synodical Conference, even as Missouri, Wisconsin and others are members of that body. This Conference of workers and delegates becoming a permanent organization is a step in this direction, paving the way for a future synod.⁷

When the General Conference met in 1927, a committee was appointed whose task was to attempt to negotiate with the Synodical Conference Mission Board and to persuade the board to draw up a constitution which would allow the congregations of the black mission to form a synod. Rev. Andrew Schulze, who was actively involved in this effort, described his view of the intended purpose of this action.

The final purpose, as the General Conference conceived it, was that the proposed new synod be accepted into the Synodical Conference as a constituent member of that body. The primary reason for this proposal, as I recall, and as I envisioned it in 1927, was not to improve financial matters as they affected the work and the workers of the mission churches, nor to improve out outreach potential in the communities in which we were working. although there was much room for both. The chief reason was the establishing of a demonstrable or visible fellowship between the Synodical Conference and the congregations represented by the General Conference.⁸

In the December 1927 meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board it was reported that the members of the General Conference thought it was time to organize a synod or if not that, then something which had

⁷General Conference minutes, Aug. 12-16, 1925, Schulze papers, CHI.

⁸Andrew Schulze, Race Against Time: A History of Race Relations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from the Perspective of the Author's Involvement 1920-1970, (Published by The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America Valparaiso, Indiana, Printed by North State Press, Hammond, Indiana, 1972), pp. 83-84.

a vote at Synodical Conference Conventions.⁹ The matter of a synod for the congregations of the black mission came up again in the April 1928 meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.¹⁰ The minutes record, "An overture, prepared by Rev. A. Schulze and M. Carter, regarding the organization of a colored synod was read in its entirety and received."¹¹ There is no indication that the proposal was given serious consideration. What was resolved was to recommend that the Synodical Conference appoint a committee which was to "act on the suggestion of the General Conference for the drafting of a constitution for a closer organization of our missionary congregations."¹² It should be noted that the recommendation hesitated to use the word synod, substituting instead, "closer organization."

The attitude of the Synodical Conference Mission Board toward this proposal became clear in a supplement which was added to the April 1928 minutes. A synod can be formed by self-sustaining congregations. The job of the missionaries was to build up the congregations so they become self-sustaining. Meanwhile, these congregations were to quit doing what churches do, i.e. make their own decisions, and act more like missions, doing the bidding of the board which was over them.

⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, December 30, 1927, CHI, III.OR, Supplement VII.

¹⁰According to Andrew Schulze, the committee, appointed by the General Conference, presented a proposed constitution to the Negro Mission Board. Schulze, Race Against Time, p. 84. However, there is no direct reference to this in the minutes of the Mission Board, unless it was included in the overture presented in April 1928.

¹¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 11-12, 1928, CHI, 111.OR, Supplement VII.

¹²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 11-12, 1928, CHI, 111.OR, Supplement VII.

Supplement to the minutes.

Whereas this Board looks forward hopefully toward "A CLOSER ORGANIZATION OF OUR MISSIONARY CONGREGATIONS", and

Whereas only self-sustaining congregations are able to assume the larger duties and share the larger responsibilities of organized church work, and

Whereas this Board has the duty of administering the Mission funds as effectively as possible for the upbuilding of a self-sustained Colored Mission Church, and

Whereas concentrating upon the single task of increasing our enrollment of well-grounded and thoroughly instructed church members is necessary

Therefore be it

1. Resolved that the duty of thorough indoctrination as a requisite for Baptism or confirmation shall receive increasing emphasis in all our mission fields at the present time --- Adopted. . . . Be it furthermore

2. Resolved that our missionaries concentrate on the upbuilding of their congregations and discontinue inner mission work (institutional and social service work) with such exceptions only as shall hereafter be authorized by this Board. . . Adopted . . . And be it furthermore

3. Resolved that our missionaries refrain from assuming any obligations, financial or otherwise, which will interfere with giving full time service to parish work . . . Adopted . . . And be it furthermore

4. Resolved that our conferences refrain from opening new preaching stations upon their own account . . . Adopted¹³

The 1928 convention of the Synodical Conference authorized the formation of a committee to consider the matter of a constitution for the mission churches, and Synodical Conference president, Prof. Ludwig Fuerbringer, appointed three men to serve. Two of the men on the committee were members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Prof.

¹³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 11-12, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

J. T. Mueller and Rev. William Hallerberg,¹⁴ and the third was the director, Christopher F. Drewes.¹⁵ After drafting a constitution the committee recommended that it be submitted to the Synodical Conference.¹⁶

The 1930 Synodical Conference Convention ordered another committee to be appointed. This time the committee consisted of Rev. Andrew Schulze, who was pastor of St. Philip's, the black congregation in St. Louis, and two board members, Prof. J. H. C. Fritz¹⁷ and Rev. Louis Wisler.¹⁸ The committee met for deliberations but was unable to draft a constitution. The Proceedings from the 1932 Synodical Conference Convention state:

A Committee, consisting of Dr. J. H. C. Fritz, Rev. L. A. Wisler, and Rev. A. Schulze, which had studied "the matter of the constitution and the organization of a conference of the workers and of lay delegates in our Colored Missions" . . . reported that the organization of such a conference and the adoption of a constitution is impractical until our colored congregations become financially independent.¹⁹

¹⁴William Hallerberg (1872-1931) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1895. From 1908 through 1919 he served as pastor at Marcus in St. Louis, and from 1919 through 1930 he was the field secretary of the Western District of the Missouri Synod.

¹⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, August 21, 1928, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 23-24, 1930, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁷John H. C. Fritz (1874-1953) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1897. He served as pastor of Bethlehem, St. Louis, from 1914 through 1920 and on the faculty of Concordia St. Louis after 1920.

¹⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, May 12, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

¹⁹Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Mankato, Minnesota, August 10-15, 1932, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 35.

While the impression given in the report to the 1932 convention that this was the unanimous opinion of all the members of the committee, at least one member of the committee seemed not to have concurred. In March 1932 the minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board record, "Proposed Constitution for the Organization of the Mission Congregations of the Synodical Conference, submitted by Pastor Schulze, was read and shall be considered at the Plenary Meeting."²⁰

It is clear that the problem was not a lack of desire for a constitution or even an inability to draft a constitution. The problem was how allowing the mission congregations to be organized into a synod would affect their relationship to and control by the Synodical Conference Mission Board. However, the issue of organizing the black mission congregations would not go away, and the Synodical Conference Mission Board was forced to continue to wrestle with the problem.

The proposed constitution, more particularly the principles involved, for our mission-congregations and preaching-stations was the subject of a general discussion. Superintendents Gehrke and Kramer were of the opinion that an organization of some kind is a necessity since the colored brethren will demand it. It was resolved that Supt. Gehrke and the other two superintendents draft a tentative constitution and present the same to the outside members of the Board and ultimately to the local Board for consideration.²¹

There was clearly a feeling among the workers in the mission that they had no input in decisions which directly affected them and, at a minimum, they wanted direct representation on the boards. In June 1932 the Immanuel Conference drafted a lengthy resolution covering several items, which they had intended to submit directly to the 1932 Synodical

²⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 8, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

²¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 12-13, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

Conference Convention. Part One of the resolution consisted primarily of an expression of their wishes in regard to the proposed closed door policy at Immanuel Lutheran College, with the additional request that they be allowed to elect one of their workers to attend the meeting when the full session of the Synodical Conference Mission Board met. While the first part was presented to the Synodical Conference Convention, for some reason it was decided not to submit the second part which addressed the issue of their lack of representation.

Whereas the several Conferences within the Synodical Conference Mission have had little voice in regard to the shaping of policies and plans concerning their own work, and have seldom been consulted in regard to the same, or have been asked for suggestions and recommendations before various plans were carried out, as for example, concerning the above mentioned closed door policy, concerning the appointment of Visitors or Superintendents, the election of delegates to Syn. Conf. the opening and closing of institutions and schools, the drafting of missionary, educational, and financial policies; and

Whereas these rights and privileges of conference as they are commonly recognized within the Syn. Conf. are not accorded the Conferences in the Synodical Conference mission and result in dissatisfaction, lack of confidence and discouragement, with consequent harmful reactions and effects upon both the personnel and work of the field and

Whereas the proper and due consultation of workers in the mission fields particularly as conferences, result in more complete harmony and cooperation, in full confidence and satisfaction; and

Whereas the superintendents, elected without consultation or approval of the conferences or districts, do not accordingly represent the workers in the Mission; and

Whereas the Negro Congregations and schools annually contribute a sum of approximately \$30,000.00 and have no representation whatsoever.

Be it therefore resolved

That Synodical Conference be and is hereby petitioned to take the Negro Mission as to a matter under advisement and to authorize the general conference of the Negro Mission to elect one or more of its members to membership in the Missionary Board, to sit in plenary

sessions with the same rights and powers as are accorded other like representatives; further also to authorize each of the conferences to elect a delegate to Synodical Conference.²²

In 1934 another constitution, prepared by a committee consisting of three members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Executive Secretary, Louis Wisler, and Professors, J. H. C. Fritz and Theodore Graebner, was ready to be submitted to the district superintendents.²³ However, again problems developed.

The proposed constitution of the "Afro-American Lutheran Church", after further study and revision by a committee consisting of Pastors Walther, Wisler, and Wilson, was read and considered by the Board. A number of complicated problems and difficulties developed in the course of this discussion and therefore it was agreed that it would be impossible to present this constitution to the next convention of synodical conference. It was furthermore resolved that this matter be placed on the calendar for the next plenary meeting.

In view of the above Superintendent Kramer shall be advised not to present the present draft of said constitution to the Louisiana Conference at this time.²⁴

The Synodical Conference Mission Board continued to struggle with the problem of preparing a constitution for the "Afro-American Lutheran Church." The report given by the Synodical Conference Mission Board to the 1935 Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod Convention stated that such a constitution had been drafted and was in the process of being carefully considered by the board.²⁵ In April 1936 the Synodical Conference

²²Minutes of the 46th Session of Immanuel Conference Greensboro, N.C., June 1932. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

²³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 25-26, 1934, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

²⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 12, 1934, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

²⁵Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Regular Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio, as the Twenty-First Delegate Synod June 19-28, 1935 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), p. 159.

Mission Board discussed the most recent revision of the proposed constitution for an Afro-American Lutheran Conference. It had been given to the superintendents for their study and recommendations. It was resolved to again discuss the constitution at the next meeting ". . . in the hope that same may be submitted to the General Conference in the event that this conference meeting is held."²⁶

The procedure recommended here in 1936 was typical of what occurred throughout this process. Except for two exceptions, the members of the committees drawing up the constitution consisted solely of members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board. The one exception was the directive given to the field superintendents to draw up a constitution (October 1932), which they were apparently unable to do because of a lack of time. No further mention was made of this constitution. The other exception was the naming of Rev. Andrew Schulze to the committee appointed by President Ludwig Fuerbringer of the Synodical Conference in 1930. This committee also was unable to draft a constitution. The proposed constitutions submitted by the General Conference or workers in the field were apparently politely read and then filed.

The dilemma was not resolved in time for the 1936 Convention of the Synodical Conference. The same old problem remained. The black congregations were not self-supporting. One additional problem was recognized, the status of the two self-supporting congregations, St. Philip's in St. Louis and St. Philip's in Chicago. The Proceedings record:

²⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 15-16, 1936, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

The constitutional committees which have been elected by the Synodical Conference from time to time have not succeeded in preparing a workable constitution under which the mission-congregations might form an organization, chiefly because the parishes are still very heavily subsidized and, with comparatively few exceptions, will require financial assistance for years to come. The only questionable result, however, is that the two self-supporting churches are without definite and official synodical affiliation and admit only of the somewhat vague classification as Lutheran churches. The missionary Board will give the problem further study.²⁷

The uncertainty regarding the two self supporting congregations was in part caused by this same convention. A resolution was presented which would have resolved the problem. It called for the two independent congregations to seek membership with the geographic districts of the Missouri Synod in which they were located, which would have placed the St. Louis congregation in the Western district and the Chicago congregation in the Northern Illinois district. As the question was being discussed, the Missouri Synod President, John W. Behnken, said on the convention floor, "I need not remind you that I am from south of the Mason-Dixon line. Brethren, it will never do."²⁸ The result was predictable, the motion was called and rejected.²⁹

In 1937 the minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board reflected a sense of urgency in this matter of a constitution, because of an added threat. While an Interim Committee, which had been appointed by President Ludwig Fuerbringer after the 1936 Synodical Conference

²⁷Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Indianapolis, Indiana August 6-11, 1936, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1936), pp. 81-82.

²⁸Schulze, p. 42.

²⁹Schulze, pp. 42-44.

Convention, was still debating the matter of a constitution, the following observation was duly noted:

The necessity of taking some steps in this direction seems more important at this time because the U.L.C. by resolution proposes to create synods, etc. among the Colored. From advice received from various sources it appears that the U.L.C. and Catholic Churches are planning to put forth special efforts to gain the Negro.

It was resolved that the Interim Committee be encouraged to proceed energetically and speedily with the study of the problem of a constitution for the Negro mission stations, as authorized by Synodical Conference resolution.³⁰

Later that same year the Interim Committee had a proposed constitution ready for discussion. This was thoroughly evaluated by the Synodical Conference Mission Board and several improvements and corrections were suggested.³¹ In 1938 this Interim Committee presented to the Synodical Conference a proposed constitution for the organization of the black mission congregations.

An alternative suggestion for the organization of the black mission was presented at the 1938 Synodical Conference Convention. The Southern Indiana Pastoral Conference of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had sent a memorial to the 1938 Missouri Synod Convention, which suggested that the Synodical Conference black mission work be divided into a Northern and a Southern district, with each being given a considerable measure of freedom to administer its own affairs. The Synodical Conference Mission Board was to exercise general supervision. The Missouri Synod Convention resolved that this suggestion be forwarded

³⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 31-April 1, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

³¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, August 31-September 1, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

to the Synodical Conference for consideration.³² Little serious consideration was given to this suggestion. The convention resolved, ". . . that we decline to enter upon the suggestions here made because we feel that they are prejudicial to the best interests of our Negro Missions and would involve us in difficulties which are hard to solve."³³

The 1938 Proposed Constitution and Reactions to It

The proposed constitution was printed in the book of Reports and Memorials which was distributed to delegates prior to the opening of the convention. The relationship to the Synodical Conference Mission Board which was offered to the black Lutheran Churches requires close scrutiny.

Proposed Constitution for the Organization of the Negro Mission Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America

Article I. - Name

The name of the body organized under this constitution shall be: The (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church.

Article II. - Confession

The (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God and as the only rule and norm of faith and practice.
2. The acknowledged Lutheran Confessions, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, viz., the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin

³²Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Regular Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States Assembled at St. Louis, Mo. as the Twenty-Second Delegate Synod June 15-24, 1938, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 194-195.

³³Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Watertown, Wisconsin August 4-9, 1938, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 118.

Luther and, the Formula of Concord, as the true witness and declaration of the Word of God.

Article III. - Object

The object of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church shall be: The maintenance and extension of the kingdom of God among the Negroes in North America and abroad by means of the Gospel and the Sacraments, the furtherance of the sacred cause of Christian education in home, church, and school, the exercise of Christian discipline, the promotion of missionary interest among its members, the fostering of Christian fellowship, the achievement of financial independence on the part of the congregations, and whatever other objects are involved in the maintenance and extension of Christ's blessed Kingdom of Grace upon earth.

Article IV. - Membership

Membership may be acquired and held in the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church only by such congregations as

1. Accept without reservation the confessional basis as set forth in Article II;
2. Avoid unionism of every description;
3. Exercise Christian discipline;
4. Use only doctrinally sound religious literature in church, school, Sunday-school, and in other organizations existing in the congregation.
5. Have a constitution approved by the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church;
6. Have met requirements, to be decided upon in each case by the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church and the Missionary Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Article V. - Suffrage

Section 1. - Voting membership is restricted to congregations and their pastors.

Section 2. - The (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church adheres to the Biblical principles as laid down by the Scriptures in 1 Cor. 14:34-40 and 1 Tim. 2:11-13.

Section 3. - Votes may not be cast by proxy.

Section 4. - Advisory members are 1. assistant pastors; 2. pastors engaged in educational work only; 3. pastors serving congregations that have not affiliated with this body; 4. professors at the colleges and seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America; 5. male teachers in the parochial school.

Section 5. - Official representatives of the Missionary Board as well as the officials of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference, as also its superintendents, shall have the status of advisory members at all conventions.

Article VI. - Conventions

Section 1. - General conventions of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church shall be held when and if found necessary and desirable, subject to the consent of the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference; the expenses to be borne by the participants. Final decision as to time and place of the convention shall be left to the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Section 2. - At the General Convention each congregation or group of congregations served by one pastor (parish or circuit) shall be represented by one lay delegate and the pastor, each of whom shall have one vote.

Section 3. - One third of the voting pastors and lay delegates shall constitute a quorum.

Article VII. - Officers

Section 4. - The officers shall be: 1. a President; 2. as many Vice-Presidents as the By-Laws shall provide; 3. a Secretary; 4. a Treasurer; 5. such other officers as may be provided by the by-laws.

Section 2. - All officers must have qualified as voting members prior to their election. In addition, the President and the Vice-Presidents must be ministers of the Gospel.

Section 3. - The term of office shall extend from one convention to the next.

Article VIII. - Rights and Duties of Officers

Section 1. - Officers shall have delegated rights only. Officers may be removed in a Christian and lawful manner.

Section 2. - The President shall be the presiding officer at the convention, shall sign all official documents together with the Secretary, and shall perform such other duties as are expressly provided for in this constitution or as may be assigned to him.

Section 3. - The Vice-President shall execute the functions of the President in the event of the President's disability.

Section 4. - The Secretary shall record the proceedings, preserve the minutes, and sign all official documents together with the President. He shall also prepare the list of voting

congregations and publish it in the first afternoon session of each convention.

Section 5. - The Treasurer shall be the custodian of all moneys of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church (exclusive of subsidies, etc., by the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference); he shall keep an accurate record of all money received and expended; he shall administer the financial affairs in accordance with the instructions of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church; he shall submit his financial records for an audit when so ordered by that Church or the authorities of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Article IX. - Resolutions

Section 1. - Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God as interpreted in the Formula [sic] of Concord and taught by the body supporting this Church.

Section 2. - All other matters, including the election of officers, shall be decided by a majority vote.

Article X. - Relation to Its Members

In its relation to its members the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers. Hence with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Conference imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient to the congregation.

Article XI. - Relation to Other Church-Bodies

The (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church acknowledges

- a) the doctrinal position of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America;
- b) the right of the Synodical Conference to determine the relation which the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church shall hold to the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America or other church-bodies.

Article XII. - Relation to the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference

Section 1. - The (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church recognizes the administrative and executive authority of the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. It recognizes also the present status of the superintendents of the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Section 1. In cases of self-sustaining congregations the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church recognizes the cooperative interest of the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference in all matters pertaining to the calling of pastors and teachers, in the exercise of church discipline, the erection of new church- or school- buildings, etc. While the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference should in no case employ arbitrary measures, neither should any self-sustaining congregation plan and conduct the Lord's work without the advice and cooperation of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America as represented by its Missionary Board.

Article XIII. - Districts or Circuits

Section 1. - The (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church shall be privileged to divide into districts or circuits.

Section 2. - The number and geographical boundaries of the districts or circuits of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church shall be determined by the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church in conjunction with the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Section 3. - Each district or circuit shall organize a conference for its pastors and teachers and shall submit its conference minutes both to the General Convention of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church and to the Missionary Board of the Lutheran Synodical Conference.

The General Convention minutes shall be submitted to the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Article XIV. - Amendments

Section 1. - Changes in, or amendments to, this constitution may be made provided they do not affect Articles II, IV, V, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV.

Section 2. - Changes in, or amendments to, this constitution must have the approval of at least one district and of the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference prior to their submission in writing to a constitutionally authorized convention of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church.

Section 3. - When each proposed change or amendment has been received the vote by ballot of at least two thirds of the voting members present at a General Convention, such change or amendment shall be submitted by the President to the congregations of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church. Such change or amendment shall become effective immediately upon its adoption by at least a majority of the voting congregations and the approval of the Missionary Board of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Article XV. - Adoption of the Constitution

The ratification of a Constitutional Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and two thirds of the congregations of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church shall be sufficient for the establishment of this constitution.

BY-LAWS

I. Regulations for Convention

Section 1. - Credentials of lay delegates must be signed by the pastor and the secretary of the congregations represented by them

Section 2. - The General Convention shall be opened with a mission service.

Section 3. - The morning sessions shall be devoted mainly to the discussion of doctrinal or practical papers. The afternoon sessions shall be devoted to missionary, educational, and financial matters.

Section 4. - Two special services shall be held. In one service a pastoral sermon and in the other service a sermon on Christian education shall be preached. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated in one of the services.

Section 5. - All congregations sending delegates shall contribute a specified amount to the entertaining congregation(s), as well as defray the expenses of their own delegates.

Section 6. - An abstract of the minutes of the convention shall be published in Missionary Lutheran.

II. Amendments

Changes in, or amendments to, these by-laws may be made provided each change or amendment receives two thirds of the votes by ballot of the voting members present at a constitutionally called convention and the approval of the Missionary Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Addendum. - With reference to Art. XI,b) the Committee offers the following for adoption: Resolved, That the relation of the (Negro-) Afro-American Lutheran Church to the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference shall remain what it has now been for so many years, viz., that of a mission organization cooperating with the Synodical Conference in such a way as to further the preaching of the Gospel. It shall endeavor at all times and in every way to avoid all issues which might militate against this high purpose. To this end it shall also avoid the so-called race issue, being mindful of the fact that, after all, this issue is a temporal matter and must not be

permitted to interfere with the high Christian purpose of saving immortal souls.³⁴

It requires little more than a superficial reading of this proposed constitution to perceive a variety of serious flaws. If those who drafted the document, or later adopted it, seriously expected the constitution to be acceptable to the black congregations, it is a vivid demonstration of the extent to which they were out of touch with the mood and thinking of the workers and laity in the Synodical Conference mission field. We can well imagine the hue and cry that would have gone up if this kind of a constitution had been foisted on one of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.

The proposed constitution in essence left virtually all power in the hands of the Synodical Conference Mission Board. In Article IV, point six, membership requirements were decided in each case both by the proposed church and the Missionary Board. In Article V, section five, representatives of the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the superintendents were advisory members at all conventions. Article VI, section one, states that conventions could only be held with the consent of the Missionary Board, which also had the final decision regarding time and place. Article XI indicated that the Synodical Conference alone would determine the relationship between this new body and the Synodical Conference. There was no indication that the new body would have any vote or representation in the Synodical Conference itself or on the Synodical Conference Mission Board. According to Article XII the

³⁴Reports and Memorials for the Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Watertown, Wisconsin August 4-9, 1938, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 55-60.

Missionary Board retained complete control over the congregations. There was no change in the authority of the superintendents. The self-supporting congregations were also required to seek the advice and cooperation of the Missionary Board even in the matter of calling a pastor. Article XIII stipulated that the Synodical Conference Mission Board must give its consent to the divisions of the new body into districts and circuits. As Article XIV dealt with the procedure for making amendments, all articles affecting the power of the Missionary Board were unalterable, and the board in fact had double power. Before an amendment could be considered, it had to have the approval of the Synodical Conference Mission Board. Then after it was ratified, it did not go into effect until approved by the same board. Approval of the Synodical Conference Mission Board was also necessary to amend the by-laws. The crowning touch came in the Addendum, which in effect said, we will give you a constitution but nothing has changed. We will even decide what issues you can debate, and it will not be the "so-called" race issue.

The floor committee charged with the matter of "Colored and African Missions" recommended that the proposed constitution be submitted to the General Conference and if it was adopted by them the whole matter should be submitted once more to the Synodical Conference for ratification prior to organizing the new church body.³⁵

³⁵Proceedings, 1938, p. 118. (The Proceedings themselves do not indicate if the resolution was adopted or failed. The resolution ends on the very bottom of the page 118, and the treasurer's report begins on the following page. That it was adopted can be concluded on the basis of other sources, such as the Minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, March 27-28, 1940.

When the proposed constitution was submitted to the General Conference, the result was predictable. Article XI was particularly offensive.³⁶ In response they passed the following resolution which was to be sent to the Synodical Conference Mission Board of the Synodical Conference, with the plea that this be conveyed to the Synodical Conference.

WHEREAS our Negro churches andmissions [sic] everywhere stand isolated from any contact with orthodox Lutheranism despite the fact that in many instances they are literally surrounded by Synodical Conference churches, and

WHEREAS self-support under the present status adds to the isolation of our congregations, taking from them the only tie that unites them in any manner with the Synodical Conference, namely that of the Mission Board,

WHEREAS there is a very specific need for some form of organic union with Synodical Conference in the interest of the further development of our Lutheran Church among the Negroes of the United States of North America,

BECAUSE

(a) Our Christians feel that such union is a self-evident result of unity of faith, and

(b) Because it is a necessary [sic] expression of such faith, and

(c) Because the confidence of our constituency cannot be held indefinitely without it, and

(d) Because the Negro, meeting with injustice, isolation, and ostracism on all sides in every step of lofe [sic], looks to the Church for better things, and this thought is in the minds of the inteelligent [sic] Negroes and very often expressed by them when engaged in conversation - "How does the Lutheran Church recognize Negro Luterahns [sic]?" "Will Negro churches be represented when they become self-supporting?" - While these questions are asked by our own members very often, eyt [sic] those on the outside want a proper answer to this question before they are ready to lend their ear to what Lutherans teach. And if the first question is not answered to their satisfaction, the missionary finds a wall separating him from the confidence of the person in question., and

(e) Because, by the grace of God, our pastors and missionaries are finding ever greater opportunities among intelligent and thinking Negroes,

³⁶Dickinson, pp. 106-107.

AND WHEREAS we have the examples of the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopalian Church, and others that have refused to isolate their Negro Church, which examples are held before our people and our missionaries, and

WHEREAS our Lutheran Church has expressed its desire time and again to effect union through unity of faith, and our Negro churches and missions are already one in faith with the Synodical Conference and its constituent synods,

WE, THEREFORE, HUMBLY PETITION OUR MISSION BOARD to make these facts known to Synodical Conference, to the end that that august body make arrangements whereby our churches and missions, either as a body or as individual congregations, or both, be given opportunity for organic affiliation either with Synodical Conference or with individual synods or districts of synods.³⁷

In September 1938 the Rev. Marmaduke Carter³⁸ attended the meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board and presented the response of the General Conference to this proposed constitution. After hearing Pastor Carter's report the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved:

That the relation of the (Negro-) Afro- American Lutheran Church to the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference shall remain what it has now been for so many years, viz., that of a mission organization cooperating with the Synodical Conference in such a way as to further the preaching of the Gospel.

Resolved, moreover that a special committee be authorized to make a thorough study of this matter and present its recommendations to the Board.

The following were elected to serve on this committee: Pastors Kleinhans, Kurth, and Mr. Lottmann.³⁹

³⁷Resolutions from General Conference August 25-28, 1938, Andrew Schulze papers, Box 5a, CHI.

³⁸Marmaduke Nathanael Carter received some training at the Ohio Synod institution, Capital University, and then studied theology privately. He was ordained in 1917 and served in Alabama until 1921. Between 1921 and 1924 he gave lectures in various locations on behalf of the Synodical Conference mission work. In 1924 he became the pastor of St. Philip's, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 7-8, 1938, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

In essence, after hearing Pastor Carter, the Synodical Conference Mission Board recommended no change. Typically, the members of the committee that was appointed were all members of the board. After considering the objections of the General Conference and re-studying the proposed constitution, the committee concluded it was a good constitution. Pastor John Kleinhans⁴⁰ presented the findings of the committee in March of 1940, repeating first the reaction of the General Conference and then stating the committee's opinion.

Briefly stated the reaction of the brethren is this: Article XI of the proposed constitution "sets forth a proposed relation between the Synodical Conference and the proposed church body unacceptable to us."

"There is a very specific need for some form of organic union with Synodical Conference in the interest of the further development of our Lutheran Church among the Negroes of the United States of North America."

The reasons advanced for such an organic union are the "unity of faith" and the considerations of the Negroes as a race.

Naturally, the Negro Christians are members of that Organism the Holy Church and the true visible Church. We hold that, an organic union is not "a self-evident result of unity of faith." Unity of faith does not entitle a believer to all rights and privileges of church organizations automatically. There may be other factors determining the advisability or expediency of organic union, and why must it be said that "the confidence of our constituency cannot be held indefinitely without it?"

We find nothing in the proposed constitution that could be construed as being prejudicial or discriminating because of the difference of nationality or race.

After careful consideration we believe that the proposed constitution does provide for a just and equitable plan for the organization of the Negro Mission congregations.

⁴⁰John Gottlieb Friedrich Kleinhans (1871-1942) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1892. From 1912 through 1933 he served as president of the Southern Illinois District of the Missouri Synod.

The report was unanimously adopted.⁴¹

Continued Pressure

The Synodical Conference Mission Board was satisfied with what was offered and was not prepared to offer anything else. This March 1940 resolution was presented to the 1940 convention of the Synodical Conference. The convention also was satisfied with the offer made in 1938 and endorsed the action of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, and instructed it to take the matter up with the General Conference.⁴² The workers in the black mission field, however, clearly were not satisfied and were prepared to act on their own.

The members of the general conference were sure that a Black synod was the only acceptable solution to their dilemma. They continued with the proposal, with or without support or acceptance of the Synodical Conference, and set up the machinery to secure a name for the new church body that would be acceptable to the majority of the constituency.⁴³

In November 1942 the Synodical Conference Mission Board discussed excerpts from several parish papers which were advocated that the self-supporting black congregations organize a separate synod.⁴⁴ In July 1943 one portion of a report from the meeting of the Luther conference in New Orleans concerned the proposed formation of a separate organization.

⁴¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 27-28, 1940, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 1.

⁴²Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Chicago, Illinois August 1-6, 1940, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House Print, 1940), p. 66.

⁴³Dickinson, p. 108.

⁴⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 10, 1942, CHI, III.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

In answer to Rev. Schulze's agitation in behalf of a Negro Synod or organization, for the purpose of closer contact with Synodical Conference, the Luther Conference adopted the following resolution:

"We advise the self-supporting congregations to seek advice of the Synodical Conference officials in the formation of this contemplated body."⁴⁵

The Mission Board became aware that the issue was not going to go away, and attempted to deal with the movement of the self-supporting congregations which intended to form their own synod. Toward the end of 1943, conversations were held with Dr. Andrew Schulze, who was pastor of St. Philip's in St. Louis, one of the self-supporting congregations, and a strong advocate of the formation of a black Synod.

Dr. Mueller reported having had a fraternal discussion with Rev. Andrew Schulze, St. Louis, relative to matters pertaining to the "race question." Considerable time was devoted to the discussion of this trouble-some problem in its various relations.

It was resolved that Pastors Wilson and Wittmer meet with Rev. Schulze for a frank discussion of his grievances against the Board in particular and his purposes relative to the organization of a Negro church-body.⁴⁶

Pastors Wittmer and Wilson reported on their meeting with Rev. Schulze. Two points were particularly discussed; The organization of the Negro Mission, and the Board's attitude towards the "race question."

In a letter to this Special Committee after this meeting, Rev. Schulze stated: "It is my opinion that our conversation of yesterday was productive of some good. To cut off discussion at this point would be bad. I sincerely hope that it will be possible to discuss in sufficient detail the two different attitudes which are referred to above and were pointed out in our conversation."⁴⁷

⁴⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, July 13, 1943, CHI, III.OR, Supplement I, Box 4.

⁴⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 9, 1943, CHI, III.OR, Supplement I, Box 4.

⁴⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, December 14, 1943, CHI, III.OR, Supplement I, Box 4.

Achieving the Solution

In 1941, as the Fiscal Conference of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod discussed its share of the proposed 1942 Synodical Conference budget, some expressed the opinion that the appropriations requested for the work of the North American Negro mission appeared excessive. It was resolved to adopt their share of the budget for 1942, but that any further request had to be preceded by a thorough review of the whole Synodical Conference mission. The Missouri Synod Board of Directors and its mission committee was authorized to conduct this survey. In 1942 the report was made to the Missouri Synod Fiscal Conference that no better procedure could be found for establishing the Synodical Conference budget than the one currently being used. It was also recommended that the executive staff of the Synodical Conference be requested to authorize a thorough review of the entire work of black missions with the aim of effecting economies and improving the way the mission operated. In accord with this request, the president of the Synodical Conference, Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer appointed a committee of three men, none of whom was affiliated with the Synodical Conference Mission Board. The members of the committee were Rev. E. Benjamin Schlueter, the vice-president of the Synodical Conference, who was from the Wisconsin Synod, and two men from the Missouri Synod, Rev. William Lochner, who was Secretary of the South Wisconsin District, and Rev. Frank C. Streufert, who was the Missouri Synod Secretary of Missions.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Reports and Memorials for the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio, August 1-4, 1944, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p.30.

The Report of the Survey Committee

The committee studied every phase of the Synodical Conference mission work, and wrote a comprehensive report, suggesting a thorough reorganization of the black Missions. It is important to note that representatives from the black mission field were incorporated into this plan of reorganization.

The General Board

Membership

Be it suggested

that a General Board of nine men be elected instead of a Missionary Board of twelve men; and

that Article 8, Section 1, re Board of Trustees of the new Constitution of the Synodical Conference proposed at the Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference held in 1940, cf. Proceedings, 1940, page 76, be changed to read:

"The Synodical Conference of North America shall at its regular meetings elect a General Board of nine (9) members, six (6) pastors and three (3) laymen. The constituent synods shall be represented in this General Board as follows: four (4) members from the Missouri Synod, two (2) members from the Wisconsin Synod, and one (1) each from the Slovak and from the Norwegian Synods, and one (1) from the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church if it is received into the membership of the Synodical Conference. The term of office of these members shall be four years and classified that the term of five (5) members expire at one time and the term of four (4) members expire two years later. Vacancies of said General Board shall be filled by the Board until the next meeting of the Synodical Conference of North America."

(We suggest the election of a General Board. A change in name is deemed necessary because the proposed functions of the proposed General Board are different from the functions of the present Missionary Board.

We suggest that the present Plenary Board be abolished. The work of Negro Missions and African Missions is of such importance that all synods constituting the Synodical Conference ought not only be represented on a Plenary Board which meets only two or three times each year, but all synods ought to be duly represented at every meeting. Members of the Plenary Board were always welcome at the meeting of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of

the Missionary Board was for many years composed of members of the Missouri Synod only. Now a layman of the Wisconsin Synod is also a member of the Executive Committee. In the Plenary Board all synods were represented.)

Be it suggested

to consider the election of some of the former members of the Missionary Board to the membership of the General Board.

It shall be understood

that definite rules and regulations be drawn up defining the duties of the General Board.

(Nowhere do we find Rules and Regulations defining the duties of the Missionary Board. The conduct of missions, the supervision of the missionaries, of the schools of higher learning, were given over to the care of the Missionary Board without definite rules and regulations to guide them, the mission stations or the colleges and seminaries.)

Creation of Regional Mission Districts

Regional Mission Districts

Be it suggested

that our Negro Mission field be divided into Regional Mission Districts (i.e., the Northern, the Eastern, the Southeastern, the Southern, the Alabama, the Louisiana, the Midwestern field, etc.);

that the Synodical Conference determine the number and the geographical lines of the Regional Mission Districts;

Regional Mission Committee

that a Regional Mission committee be elected for each Regional Mission District;

that the Regional Mission Committee consist of three (3) men from the Negro Missions of the District - one white and one Negro pastor and one layman;

that each Regional Mission District nominate its own Regional Mission Committee and present the names of the candidates nominated to the Synodical Conference for approval;

It shall be understood

that additional names of candidates may be added on the floor of the Convention of the Synodical Conference to the slates presented by the respective Regional Mission Districts;

that elections of the Regional Mission Committees be held according to Rules and Regulations governing elections of the Synodical Conference;

that the Regional Mission Committees be responsible to the General Board;

Duties of Regional Mission Committee

that the Regional Mission committee in consultation with the General Board have the power to call missionaries, teachers, and assistants for mission stations and fix the missionary workers' salaries, give instructions, exercise the right of visitation; and

that the Regional Mission Committee guide, direct, and supervise all Negro Missions of the respective District, encourage pastors and congregations to greater zeal and closer co-operation, study mission opportunities within the Regional Mission District;

Budget. Subsidy Requests. Vouchers. Salaries

that the Regional Mission committee study the financial requirements of the Regional Mission District, prepare the annual budget, and submit the annual subsidy request to the General Board as per subsidy-request blanks furnished by the General Board;

that the chairman of the respective Regional Mission committee prepare monthly vouchers for the payment of salaries and of expenses of the workers in his District, sign and submit the voucher in duplicate copy to the Secretary of the General Board. The Secretary is to countersign said vouchers and forward the original copy of the voucher to the treasurer for payment and retain the other copy for his own files;

that a member of each of the Regional Mission Committees attend the annual meeting of the General Board in order to report in person on the missions of the respective Regional District Mission, on the progress made, on the possible mission expansion, on budget needs, on problems confronting the Regional District Mission, and offer suggestions to the best interest of Negro Missions;

Visitor

that the chairman of the Regional Mission Committee be considered "Visitor" of the respective Mission District, with such duties as are usually placed upon a synodical Visitor;

Committee on Appeals

that the Regional Mission committee appoint a Committee on Appeals whenever this becomes necessary;

that the Appeals Committee of the Synodical Conference be considered the highest Board of Appeals, whose verdict shall be considered final.⁴⁹

In specifying the responsibilities for the General Board, the Survey Committee suggested that the General Board was to deal only with the Regional Mission Committees rather than directly with the congregations or pastors. This procedure was to be followed lest two sets of directives cause confusion.⁵⁰

The 1944 Constitution Proposal

Pertaining to the matter of an organization for the black mission congregations, the Survey Committee reviewed the whole question, taking note of the desire on the part of the black congregations both for a synodical organization and affiliation with the Synodical Conference. It was observed that this desire had increased over the years and was now stronger than ever. Therefore the Survey Committee recommended that a constitution committee be formed which would draft a constitution that was acceptable both to the black churches and to the Synodical Conference. This constitution committee was to consist of five members, one from the Synodical Conference Mission, one from the Synodical Conference Mission Board, and three at large members from the Synodical Conference.⁵¹ It was noteworthy that, in contrast to past constitutional committees, the membership of this new constitutional committee was not taken from the Synodical Conference Mission Board.

⁴⁹Reports and Memorials, 1944, pp. 35-37.

⁵⁰Reports and Memorials, 1944, p. 37.

⁵¹Reports and Memorials, 1944, pp. 38-39.

The members appointed to the Committee on Constitution were Rev. Frank C. Streufert, the chairman, who was also on the Survey Committee, Rev. Edwin Wilson, from the Synodical Conference Synodical Conference Mission Board, Rev. Marmaduke Carter, a pastor of a black congregation, Rev. Arthur P. Voss from the Wisconsin Synod, and Rev. Bernard H. Hemmeter⁵² from the Missouri Synod.⁵³ The constitution proposed by this committee was presented to the 1944 convention of the Synodical Conference.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION
for the Organization of the Negro Congregations of the
Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America

Article I - Name

The name of the body organized under this constitution shall be: THE IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
(Name may be chosen).

Article II - Doctrinal Basis

The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts without reservation the canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the verbally inspired Word of God and the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church constituting the Book of Concord of 1580 as its confession of faith, viz., the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and the Formula of Concord.

Article III - Purpose

The purpose of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be: the maintenance and extension of the kingdom of God primarily among the Negroes in North American and abroad by means of the Gospel and the Sacraments; the preservation of the unity of faith; the furtherance of the sacred cause of Christian education in home, church, and school; the exercise of Christian discipline; the promotion of missionary interest among its members; the fostering

⁵²Bernard H. Hemmeter graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1917.

⁵³Reports and Memorials, 1944, p. 23.

of Christian fellowship; the achievement of financial independence on the part of the congregations; and whatever other objects are involved in the maintenance and extension of Christ's blessed Kingdom of Grace upon earth.

Article IV - Membership

Section 1. - Membership may be acquired and held in the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church by such congregations only as have accepted without reservation the doctrinal basis mentioned in Article II and uphold the same in practice and accordingly avoid unionism, exercise Christian discipline, use only doctrinally sound religious literature in church, school, Sunday school, and in other organizations, and have a constitution approved by the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Section 2. - Voting membership shall be restricted to congregations and their pastors. Votes cannot be cast by proxy.

Section 3. - The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church adheres to the Biblical principles as laid down by the Scriptures in 1 Cor. 14:34-40 and 1 Tim. 2:11-13.

Section 4. - Advisory members are: 1. assistant pastors; 2. pastors engaged in educational work only; 3. pastors serving congregations that have not affiliated with this body; 4. professors at the colleges and the seminary; 5. male teachers in the parochial school; 6. official representatives of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

Article V - Conventions

Section 1. - Conventions shall be held as stipulated by the By-Laws.

Section 2. - Each congregation or group of congregations served by one pastor shall be represented at the convention of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church by one lay delegate and the pastor, each of whom shall have one vote. Two thirds of the voting pastors and lay delegates shall constitute a quorum.

Article VI - Officers

Section 1. - The officers shall be: 1. a president; 2. at least one vice-president or as many as the By-Laws shall provide; 3. a secretary; 4. a treasurer; 5. such other officers as may be provided by the By-Laws.

Section 2. - All officers must be members of a member congregation of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church. The

president and the vice-presidents and the secretary shall be elected from among the clergy.

Section 3. - The officers shall be elected by ballot at each regular convention and shall serve until their successors shall have been elected and shall have qualified.

Article VII - The Rights and Duties of Officers

The officers shall have delegated rights only. Officers may be removed in a Christian and lawful manner.

Section 1. - The president shall be the presiding officer at the convention, shall sign all official documents together with the secretary, and shall perform such other duties as are expressly provided for in this Constitution or as may be assigned to him.

Section 2. - The vice-president shall execute the functions of the president in the event of the president's disability.

Section 3. - The secretary shall record the proceedings, preserve the minutes, and sign all official documents together with the president. He shall also prepare the list of voting congregations and publish it in the first afternoon session of each convention.

Section 4. - The treasurer shall be the custodian of all moneys of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church; he shall keep an accurate record of all money received and expended; he shall administer the financial affairs in accordance with the instructions of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church and shall be placed under bond; he shall submit his financial records for an audit whenever the given authorities request it. The subsidies (including salaries) shall be paid directly to the congregations and mission stations by the treasurer of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America upon the presentation of vouchers duly executed by the chairman of the regional mission committees and signed by the secretary of the General Board.

Section 5. - In the event of vacancies the remaining officers shall in conjunction with the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America be empowered to fill them.

Section 6. Resolutions: Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God as interpreted in the Book of Concord and taught by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

All other matters including the election of officers shall be decided in Christian love by majority vote.

Article VIII - Relation to Its Members

In its relation to its members the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church shall not exercise legislative or coercive powers. Hence with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is to be but an advisory body. Nevertheless, all resolutions of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church pertaining to its welfare shall receive conscientious consideration by the congregations. All congregations as the church at large are bound by the Word of God in all matters of Christian doctrine and practice.

Article IX - Relation to Synodical Conference and Constituent Synods

Section 1. - The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church acknowledges the doctrinal position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and its constituent synods.

Section 2. - The relation of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church to the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America shall be that of the constituent synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, with the same rights and privileges of representation at the conventions of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, and representation in the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

Article X - Regional Mission Districts

Section 1. - The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be divided into Regional Mission Districts, viz.: 1. Alabama; 2. Louisiana; 3. Northern; 4. Southeastern; 5. Western Districts.

Section 2. - The number and geographical boundaries of the Regional Mission Districts of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be determined by the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in conjunction with the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

Section 3. - Each Regional Mission District shall organize a conference for its pastors and teachers and shall submit its conference minutes and essays both to the General Convention of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church and to the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

Section 4. - Each Regional Mission District shall nominate a Regional Mission Committee of three (3) men, one white worker in our Negro Missions, one Negro pastor, and one Negro layman.

Section 5. - Each Regional Mission District shall present the names of the men nominated for the Regional Mission Committee to the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America for

approval. (Additional names may be added on the floor of the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.) Upon approval of the nominations by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America the election of the Regional Mission Committee will be held by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in accordance with the rules and regulations governing elections of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

Article XI - Duties of the Regional Mission Committees

Section 1 - The Regional Mission Committee in consultation with the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America shall have the power to call missionaries, teachers, and assistants for mission stations, and shall fix the missionaries' salaries in conjunction with the mission stations and exercise the right of visitation.

Section 2. - The Regional Mission Committee shall guide and supervise all Negro missions of the respective district and Christian day schools in these missions, encourage pastors and congregations to greater zeal and closer co-operation, study mission opportunities within the Regional Mission District.

Section 3. - The Regional Mission committee shall study the financial requirements of the Regional Mission District, prepare the annual budget, and submit the annual subsidy request to the secretary of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America on request blanks furnished by this General Board.

Section 4. - The Regional Mission committee shall be responsible to the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Conference of North America and submit copies of minutes of all meetings held by them, together with copies of annual reports of the individual workers; Report blanks to be furnished by the General Board.

Section 5. - The chairman of the respective Regional Mission Committee shall prepare monthly vouchers in duplicate copy for the payment of subsidies to the congregations in his district. He shall sign and submit them in duplicate copy to the secretary of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. The secretary will countersign said vouchers and forward the original copy of the voucher to the treasurer of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America for payment, and retain the other copy for his files.

Section 6. - A member of each of the Regional Mission Committees, together with the president of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church and the presidents of the educational schools, shall attend the annual meeting of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in order to report in

person on the missions of the respective Regional District, on the progress made, on possible mission expansion, on education, on budget needs, on problems confronting the district, and offer suggestions to the best interests of Negro Missions.

Section 7. - The chairman of the Regional Mission Committee shall be considered "Visitor" of the respective Mission District, with such duties as are usually placed upon a synodical Visitor.

Section 8. - The Regional Mission committee shall appoint a Committee on Appeals whenever this becomes necessary. The verdict of the Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America shall be considered final.

Article XII - Amendments

Section 1. - Changes in, or amendments to, this Constitution must be in conformity with Article II and have the approval of at least one Regional Mission district and of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America prior to their submission, in writing, to a constitutionally authorized convention of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

Section 2. - When each proposed change or amendment has received the vote, by ballot, of at least two thirds of the voting members present at a general convention, such change or amendment shall be submitted by the president to the congregations of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church. Such change or amendment shall become effective immediately upon its adoption by at least a majority of the voting congregations.

Article XIII - Adoption of the Constitution

The ratification of a constitutional convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and two thirds of the congregations of the Negro Missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America shall be sufficient for the establishment of this Constitution.

BY-LAWS

I. Regulations for Convention

Section 1. - Convention shall under normal conditions be held biennially. Time and place shall be determined by the officers of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church and the General Board. Special meetings may be called by the officers with the approval of the General Board. Expenses of the convention are to be borne by the congregations of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Section 2. - Credentials of lay delegates must be signed by the pastor and the secretary of the congregations represented by them.

Section 3. - The general convention shall be opened with a divine service with a pastoral sermon.

Section 4. - The morning sessions shall be devoted mainly to the discussion of doctrinal or practical papers. The afternoon sessions shall be devoted to missionary, educational, and financial matters.

Section 5. - Two special services shall be held. In one service a mission sermon and in the other service a sermon on Christian education shall be preached. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated in one of the services.

II. Amendments

Changes in, or amendments to, these By-Laws may be made provided each change or amendment receives two thirds of the votes, by ballot, of the voting members present at a constitutionally called convention and the approval of the General Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.⁵⁴

In comparing this constitution with the one offered to the black mission congregations in 1938, there is much that is similar. The most serious objections had been removed and considerable improvement can be seen. The major improvement is in the fact that the 1944 proposal gave the black synod full membership in the Synodical Conference, with voice and vote and representation on the Synodical Conference Mission Board, now called the General Board. The proposed synod had significantly more autonomy under the 1944 constitution and the General Board did not retain the same level of control over the mission congregations that had been held by the old Synodical Conference Mission Board and superintendents. The actual supervision was in the hands of a three man Regional Mission Board made up of workers in the district, two of the members were to be blacks. It is possible that if this constitution had been offered in 1938, it would have been accepted by the black churches.

⁵⁴Reports and Memorials, 1944, pp. 23-28.

At the same time this new synod was clearly being treated differently than the other constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. The new synod is clearly not autonomous. Article VII, section 5, states that when a vacancy occurs in an office in the new Synod, the remaining officers must act in conjunction with the General Board in naming a replacement. Any suggested change in the By-Laws still required prior approval by the General Board before it could be submitted to a convention for a vote.

The major flaw occurred in Article X, which concerned the election of the members of the Regional Mission Committee. This Regional Mission Committee was the real power, having control of calling personnel into the various mission stations, setting budgets, and fixing the salaries of the missionaries. While each Regional Mission District could nominate the men to be its officers, nominations could also be made for these districts at the Synodical Conference Convention. The actual voting was done by the full Synodical Conference Convention. There was no guarantee that any of those nominated by the Regional Mission District would be elected. In addition the proposed constitution did not specify how the chairman of each Regional Mission District would be chosen. However, the implication was that the chairman would also be elected at the convention from among those which had been elected to serve on the committee of that region. This meant that the Regional Mission District could be stuck with a chairman, who also functioned as visitor, that they did not want. Even under this new constitution there was still a significant level of control exerted by the General Board through its Regional Mission Committee, which might or might not consist of the individuals desired by that Regional Mission District.

At the convention itself, the Survey Committee recommended the reorganization of the Synodical Conference Mission in the matter of a formation of a General Board and in the formation of Regional Mission Districts, but gave no recommendation concerning the adoption of the new constitution and formation of a synod of the black mission congregations.⁵⁵ The convention adopted resolutions authorizing the formation of the General Board and the Regional Mission Districts which were supervised by a Regional Mission Committee. It also adopted a resolution to defer action on the proposed constitution for a synod of the black Mission congregations.⁵⁶

A Changing Point of View in the Black Churches

The reason action on the proposed constitution for the black mission congregations was deferred by the 1944 Synodical Conference Convention was because of "recent developments."⁵⁷ What these recent developments were was an uncertainty among the Synodical Conference mission workers and congregations pertaining to the course to be sought. Two points of view were represented. Some wanted the black congregations to be integrated into the geographic districts of the constitutive synods of the Synodical Conference in which they were located. Others favored the formation of a black Synod which would be affiliated with the Synodical Conference.

⁵⁵Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio, August 1-4, 1944, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 81.

⁵⁶Proceedings, 1944, p. 85.

⁵⁷Proceedings, 1944, p. 85.

After the proposed revisions and constitution had been accepted by the Synodical Conference Mission Board in April 1944, they were presented to the next meeting of the General Conference, which was held in June 1944. The report given to the Synodical Conference Mission Board illustrated the lack of unanimity within the General Conference at that time.

Pastors Wittmer and Wilson submitted a lengthy report on the meeting of the General Conference of the Negro Mission, which was held in Philadelphia June 7 to 11. -- The Conference rejected the plan of reorganization as presented by the Survey Committee, the Missionary Board, and thereby also rejected the constitution presented by the Constitution Committee, and resolved to adopt the recommendation of the Negro Executive Committee that the self-sustaining congregations organize into a separate body. -- The discussion in committees and on the floor of the convention revealed a determined opposition to the organization of a Negro body along racial lines. -- Integration with white congregations is "not only an ideal but a goal." -- A very powerful group in the Negro Mission insists that the missionary Board be abolished entirely and the Negro Mission have complete control of its own funds. -- Serious accusations were also made publicly against the Missionary Board.

A lengthy discussion followed in which the various difficulties and problems, also charges and accusations, were given due consideration.⁵⁸

From the report of this June 1944 meeting of the General Conference, a lack of consensus was apparent. Two different courses of action were proposed and seemingly endorsed, which were essentially incompatible. On the one hand, the General Conference adopted the recommendation of the black Executive Committee that the self-supporting congregations organize into a separate body. On the other hand, it was stated that a determined opposition was revealed to any kind of synod formed along racial lines. The one element common to all was a strong desire to be free from the control of the Synodical Conference Mission

⁵⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 13, 1944, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

Board. Following the 1944 convention of the Synodical Conference, this difference of opinion was still strongly present in the General Conference. When it met in September 1944, some wanted to form their own organization, while others favored the concept of integration into existing synods.⁵⁹ From a letter sent out by Rev. Andrew Schulze, the chairman of the General Conference, to all of the members of the General Conference following that September 1944 meeting, it appeared that a plan had been formulated which called for the self-supporting congregations to organize temporarily into their own synod and then seek membership in the existing constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. In the beginning of the letter the impression was given that all were in essential agreement on this general plan. Further along in the letter it became apparent that all were not, with those particularly in the south not quite as enthusiastic about integration into existing synods or districts of synods.

As you will recall, a small minority of delegates voted against the proposed organization, and several did not vote. Some of these favored no organization at this time, but that the individual congregation seek membership in a synodical District in which it is to be found. The chief reason set forth against this plan was this, that a large percentage of general conference congregations are so located, geographically, that membership in an already existing District would be all but impossible because of sentiment still prevailing within such geographical Districts.⁶⁰

A difference in the make-up and thinking between congregations in the North and South was already apparent in 1938. The congregations in Alabama were predominantly rural and lived in a different racial climate. This difference is apparent in a description given by Rev. William

⁵⁹General Council, minutes, September, 1944, CHI, Schulze Papers, Box 5a.

⁶⁰Dickinson, pp. 109-110.

Gehrke, the superintendent of the Immanuel Conference. In his description of the members of the black congregations in the Immanuel Conference, which included virtually all of the congregations outside of the Deep South, he stated:

The Church began preaching the Gospel to those poor in this world's goods; but it did not gain the marginal people. On the whole, the membership is composed of the middle class. This fact requires a careful rethinking of the entire work. Since Negroes are holding the balance of power in a number of Northern States, the political world has adopted civil-rights legislation, guaranteeing equal opportunities to its dark-skinned voters. The Synodical Conference eventually resolved to offer its Negro churches a constitution under which they might form an organization. Ten years ago such a gesture would have been hailed with unmixed pleasure. Now, however, there will be such questions as, Will the constitution more closely knit the relationship with the Synodical Conference? Will the Synodical Conference share its common property?⁶¹

When it came to the matter of integration, the pastors and congregations in the Deep South were not sure they would be welcomed by the white churches. There were, in fact, in some regions almost as many black churches as white churches.

Another element which contributed to this diversity was perhaps due to a development in the thinking of the workers in the black mission, a development that would occur at different rates and at different times in various individuals. There is a clear difference in the position of Rev. Clemonce Sabourin in 1943, when he reported to the August meeting of the Immanuel Conference concerning the progress of the congregation he was serving, to his position in 1945 as he presented a paper to that same conference. In 1943, he stated that "the congregation plans to declare

⁶¹Proceedings, 1938, p. 105.

itself self-supporting by the time Synod is formed; . . . ,"⁶² which was planned for June 1944.⁶³ In 1945, Pastor Sabourin stated in his paper, "the establishment of a separate Negro Lutheran Church will not and cannot on the basis of the trends of this new world order succeed."⁶⁴

1946 Resolution

Since only a portion of the proposal of the Survey Committee, that involving the reorganization of the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the formation of Regional Mission Committees, had been adopted by the 1944 Synodical Conference Convention, the Survey Committee continued to function in an attempt to resolve the issue of how the black mission congregations were to be organized. In order to help accomplish its task, the committee was enlarged so that in addition to Dr. Streufert, the chairman of the committee, it included two men from the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Pastors Edwin Wilson and George Wittmer⁶⁵; two men chosen by the General Conference, Pastors Sabourin and Schulze; and

⁶²Minutes of the 61st Session of Immanuel Conference, August 5-8, 1943. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

⁶³In 1943 a committee of the General Conference had adopted a resolution which recommended that the self-supporting congregations form an autonomous church body. The majority of the General Conference was in agreement with this action, and plans were made to effect this organization in June of 1944. This organization was not formed in June 1944 because of the proposed constitution that was to be submitted to the August 1944 convention of the Synodical Conference. Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 6-9, 1946, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 31.

⁶⁴Minutes of the 62nd Session of Immanuel Conference, August 19-22, 1945. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

⁶⁵George W. Wittmer (1906-1987) graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1930.

two men from the Synodical Conference at large, Pastors William Lochner and Carl Buenger.

Theoretically, there remained five options. 1. To do nothing. 2. For the self-supporting congregations to organize their own synod, which would become a constituent synod of the Synodical Conference, with the remaining subsidized black congregations still under the Synodical Conference Mission Board. 3. To organize the black mission congregations as a non-geographic district of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. 4. To integrate all of the black congregations desiring to do so into one of the synods or districts of synods of the Synodical Conference. 5. To organize all the congregations into a synod which would become a constituent synod of the Synodical Conference. Already in June of 1945 it was abundantly clear which option the members of the General Conference wanted. Dr. Streufert met with the Synodical Conference Mission Board of the Synodical Conference and stated, "It is evident that the brethren of the Synodical Conference Mission desire complete integration with the white congregations."⁶⁶ The Synodical Conference Mission Board was not willing to go along with this proposal and considered ways to prevent its implementation.

Considerable time was devoted to the study of Supt. Kramer's interesting and helpful report of meeting with the Steering Committee of General Conference in Greensboro, Feb. 19 and 20, which he attended at our request. Supt. Kramer stated that the brethren are fully determined upon complete "integration" with the white districts of their respective territories and that this is a movement which "cannot be stopped." The present plan of operation, together with the authority vested in the Missionary board, is entirely unacceptable, salaries are much too low, etc. -- Supt. Kramer also offered a number of suggestions as to the Board's procedure in the entire matter, the possible postponement of General

⁶⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 8, 1945, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

Conference scheduled to meet in New Orleans in July and the disposal of I.L.C., Greensboro.

Dr. Streufert, chairman of the Synodical Conference Survey Committee, has been completely informed and expects to meet with his committee in the near future for the purpose of drafting a report to Synodical Conference, which will meet in convention this summer, setting forth the reasons why the adopted plan for the organization of our work into Regional Mission Districts cannot be carried out.⁶⁷

There was a clear division on the Survey Committee. The debate centered on whether the black congregations were to be organized as a non-geographic district of the Missouri Synod, as was the English District, or if they were to be integrated into the geographic districts (of either the Missouri or Wisconsin Synods) in which they were located. Pastors Sabourin and Schulze opted for integration, while the other four opted for a separate district. It appeared that a stalemate had been reached. Since the 1946 Synodical Conference Convention was approaching, it was decided to call another meeting. If no agreement could be achieved, then a majority and a minority report would be presented to the convention. Rev. Andrew Schulze described that meeting.

The same deadlock prevailed until lunchtime, when the chairman in evident frustration announced that he was very much inclined to resign. Had the deadlock continued, with the result of a majority and a minority report being presented to the Synodical Conference - judging from past experience- the majority report would have been adopted, and Dr. Streufert very likely knew that the minority report would have been the expression of the will of the General Conference.

"The wind of the Spirit" must have been blowing strong that noon hour. When the committee reconvened, instead of announcing his resignation, the chairman told the committee he was now ready to recommend to the Synodical Conference that its mission congregations be accepted into full membership of the districts in which they were located. Whether the chairman held a private caucus that noon with

⁶⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 26, 1946, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 2.

our friendly opponents on the committee, I do not know. Nevertheless, his recommendation was adopted unanimously.⁶⁸

When the General Conference learned that the plan of integration into the geographic districts was going to be recommended to the Synodical Conference by the Survey Committee, it unanimously passed a resolution on July 26, 1946 endorsing the resolution.⁶⁹ The Floor Committee on "Negro and African Missions" recommended adoption of the Survey Committee's report calling for the integration of the black congregations into the geographical districts of constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.⁷⁰ A stipulation was added to the resolution, which stated, "The Synodical Conference convention suggests that all these recommendations be referred back to the constituent synods."⁷¹ This little addendum was necessary because the Synodical Conference could only suggest that the constituent synods do this. It was up to each individual synod to actually accept these black congregations.

Official sanction had now been given for the black mission congregations to be integrated into constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. In order not to overburden the budgets of the districts, the Synodical Conference would continue to provide funds for the subsidized congregations.

The Process of Amalgamation

While the integration of the congregations in the black mission into the constituent synods was given official sanction at the August

⁶⁸Schulze, p. 86. ⁶⁹Proceedings, 1946, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁰Proceedings, 1946, pp. 45-46.

⁷¹Proceedings, 1946, p. 46.

1946 convention of the Synodical Conference, the process of amalgamation was not initiated at that time, nor was it quickly completed. Movement toward amalgamation began already in 1937 when the Board of Missions of the Southern California District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod began to supervise the black Mission work in its district.⁷² Through this contact, the white and black congregations would begin to identify with one another. The same process began in the Michigan District in 1940 when that district agreed to take over the Detroit black Mission and "make all necessary arrangements to carry on this and other mission work among the blacks of Michigan."⁷³ While the Synodical Conference Mission Board had initially commended this action in November 1940, they had second thoughts in January 1941, seeing potential difficulties and irregularities, which were probably a loss of control over this mission work and a fear of the impact of this decision in other areas.⁷⁴

In 1944 the Synodical Conference convention had adopted a resolution declaring that while they should consult first with the Synodical Conference Mission Board, it was "laudable that District mission boards, and groups of congregations start and support colored mission work with their areas;. . . ."⁷⁵ By 1946 it was reported at the Synodical Conference Convention that at least ten districts had taken

⁷²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 9, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁷³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 19, 1940, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 1.

⁷⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 15-16, 1941, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 1.

⁷⁵Proceedings, 1944, p. 85.

over the supervision of the mission work in their areas, although in no instances were these congregations received as members of the district.⁷⁶

The first black pastor called by one of the constituent synods was apparently Rev. Clemonce Sabourin. In 1944, without the knowledge of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, the Atlantic district of the Missouri Synod called Pastor Sabourin as a missionary to the blacks in New York City.⁷⁷ In June 1946 the first two black pastors, Rev. Clemonce Sabourin and Rev. Joseph G. Lavalais, were officially received as members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.⁷⁸ Also, in June 1946, again without the sanction of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, the first black congregation was officially accepted into The Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod. This congregation was Bethany, Yonkers (Rev. William O. Hill, pastor),⁷⁹ which officially became a member of the Atlantic District.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Proceedings, 1946, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 19-20, 1944, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

⁷⁸The Missouri Synod Atlantic and the Eastern district both met from June 24-27, 1946. Clemonce Sabourin was officially accepted by the Atlantic District, Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Convention of the Atlantic District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States assembled at Concordia Collegiate Institute, Bronxville, New York, June 24-27, 1946, p. 12. Joseph G. Lavalais was officially accepted by the Eastern District, Proceedings of the Sixty-Sixth Convention of the Eastern District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, Camp Pioneer, Angola, New York, June 14-27, 1946, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), p. 75.

⁷⁹William O. Hill, had been pastor at Bethany since 1911. I could find no record of his being officially accepted into the Missouri Synod. However, he is listed in the 1947 Lutheran Annual among the Missouri Synod pastors. It may have been understood that he was accepted in 1946, along with the congregation he served.

⁸⁰Proceedings, Atlantic District, 1946, p. 12.

There was clearly going to be at least some integration, no matter what was done at the 1946 Synodical Conference Convention.

In its June 1946 convention the Eastern District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod expressed a similar intention regarding St. Philip's, Philadelphia. The major difference was that the Eastern District did not officially accept St. Philip's, rather they requested the Synodical Conference to establish a policy making this possible. The Eastern District stated:

B. With regard to the application of St. Philip's (Colored) Congregation, Philadelphia, Pa., whose constitution was approved by the Committee on Application for Membership, the following resolutions were adopted:

1. That we, the delegates of the Eastern District, stand ready to accept the application of St. Philip's Congregation for membership in the Eastern District and Synod.

2. That in view of the absence of fixed policy relative to the receiving of colored congregations into Synod, the District postpone action on the application until such a policy as been adopted.

3. That the Eastern District memorialize the Synodical Conference to establish a policy at its forthcoming convention in Milwaukee, August, 6-9, 1946, making it possible for the constituent synods to receive colored congregations into membership where such action is feasible.⁸¹

Assuming that it would be acceptable to the constituent synods, the 1946 Synodical Conference convention gave official sanction to this policy.⁸² Once official sanction for integrating black congregations into existing synods and districts was given, several areas, particularly those outside of the south, quickly accepted the black congregations in their areas as members of their districts. In addition to the Atlantic

⁸¹Proceedings, Eastern District, 1946, pp. 75-76.

⁸²For the resolution adopted, see above, pp. 90-91.

District which had already taken action prior to the 1946 convention, by January 1947 several more were in the process of doing the same.

The Executive Secretary reported that the Southern California District, the California-Nevada District, the Oregon-Washington District, the Kansas District, the Texas District, and the Eastern District, the Northern Illinois District, and the Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Synod have definitely assumed supervision of Negro Mission work in their respective territories.

The Central and Southeastern districts have made oral commitments which according to all indications will be officially confirmed in the course of time.⁸³

At the 1948 convention of the Synodical Conference, it was noted that the four constituent synods had adopted resolutions expressing a willingness to accept black pastors and congregations. Specific procedures were also adopted to facilitate the application of black pastors and congregations for membership in the various districts.

a. That Negro congregations or their pastors which for a longer or a shorter period of time were affiliated with the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference, desiring to affiliate with a synod or with a District of a sister synod of the Synodical Conference, request a release from the Missionary Board to the respective synod or District, and that such congregations which do not affiliate with the synod continue their affiliation with the Missionary Board.

b. That if said Negro congregation or pastor be given a peaceful release by the Missionary Board that such release be sent by the Missionary Board to the authorized officers of the respective synodical District of synod in the usual manner.

c. That such Negro congregations as were organized by the authority of a synodical District affiliated with the Synodical Conference and such pastors called by such congregations are subject to the regulations of the respective synod or District concerning membership.⁸⁴

⁸³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 8-9, 1947, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 2.

⁸⁴Proceedings of the Fortieth Convention of the Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August, 3-6, 1948, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), p. 117.

In most areas outside of the South workers and congregations were accepted in routine fashion. After proper certification, their applications would be accepted. The Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod was the first of the southern districts to accept black workers and congregations. It used a gradual step by step approach. First the black pastors and then their congregations were accepted as advisory members of the district. Then both were accepted into full membership.⁸⁵ The minutes of the August 1948 meeting of the Immanuel Conference illustrated the care that was used to make sure that undue tensions did not develop.

At this point a lengthy discussion on the progress of the integration program with the Southeastern District was conducted. Pastor Summers was of special interest in this discussion as he could give the most recent developments along this line. ---- The Southeastern District resolved in accordance with Synodical Conference Resolution: To take over the work of Immanuel Conference, to promote the work in keeping with the funds that are appropriated by Synodical Conference and to the extent of the ability of the Southeastern District to contribute to the work. Pastors are invited to become members of the District by taking the necessary steps of making application to the Missionary Board for transfer. -- Resolved that we thank the Southeastern District for its attitude and actions in the matter of taking over our work in its District, and that all the Pastors are urged to join the District at the proper time. That Immanuel Conference join the District in the prayer that the Lord of the Church will grant wisdom and patience in carrying out this program.⁸⁶

The extent to which this amalgamation had occurred is revealed by the April 1949 report of Executive Secretary, Karl Kurth, to the Synodical Conference Mission Board. Not only had there been rapid, widespread acceptance of the black missions, but the districts were also assuming as much of the financial responsibility as possible.

⁸⁵Dickinson, pp. 110-111.

⁸⁶Minutes of the 64th Session of Immanuel Conference, August 19-22, 1948. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

The Executive Secretary reported that the following Districts of the constituent Synods of the Synodical Conference have agreed to take over supervision of Negro churches in their respective territorial area:

Eastern District of the Mo. Synod has assumed full charge as of Jan. '49

Northern Illinois District, Mo. Synod - full supervision. Missionary Board subsidizes work in this District to the extent of 50%

Kansas District of the Mo. Synod - full supervision. Missionary Board pays the salary of pastor in Kansas City, Kansas.

Minnesota District of the Wis. Synod assumed full supervision. The Missionary Board pays \$110.00 toward pastor's salary in Minneapolis.

Southeastern District of the Wis. Synod has assumed supervision and at present is seeking a suitable place of worship in Milwaukee.

California-Nevada District of the Mo. Synod is fully supervising the work in its territory. Missionary Board is advancing money for the purchase of a lot on which a chapel will be built and is contributing \$95.00 monthly toward pastor's salary.

Southern California District of the Mo. Synod has assumed supervision and beginning with July 1949 will also assume all financial obligations.

Central District of the Mo. Synod has agreed to assume supervision in its area, however, the Missionary Board pays all salaries and expenses of the workers. A number of our Negro pastors and congregations are now members of the District.

Southeastern District of the Mo. Synod has assumed supervision and has invited the pastors to become members of the District. The Missionary Board continues to pay all expenses with the exception of the traveling expenses of the Mission Director of the District.

Oregon and Washington District of the Mo. Synod has declared its willingness to supervise Negro missions within its area. Nothing is being done there at the present time.

Western District of the Mo. Synod has not as yet taken over supervision but is presently contributing \$155.00 plus \$3.96 into the Mission treasury of the Syn. conference for the salary of one pastor.

Districts which have been carrying on work in their respective areas for some time past are:

Michigan District - Atlantic District - Central Illinois District - Oklahoma District - Southern Illinois District - Northern Nebraska District - Texas District.⁸⁷

By 1954 only the congregations in the Alabama Conference and the Luther Conference remained under the supervision of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.⁸⁸ These congregations were all located within the geographic boundaries of the Southern District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The process of integration of the black pastors and congregations of the Southern District of the Missouri Synod required a slow and tedious process. Dr. Karl Kurth, the Executive Secretary of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, told the 1955 convention of the Southern District that he felt the time was not yet propitious for the Southern District to take over the work of the Synodical Conference mission.⁸⁹ Rather, he suggested that the Southern District be officially represented on each of the Regional Mission Committees.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 27-28, 1949, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 2.

⁸⁸Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at East Detroit, Mich. August 10-13, 1954, First St. Paul's Church Chicago, Ill. November 16-19, 1954, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), pp. 121- 174.

⁸⁹Part of the problem was that segregation was woven into the very fabric of Southern life. Integration even in the church ran contrary to the generally accepted social practice. This is amply illustrated by the problem encountered by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League which decided to cancel its 1955 convention which was scheduled to meet in New Orleans. The reason was that the hotel would not allow black women to participate with the white women. Ruth Fritz Meyer, Women on a Mission, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 180.

⁹⁰Forty-Eighth Convention Southern District of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Proceedings and Reports, Grace Lutheran Church Mobile, Alabama October 17-20, 1955, [No publisher or date.], p. 18.

In 1957 the Southern District adopted a resolution which requested the Missionary Board of the Lutheran Synodical Conference to make arrangements for the Southern District to take over the supervision of the black congregations and workers.⁹¹ These were initiated and a progress report was given at the 1958 Convention. At that time it was stated that meetings had been held with both the Alabama and Luther Conferences, officials of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board for North and South American missions, and the Synodical Conference Mission Board of the Synodical Conference. In addition, authorization had been given to draw up Guidelines for use of both black and white congregations. The committee, as it reported on the progress and understanding that had been achieved thus far, advised against haste, and recommended that these efforts be continued.⁹² The convention adopted the recommendation to proceed with the discussions and endorsed its philosophy of "going forward with due, deliberate caution because of the manifold and sensitive problems involved."⁹³

In 1960 the Southern District committee considering the acceptance of the black congregations into that district, stated in its report that it was prepared to recommend that the Southern District take over the supervision of the black work in its geographic area, but not to offer

⁹¹Forty-Ninth Convention Southern District of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Proceedings and Reports, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 28-November 1, 1957 <No publisher or date.>, pp. 94-95.

⁹²Convention Handbook for the 50th Convention of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod New Orleans October 27-31, 1958 <mimeographed.> pp. 63-65.

⁹³The Proceedings of the 50th Convention of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod October 27-31, 1958 St. Paul's Lutheran Church, New Orleans, La. <No publisher or date.>, p. 93.

district membership to the black workers or congregations. The Alabama conference had replied that they were not interested in supervision without membership. The Louisiana Conference referred the matter to its various congregations. The committee at that time was not in a position to make further recommendation as to taking over supervision of the black congregations.⁹⁴

On the basis of a recommendation of the Missouri Synod Board of Directors, the Board of Directors of the Southern District presented resolutions to the 1961 convention of the Southern District inviting the black pastors and congregations in its geographical area to become advisory members of the district with the goal of working toward full voting membership. There was also a resolution presented by a congregation which called for the continuation of the segregated system. In convention action the resolutions presented by the Southern District Board of Directors were adopted.⁹⁵ On January 1, 1962 the Southern District accepted responsibility for the remaining work of the Synodical Conference mission.⁹⁶ Completion of the final details, which involved

⁹⁴The Proceedings of the 51st Convention of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod August 22-26, 1960 First English Lutheran Church, New Orleans, La. <No publisher or date.>, pp. 89-90.

⁹⁵The Proceedings of the 52nd Convention of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod August 28-September 1, 1961, Admiral Semmes Hotel, Mobile, Alabama <No publisher or date.>, pp. 121-123.

⁹⁶Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference Assembled at St. James Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois, November 13-15, 1962, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 73.

the transfer of Church Extension Fund loans and titles and deeds for property to the Southern District, took until March 30, 1966.⁹⁷

Conclusions

One factor behind the struggle encountered by the Synodical Conference mission congregations as they tried to form or become part of an organized church was the very nature of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, which itself was not an organized church. In effect these mission congregations had been given Christian birth by a non-church. There was no natural place for them to go. This potential problem had been discussed in 1872 at the very first meeting of the Synodical Conference. Each of the constituent synods was already working to gather the large number of immigrants coming to the United States. It was suggested at the convention that this work, particularly of the German speaking synods, be conducted jointly under the auspices of the Synodical Conference. As this suggestion was being debated, the question was raised concerning the synodical membership of congregations which might be formed. Which of the synods should they join.⁹⁸ The Synodical Conference was not a church, and it was recognized that a congregation formed by the Synodical Conference would exist in isolation, unless it joined one of the constituent synods.

⁹⁷Proceedings of the Forty-Ninth General Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference Held at Ramada-O'Hare Inn and Holiday Inn Schiller Park, Illinois July 13-14, 1966, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 29.

⁹⁸Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 10. bis zum 16. Juli 1872, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und Anderen Staaten, 1872), p. 72.

To this must be added the major factors of paternalism and racism. The black race was perceived as not capable of really running a church in the right way. Until the decade of the 1940s, a majority of the members in the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference did not want fellowship with these black Lutherans.

In the early years of the black mission, the issue of formal membership in a church did not seem to have occurred to either workers or laity. The congregations were small and scattered, and were totally dependent on the Synodical Conference Mission Board of the Synodical Conference to keep congregation and school operating.

As the first expressions advocating a formal organization were voiced, it seemed to be assumed by all, both black and white that this would be a separate, segregated church. It was not until the 1940s that the choice of integration became prevalent. A description of the change which occurred with the Immanuel Conference is illustrative of this trend.

The Conference has devoted much time to discussions of the proper place of its churches in the Synodical Conference. For a number of years the Conference hoped to found a Church which might be the mistress in her own home and the sister of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. In recent years, however, the Conference abandoned this proposed organization and unanimously resolved to request complete integration into the various Districts.⁹⁹

By the time the Synodical Conference did get around to offering a constitution to the black congregations, it was too little, too late. In the end changes had occurred in Black America which also affected the black Lutheran Churches. The only tie with the Lutheran Church which the

⁹⁹Proceedings, 1946, pp. 12-13.

majority of black congregations would accept was integration, because they believed that any other solution was inconsistent with the Scriptures.

But even among Christians, racial attitudes do not change by decree. In 1946 the Synodical Conference voted at its convention to encourage the black congregations and pastors to seek membership in one of the constituent synods. While the decision was implemented quite quickly and with few problems in most areas, this was not the case in the Southern District of the Missouri Synod. Other than in the Southeastern and the Southern Districts, there were at most only a few black congregations located within the geographic area of any district. Black congregations and pastors could be accepted and hardly anyone would notice a difference. The Southeastern District of the Missouri Synod, which had the second largest number of black congregations, also made the transition quite easily and quickly. However, in the Southern District, where the largest number of black congregations was concentrated, and, where there were relatively few white congregations, the process of acceptance was prolonged. It was not until 1962 that supervision of the black mission could be assumed and the process of integrating the black congregations and pastors into the Southern District begun.

CHAPTER V
THE FACTORS OF RACISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE WORK OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

Both racism and authoritarianism had a profound impact on the mission work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference. The effect of either one of these alone would have caused a significant problem. However, because they were present in combination, the difficulty was compounded. The aspects of racism and authoritarianism have already appeared at many other points as the home mission work of the Synodical Conference has been described and analyzed. In this chapter these two attitudes will be given a detailed analysis. By the very fact that the mission was a "Negro" mission, the attitude of racism was by far the most dominant, and will therefore be treated first.

The Attitude of Racism

Racism is essentially the assumption that one race is inherently superior to another and possesses characteristics and capabilities which are different from those of the inferior race. Therefore, it logically follows from this assumption that the members of the superior race are treated preferentially, have a different potential of achievement, and are capable of receiving different levels of responsibility than is appropriate for the inferior race. Given this assumption it also follows logically that a different set of rules and standards applies when members of the superior or inferior race are dealing with another individual of their same race, than applies when they are dealing with an

individual from another race. In this chapter the concern is not with the racism that came from outside of the church, which affected not only the black Lutherans but the white missionaries who worked among them as well. Rather the concern is with the racism that was present within the Lutheran church. It is unequivocally certain that such racism was prevalent in the black mission endeavor of the Synodical Conference. In matters of race, the Synodical Conference was simply a reflection of the prevalent racial attitudes of the United States.¹ The reflections of Rev. Andrew Schulze, as he looked back to his student days at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, illustrated what was generally true throughout the Synodical Conference.

¹The 1877 withdrawal of the last union troops from the South marked the end of the Reconstruction period. After this time the white majority of the South was allowed to handle race relations in the way that it saw fit. In essence the goal was to take away any rights that had been won by the black people during reconstruction and to keep them in submission. The 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision legalized segregation with its separate but equal doctrine.

By the beginning of the twentieth century segregation had become more entrenched and the popularity of the extreme segregation views which dominated the South spread also into the North and mid-West. One of the effects of World War I was a massive migration of black people from the South to the industrialized urban centers of the United States. After World War I ended, racial tensions heightened as competition for jobs increased due to the return of the servicemen. Violence against blacks increased and blacks were systematically excluded from the better paying jobs and labor unions. However, changes also occurred within the black community. Voices which had advocated patience and gradually earning acceptance through education, such as Booker T. Washington, were discredited since this approach had born little fruit. Organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), began to actively press for integration.

The result of this demand for integration was an aggravation of the tensions between blacks who sought their rights and the dominant white sentiment which wanted to maintain segregation. The led to a significant polarization within United States society. For a more thorough discussion of the racial attitudes in the United States during the period of the Synodical Conference black mission work see Appendix L.

While at the Springfield seminary I had imbibed much of the spirit of the times and did not question the theology which helped to nurture that spirit. Much later in life I realized that the theology of the seminary in the 1920s in the matter of race was reflected in the lives of faculty members and their families and the students generally. When I became conscious of this fact, I understood more fully that the racial attitude of the nation as a whole had been mirrored in the seminary's theology and in those who were influenced by it.

. . . . As far as I can recall after more than 45 years, the race issue as such was seldom if ever discussed in the classroom. Segregation with all the concomitant ethical problems involved - the generally assumed innate superiority of one race and the inferiority of another, all running counter to the doctrine of creation as taught at the seminary; why no Negroes were enrolled at the seminary during the years that I was there, and the fact that there were two congregations in Springfield, for all practical purposes one for whites and one for blacks - these and many other related questions were not a matter of classroom discussion or debate.²

Racism of the Leaders

The leaders of the Synodical Conference and the constituent synods of that organization, and particularly those who were active in the black mission work, were not haters of blacks. They were in fact convinced that they were a friend of the black man, and would have objected strenuously if it was implied that they were racist. These were individuals who were genuinely concerned that the black race had been virtually ignored when it came to proclaiming the Gospel to poor condemned sinners. The leaders were not maliciously trying to keep "those niggers" in their place. Among those who were more actively involved, there is absolutely no evidence that they experienced great personal gain from their work. In fact, many who served the black

²Andrew Schulze, Race Against Time: A History of Race Relations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from the Perspective of the Author's Involvement 1920-1970, (Published by The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America Valparaiso, Indiana, Printed by North State Press, Hammond, Indiana, 1972), pp. 7-8.

mission field did so at great personal sacrifice. Yet it is an amazing inconsistency that no matter how genuine their concern was, and no matter how many sacrifices they made, it did not purge their attitudes of racism. In a large measure the intensity of the struggle with racism is due to the fact that the white leaders of the black mission did not adapt well to the changes which occurred in the attitude of Black America toward the "race question." The leaders continued to operate with the assumptions of a by-gone age.

Even a man like Rev. Nils J. Bakke, who felt the sting of rejection by white society because he was reaching out with the Gospel to the blacks, and who counted his black fellow Lutherans as dear friends, appeared to have uncritically accepted the assumption that it was best to keep the races separate. In 1892, after moving from New Orleans to North Carolina to supervise and expand on the work of defunct Alpha Synod, Missionary Bakke expressed his feelings in a letter printed in Lutheran Pioneer.

The temporary transfer of the pastor of the Mt. Zion and St. Paul Churches at New Orleans to North Carolina, where a new and unexpected addition was made to our colored work, has been noted in these columns. The parting from a people with whom the missionary's life for so many years had been intimately connected, was not pleasant to flesh and blood. Though belonging to two distinct races, a mutual love had sprung up between pastor and flock. The people of these churches have on several occasions, particularly on that of the pastor's removal, proved their love and gratitude in word and deed, for which we once more return grateful acknowledgment.³

Later in that same year, as Missionary Bakke reported on an offer for land in Concord, North Carolina made by Warren C. Coleman, a black merchant of that city, Bakke stated that a colored Concordia was a long

³[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord, N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer 14 (June 1892):22.

felt need.⁴ Since the Concordia College in Conover operated by the English Synod had been in operation for many years and had admitted black students, this new Concordia was to be established to keep the races separate.

Dr. John W. Behnken, the Texan who was president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1935-1962 (the years in which the tensions caused by racism were keenly felt), carried with him the attitudes toward race of his native southland. His assumption that segregation of the races was normal was demonstrated not only by his 1936 statement that since he was from south of the Mason-Dixon line, it would never do to advise the two self-supporting black congregations of the Synodical Conference to seek membership in the Missouri Synod,⁵ but even more explicitly by his response when the Central Illinois District of the Walther League⁶ accepted the youth group of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Springfield, Illinois,⁷ as a member of its organization. On April 27, 1922, Behnken wrote to the International Walther League Executive Board protesting this action. In part his letter stated:

Far more prominence than the matter calls for has been given to the acceptance of this society, even more than to the acceptance of ten or twelve white societies. Now, we readily understand that the

⁴[Nils J. Bakke], "Letter from Concord, N. C.," Lutheran Pioneer 14 (July 1892):26.

⁵See above chapter 4, p. 158.

⁶The Walther League was founded in May 1893 as the General Alliance of Young People's and Young Men's Societies of the Synodical Conference. It was later officially called the Walther League. Initially its goal was to reach young adults and keep them within the church, as, after finishing school, they moved into the cities in search of work. The development of the Walther League into an organization for high school age youth came much later.

⁷Holy Trinity, Springfield, Illinois, was a black congregation.

North regards this to be a distinct triumph, and looks upon it as a mere beginning of greater results in this particular field in the future. . . . You may think us to be quite bigoted, narrow-minded, and erratic for opposing such a move in the Walther League circles. . . . When such matters once become public property, your Southern friends will be made to feel the sting of this social equality between whites and blacks. . . . If this matter is not rectified in some way, or if further Negro societies will be received into the league it will eventually mean the withdrawal of all Walther Leagues below the Mason and Dixon line. . . . As far as mission work among the Negroes is concerned, our Southern people try to do their part, but we know that it is absolutely impossible for us to sanction social equality.⁸

Racism made its presence felt in the decision made by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board of Directors in conjunction with the request made in 1936 by the Synodical Conference Mission Board to transfer the theological department of Immanuel Lutheran College to Concordia Seminary, Springfield. After the matter was discussed with the administration of the Springfield Seminary, while no definite action was expected immediately, the members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Rev. Otto Boecler and Rev. Louis Wisler, reported that the faculty was favorably disposed to the suggestion.⁹ A final decision was made in December 1937, when the Missouri Synod Board of Directors declared it was against opening Missouri Synod institutions of higher education to colored students.¹⁰ When appeals were made to reverse this policy of discrimination, the Missouri Synod Board of Directors defended itself with somewhat flawed logic by stating that even though colored students are not allowed in our colleges, we cannot be accused of discrimination

⁸Schulze, p. 45.

⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 30, 1936, Concordia Historical Institute, 111.0R, Supplement VII, St. Louis, Mo. [Hereafter CHI - (city omitted)]

¹⁰Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, December 20, 1937, CHI.

against our future colored workers, because we maintain the necessary schools for them to attend.¹¹

Racism was not limited to the leadership of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The sad experience of Ruth Smith at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois,¹² was not the end of the discrimination she experienced within the Lutheran Church. While she was immediately admitted to Martin Luther College, a Wisconsin Synod school located in New Ulm, Minnesota, her admission was hardly routine. Before he would grant admission, the president of the institution, Carl Scheweppe, first asked the three girls who would have to share the room with Ruth if they would mind having a partly colored roommate. When the girls raised no objections, Ruth was admitted. Nor, after the completion of her studies, was Ruth placed along with the members of her class. There were nine in her class, and after the other eight were placed, seventeen vacancies still remained, for any of which Ruth Smith was qualified. There can be little doubt that her race was the reason she was not placed.¹³ The Synodical Conference Mission Board did manage to find a teaching position for Ruth at St. Philip's Lutheran School in Cleveland, Ohio. She arrived in Cleveland on October 1, 1944, and it was resolved by the Synodical Conference Mission Board that she was not to be called but hired for one year.¹⁴ In April 1945 it was decided to send her to Toledo to teach the

¹¹Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, April 10, 1940, CHI.

¹²See above Chapter 3, pages 140-141.

¹³Stephen C. Hintz, "The Odyssey of Ruth Smith" WELS Historical Institute Journal, 7 (Spring 1989): pp. 7-9.

¹⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 17, 1944, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

lower grades in a school that the Synodical Conference Mission Board planned to open.¹⁵ In June 1945 the minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board note, "Miss Ruth Smith, appointed as teacher for Toledo, has definitely excluded herself from black Mission Service."¹⁶ During the Spring of 1945, Ruth Smith had written to the executive secretary of the Wisconsin Synod Board of Education, Mr. F. W. Meyer, requesting that her name be placed on a call list with the notation, "partly colored." At about the same time, Trinity Lutheran School, Neenah, Wisconsin, needed a teacher. When the pastor, Rev. Gerhard A. Schaefer, requested a call list, Ruth's name was listed. After checking into her credentials and contacting those who knew her, the pastor of Trinity, Neenah, decided to recommend that she be called by the congregation's Board of Education.

Pastor Schaefer then got in contact with President Behm and told him that he was planning to recommend to the congregation to call Ruth Smith. Behm strenuously advised Schaefer against doing such a thing. He told him that she'd be trouble and that the kids would run out on her. Pastor Schaefer then retorted, "I don't care if she's as black as the ace of spades. We need a teacher." Behm replied, "Well, if you get yourself into hot water, don't come crying to me."¹⁷

The congregation called Ruth and she accepted. She taught there from August, 1945 until 1979 when she was forced to retire because of her health.¹⁸

¹⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, Minutes, April 18-19, 1945, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 8, 1945, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

¹⁷Hintz, p. 11.

¹⁸To the credit of President E. Behm, he later admitted he had been wrong. "One day about six years into her teaching career at Neenah there was a knock at Ruth's classroom door. She answered it and found that it was the former district president, Pastor Behm. He inquired if he might visit her classroom. Ruth said he was welcome. Pastor Behm sat

What is particularly unfortunate is the inconsistency and blatant racism apparent within the Synodical Conference Mission Board itself. Rev. Christopher F. Drewes served the Synodical Conference Mission Board from 1908 until his death in 1931 as secretary, chairman, and executive secretary. When speaking of the character of the black pastors, he lamented the racial prejudice which they and their people had to suffer.¹⁹ Yet, when one of the faculty members of Immanuel College, Prof. Hans Naether,²⁰ suggested that there should be social equality among the races, the chairman of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Prof. Theodore Graebner, and Director Christopher Drewes took action to set Naether straight.

The com. consisting of Prof. Graebner, Dir. Drewes reported that they had thoroughly discussed this matter with the members of the Gr. faculty with the result, that Naether the chief supporter of soc. equality, declared he acted unwisely and promised to be more careful in the future. Rs. to sanction action of com.²¹

The Synodical Conference Mission Board considered it perfectly normal that the black workers should be paid lower salaries. During the course of a discussion about salaries, after it was noted that there was growing sentiment among the black workers that they should be paid the same as the white workers, the following expression of the attitude of

down in the room and observed for about two hours. He confessed that he had been wrong about her and that he had been thoroughly mistaken in his advice to Pastor Schaefer at the time Ruth was under consideration for the call to Trinity." (Hintz, p. 11.)

¹⁹Christopher F. Drewes, Half a Century of Lutheranism Among Our Colored People: A Jubilee Book 1877-1927, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 93.

²⁰Hans Naether, M.A., came to Immanuel Lutheran College, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1923.

²¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, February 17-18, 1925, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

the Board demonstrated their assumption that it was self evident that black workers ought to be treated differently than white workers.

It was regarded as self-evident that in view of decidedly different standards of living among the respective races, and in view of other considerations, that the equalization of salaries of colored and white workers is impossible.²²

Using a stereotype picture of the black man, the Synodical Conference Mission Board seriously discussed if the Lutheran form of worship was truly suitable for black people.

Another question discussed in relation to our work was this: "Are we possibly withholding something from the Negro which should not be withheld? Are we probably [*sic*] insisting on our strictly Lutheran customs?" It has been said: "The Negro likes his spirituals . . . rhythm is a part of his nature, why not let him enjoy it in his services?"

Resolved that the matter of liturgies, selection of hymns, type of preaching be made a special study by the superintendents and the Executive secretary.²³

Among the white missionaries it was not unusual for the wife and children of the white worker in the Synodical Conference mission to belong to one of the white Lutheran Churches in the city, rarely if ever attending with her husband. Many believed that the races should be segregated. Rev. Erich H. Wildgrube, Sr., who was pastor of St. Paul's, a black congregation in New Orleans throughout most of his ministry, once challenged Rev. Andrew Schulze to show him ". . . one passage in the Bible that proves segregation to be sinful!"²⁴ The Rev. Gotthilf M. Kramer, superintendent of the Louisiana field, pastor of Bethlehem, a

²²Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 31-April 1, 1937, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

²³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 15-16, 1941, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII, Box 1, January 15-16, 1941.

²⁴Schulze, p. 6.

black congregation in New Orleans throughout his career, and advisor to the Synodical Conference Mission Board, lived miles from his congregation in a white suburb. An incident, described by Rev. Andrew Schulze, which occurred in Kramer's home illustrates how little segregation troubled superintendent Kramer.

I had not been in his home very long before his wife began to tell me how disastrous it was for any white family to live in a Negro community. . . . In the presence of her husband and another guest, the Rev. Louis A. Wisler, who was the executive secretary of the Synodical Conference Negro mission work, she said, "If your family lives in a nigger neighborhood, it can only go down and down and down and down."²⁵

The depths of the racism permeating the Synodical Conference Mission Board came through clearly when an essay, "Race in the Church" by Executive Secretary Louis Wisler, was accepted with thanks, after Wisler presented it to a board meeting. In his essay Wisler described divisiveness as one of the distinctive features of race. The practice of segregation, including such things as refusing to allow blacks and whites to eat together or worship together, was an innocent custom which was acceptable practice under the banner of Christian liberty. In his conclusion Wisler stated:

Observance of the race rules (customs) concerning segregation, intermarriage, inter-dining, and inter-race association in general, and church union in particular, is like the observance of innocent customs, also a matter of Christian liberty, subject to the law of charity and wisdom²⁶

²⁵Schulze, p. 7.

²⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 8-9, 1943, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

When the committee which had been appointed to review the black missions of the Synodical Conference²⁷ reported to the 1944 Synodical Conference Convention, it began with an assessment of past attitudes.

Considering the time when the Negro missions were begun, the time when the Negro race had emerged from the bonds of slavery, we can well imagine that we, too, like others, began along rather paternalistic lines. There was not a thing which we were not ready to do for the Negro people. If problems arose, we adjusted them. And if not always entirely to their satisfaction, the Negro Christians nevertheless acquiesced.

For sixty-five years we carried on with very few changes in the missionary methods once adopted.²⁸

The sad fact was that these attitudes had not changed, but in reality had become worse. In the face of pressure to change, the members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board held on to the old attitudes even more tenaciously, which simply heightened the tensions. It was inevitable that such an attitude was bound to leave its mark on the work of the black mission.

Fostering Racist Attitudes within the Church

As those involved in the work of the black mission sought to generate interest and support, they inadvertently nurtured racist attitudes. There was no message of hatred or inciting to violence. Their motives were noble, since they sought to include the black people of the United States in the "all nations" of Jesus' great commission. This racism, which was fostered, was the commonly accepted point of view

²⁷The members of the Committee were E. Benjamin Schlueter, Chairman; William Lochner, Secretary; and Frank C. Streufert.

²⁸Reports and Memorials for the Thirty-Ninth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio, August 1-4, 1944, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 31.

of white America of the day. However, by their expression of these views, they added an aura of respectability and ecclesiastical sanction to current attitudes, which were decidedly contrary to the Scriptures. The problem lay in the manner by which they attempted to generate this interest and support.

In the book written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the black mission work of the Synodical Conference, Half a Century of Lutheranism Among Our Colored People, the opening comments of Director Christopher F. Drewes in effect tried to make the slavery, practiced in the United States, look a little less bad. Drewes stated in the second and third paragraphs:

We all thank God that human slavery is a thing of the past in the United States. Yet it remains true that God in his wisdom brought good out of this evil. Even so God brought good out of the evil of slavery.

From this pagan religion of fear the Africans who were brought to this country as slaves would never have been set free if they had remained in the Dark Continent.²⁹

The argument is a simple rationalization. God could have also caused the church bodies to become mission-minded and to send missionaries to the tribes in Africa to bring them the message of the Gospel. In that way they could have avoided slavery and still come to the Christian faith.

In writing to publicize the work of black missions, a frequent device employed was to relate incidents that had occurred in various locations. In telling these stories, a stereotyped, caricature of the black person emerges, which would have been extremely offensive to educated black people. These "human interest stories" appeared regularly

²⁹Drewes, p. 5

in the journals, Missionstaube, and Lutheran Pioneer, which were aimed at readers who were supporters of the mission, and in Drewes' anniversary book.

In an article which describes how "Old Nancy" responded with firm conviction, when she was challenged with the view that the future is filled with uncertainty, the climax was reached as Nancy said:

"Stop" cried Nancy. "I neber supposes. De Lord is my Shepherd and I knows I shall not want." "And, honey," she added to her gloomy friend, "it's all dem supposes as is making you so mis'erable. You orter give dem all up, child, an' jest trus' in de Lord."³⁰

Christopher F. Drewes printed these two accounts which were comments made to teacher C. H. Heintze from St. Paul's school in New Orleans. Drewes' purpose was to demonstrate the good things which had been accomplished by the Lutheran schools. The form of the dialogue is significant and was typical of these kind of accounts.

Yes, sir, I's a good Catholic, an' I'se goin` to live an' die a Catholic, too, but I tells you, I likes de Lutheran school. My chillun done learned very well dere. I'se mo' dan satisfied an' tells dat to my frens. Mos' of de people here owes deir edication an' what erbiments dey's got to your school; an' judgin' by deir edication, de school mus' be good.³¹

Said an old mammy: "O teacher, it was terrible here before your Church began to work among the poor colored people, to be sure. Dere was nothin but gamblin' an' dancin', fightin' an' shootin', every day, worst on Sunday. Out in de 'Green' one wasn't safe after dark. But look at de change now! Most of de people livin' in de 'Green' went to your school an' learned to be good, an' many are members of your Church. An' you teach dem to work an' mind deir

³⁰"Old Nancy," Lutheran Pioneer 3 (January 1881):3.

³¹This account also demonstrates a significant problem which plagued the Synodical Conference Negro mission work as they tried to use the day schools as a mission outreach. All too often, parents, who were members of other denominations, would willingly send their children to get a good education, but who otherwise had no intention to leave their old denomination.

families an' raise deir chillun right, to be sure. Your Church did much good, an' our parson, de Reverend Dr. Hall, says so too, to be sure."³²

Racist statements denigrating the black are also found in Light in the Dark Belt: The Story of Rosa Young as Told by Herself, which was written to publicize black mission work. In evaluating her statements, it is difficult to know if Rosa Young wrote these things because she thought she was expected to and felt this was the best way to get the results she wanted, or if she had lived under the "system" so long that she had been conditioned to believe this. But whichever is the case, the effect is the same. The book would encourage racist attitudes among the white readers it was designed to reach.

One of Rosa Young's most interesting comments in this connection was her paraphrase of Christopher Drewes' description of the good that came out of slavery.³³ As she described what prompted her to contact the Synodical Conference Mission Board, Rosa wrote, "Just as slavery, with all its cruelties and inhuman acts, was a great blessing in disguise, so too was the invasion of the cotton-destroying Mexican boll weevil in our country in 1914."³⁴ The book itself contains a large number of comments which would have tended to confirm or foster racist attitudes in its readers. The following examples illustrate the blatant examples of racism which were seemingly condoned in the book.

³²Drewes, p. 31.

³³See above, p. 218.

³⁴Rosa J. Young, Light in the Dark Belt: The Story of Rosa Young as Told by Herself, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 88.

In the book Rosa described what the practices of the Colored Methodist and Baptist churches were as she knew them. She pointed out that before an individual could become a member or preacher of these churches it was necessary to have a special experience. The interpretation which is given to these experiences demonstrates an acknowledgment of white superiority on the part of black people. When the authority figure in the experience was white, the vision acquired added significance and validity. Note the role of the white man in the following visions.

Another wakes from sleep and reports that he saw a white man writing with a gold pencil; this white man wrote his name and told him to "go in peace and sin no more." Since his name had been recorded by a white man, this man would be baptized and received into the church.³⁵

Another preacher testified that a great dinner was being served. Many guests were at the table. He was sitting at the head. Suddenly a white man approached the table and placed both hands on his head and announced to all the guests; "This is the preacher." All the church members agreed that the man was thus called to preach. Forthwith he was licensed and ordained to be a preacher.³⁶

The implication of white superiority over black also appeared in her description of the efforts she made to found her school in Rosebud.

. . . I decided that it was necessary to secure the good will and approval of all the white people in the community before presenting my proposition to the colored people, for I said to myself: "This is the white people's country."³⁷

Rosa also encouraged the stereotyping of the black person. As she described a lecture trip to Minnesota, which she made on behalf of black mission work, Rosa described what happened at one place where she was

³⁵Young, p. 15.

³⁶Young, p. 16.

³⁷Young, p. 66.

supposed to speak after a dinner. She had been delayed and arrived late. The ladies had saved dinner for her and Rosa described what happened.

I thought I was too tired to eat, but when one of the ladies presented me with a large serving of red watermelon, my appetite returned, and I began the destruction of that piece of watermelon. I finished with vim, for all Negroes like watermelons. The melon feast being over, all reassembled to hear my plea for the people of my race.³⁸

One of the frequent themes in books and journal articles which were intended to publicize the black mission work, was the difference that Lutheranism had made in the character of the black people. In these accounts it is significant what roles are given to the black people. They did not become better black doctors, but better black servants. It is also significant that it was assumed that non-Lutheran blacks were more depraved than non-Lutheran or non-Christian whites. Nor were the stereotyped characteristics refuted which were often associated with black people. These characteristics were assumed to be true and became an additional factor which had to be overcome. In the following 1898 example from Lutheran Pioneer, note how the assumption is not challenged which stereotypes blacks as being plagued by an excessive development of the motions. What is challenged is the conclusion that some had drawn from this assumption, that therefore Lutheranism would have no appeal to them.

The idea that once obtained with not a few that because of the ignorance and excessive development of the motions in the colored race, that a church as staid and as conservative in its teachings and methods of work as ours, would not be effective in its efforts, has been proven fallacious. It is a matter of fact, to which thousands can bear witness, that these long-neglected sons of the dark continent, under their faithful Lutheran pastors and teachers in the South, have not only become conversant with the history, teachings and cultus of our Church, but have imbibed the love and

³⁸Young, p. 175.

the devout conservative spirit of our Church to an extent that is really wonderful.³⁹

This was not an isolated incident, nor did thirty years change any perceptions. A statement made by Christopher Drewes is strikingly similar.

People who only know of the loud and disorderly meetings of the sectarian Negroes can scarcely imagine how quiet and orderly the church services of our colored Lutherans are. A member of a white Lutheran church, having visited one of our colored Lutheran churches, exclaimed in surprise: "Why, these colored people in our Mission are just as quiet and well-behaved as the people in our German congregations, as I have just now seen in your church." People at first imagined that a church which is as quiet as our Lutheran Church would have no success among the colored people; but their opinion has certainly been disproved by the growth of our missions.⁴⁰

While it was not explicitly stated, the following statement quoted by Drewes, implied that, if the blacks were taught to know their place and to be good servants, this would go a long way in solving the race problem of the South.

Rev. John McDavid, . . . writes: "Once I had to call at a place in Charlotte where one of my members was in service. The young lady had been at this place ever since she left our school. The mistress told me that she was just like one of the family. The pupils of our schools make good servants. They are reliable, honest, and industrious. And this goes a long way in solving the vexed race problem of the South."⁴¹

Black people, other than Lutheran ones, who made good servants, are regularly depicted in a negative way.

Mr. W. H. Wilson, tax assessor and collector of Autauga County, Alabama, said to our Pastor Weeke several years ago: "The only good Negroes around here are the Lutheran Negroes. They have less debts,

³⁹"Mission Work among the Colored People," Lutheran Pioneer, 20 (February 1898):6.

⁴⁰Drewes, p. 95.

⁴¹Drewes, p. 75.

pay their bills more regularly, are more thrifty, and their morality is better than that of any of the rest around here."⁴²

Mr. Charles Cook, of Concord, who has had extensive business dealings with colored people, once said to the writer: "If all the Negroes would be like your Lutheran Negroes, they would be all right."⁴³

It must be remembered that in all of these instances there was no direct intention to put down black people. On the contrary, these were attempts to say something positive and good. To their credit the leaders of the Synodical Conference mission clearly asserted that regardless of color, before God all are equal. A little piece in Lutheran Pioneer entitled "No Difference," proclaimed this message loudly.

A little colored girl, eight years old, was setting the table, when a boy in the room said to her, "Mollie, do you pray?" The suddenness of the question confused her a little, but she answered, "Yes, every night."

"Do you think God hears you?" the boy asked. And she answered promptly, "I know he does."

"But do you think," said he trying to puzzle her, "that he hears your prayers as readily as those of white children?"

For a full three minutes the child kept on with her work; then she slowly said, "Master George, I pray into God's ear, and not His eyes. My voice is just like any other little girl's; and if I say what I ought to say, God does not stop to look at my skin."⁴⁴

In 1901, Prof. Rudolph A. Bischoff, the editor of Lutheran Pioneer, printed comments on the "Color Problem" which had first appeared in a Southern church paper, and which implied that the natural condition of the black man was worse than the natural condition of the white man. To this editor Bischoff added his own comments in which he clearly indicated that both white and black stand the same before God.

⁴²Drewes, pp. 94-95. ⁴³Drewes, p. 41.

⁴⁴"No Difference," Lutheran Pioneer, 9 (February 1887):7.

Well, the colored people need the same that the white people need. Therefore, the Lutherans of the Synodical Conference solve the problem, of which the editor speaks, by erecting schools and churches in which God's Word is taught. Would to God that all our members would recognize the grand opportunity they have for solving the "Color Problem."⁴⁵

Yet in spite of all this good will and the recognition that there is no difference before God, the underlying assumption which could not be hidden was that, in some manner or form, the black race was inferior to the white race. It simply was one of the givens of society, an assumption that most people unquestioningly accepted. Yet the very fact that it was stated, made these racist assumptions all the more firmly entrenched in the thinking of the Lutheran laity.

Racism in the Congregations

Given the general racial assumptions of the United States and the fact that these were largely reflected in the attitudes of the leaders of the church, it would be expected that a racism which assumed superiority of white over black and separation of the races would also be prevalent among the laity and in the congregations.

The prevalence of the desire to avoid black people was amply demonstrated by what happened to congregations as blacks moved into the neighborhood around the church. Almost invariably the congregation moved.

The shift of congregations from the inner city to the outlying districts and the suburbs did not always follow the same time schedule. Sometimes it happened at the first appearance of a Negro family in the community. Sometimes the shift was slower in pace. The congregation could accept a compromise - two parishes, one congregation. Some, desiring to keep the ship on an even keel, followed the counsel of "waiting to see what the Lord wanted them to

⁴⁵Rudolph A. Bischoff, "The Outlook from the Editor's Window," Lutheran Pioneer, 23 (May 1901):20.

do" - and in the end abandoned the community because of dwindling membership.⁴⁶

In some instances congregations were willing to share the use of their property with the new black mission. In 1911 the German Lutheran Congregation in Yonkers, New York, graciously offered its parish house so that the newly arrived Lutherans from the black Mission congregation in Meherrring, Virginia, might organize a congregation.⁴⁷ Yet no serious thought apparently was given to the idea that these black Lutherans be incorporated into the existing congregation.

As neighborhoods changed, white congregations were not willing to work among the black people moving into the area. In the instance of Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Louis, the congregation was willing to rent their school building to the separate black mission, but not to include these black Lutherans in their congregation. The following reports which were made to the Synodical Conference Mission Board tell the story. On January 23, 1919, it was reported that Immanuel School in St. Louis had closed. The mission director, Christopher Drewes, was to request the use of this building for mission work. On February 27, 1919, it was reported that Immanuel would be willing to let the mission use two rooms. Finally, on January 26, 1926, it was reported that Immanuel had been sold and that the mission would have to relocate.⁴⁸

As the racial make-up of communities changed and congregations prepared to move to the suburbs, they offered to sell their facilities to

⁴⁶Andrew, Schulze, Fire from the Throne: Race Relations in the Church, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), p. 37.

⁴⁷Bakke, p. 44.

⁴⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 23, 1919; February 27, 1919; January 26, 1926, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

the Synodical Conference Mission Board, in order to retain a Lutheran presence in the community. In 1932 the Synodical Conference Mission Board received a letter from Rev. Richard E. Kuehnert in Los Angeles, California. His congregation offered to sell their property to the Mission Board at a reasonable price. The Synodical Conference Mission Board rejected the offer, not because they encouraged the congregation to stay in the location and do the work themselves, but because the country was in the midst of the depression and the funds were not available.⁴⁹

When St. Peter's congregation in Cleveland, Ohio decided to move to Shaker Heights, they wanted to sell their facilities to St. Philip's, the black congregation in Cleveland, so that St. Philip's could work in that neighborhood. A complicated financial deal was worked out involving the Synodical Conference Mission Board, the Missouri Synod Board of Directors, and the congregation, to which the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Synod [sic] expressed its agreement.⁵⁰

The black congregation, St. Matthew in Oakfield, Florida, reported that its future growth was in jeopardy. The community in which it was located was gradually being surrounded by a white population and was contemplating moving to a new location.⁵¹

⁴⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 13, 1932, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁵⁰Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, November 9, 1937, CHI.

⁵¹Reports and Memorials for the Forty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America at Wisconsin Lutheran High School 330 N. Glenview Ave. Milwaukee 13, Wis., August 2-5, 1960, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 46-47.

The attitude of the laity of the Lutheran churches was aptly described in the report of the Synodical Conference Mission Board given to the 1954 Synodical Conference Convention.

The Negro population in St. Louis is increasing and moving into areas where heretofore they were sparsely represented or not at all. As a result four of our white congregations now find themselves in areas where Negro people are increasing considerably. Meetings have been held with the pastors and lay representatives of these congregations for the purpose of discussing the problem of integration. But so far none of these congregations are ready for integration. They rather favor fulfilling our missionary obligation toward the many Negroes in their territories by starting more new Negro missions.⁵²

Clearly, strong feelings were present that black and white should be kept separate. It was obviously not possible by ecclesiastical decree to quickly change attitudes. While the Synodical Conference Convention had authorized integration of black congregations into membership with the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference in 1946, not all white Lutherans were ready to extend the hand of fellowship to their black counterparts. The struggle to overcome racist attitudes was highlighted in the process which occurred in the Southern District as it attempted to integrate the black congregations of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Northern Florida into that district. However, it must be remembered that the feelings and attitudes in that district were by no means peculiar to that district. To a greater or lesser extent the racial views that had to be combated in the Southern District had to be combated in every district.

⁵²Reports and Memorials for the Forty-Third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Detroit, Michigan, August 10-13, 1954, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 60.

The "Guidelines for Discussion" developed by the Southern District to help accomplish the integration of black congregations of the Synodical Conference into their district elucidated a good Biblical presentation of the fact that before God there is no distinction between white and black. However, this document failed to draw the conclusion that it was contrary to the Scriptures and therefore sinful, to refuse to practice fellowship with a Christian who was united by a bond of theological fellowship, but was of a different race. In effect, thesis eleven gave permission to any congregation to continue to practice segregation with a good conscience if it so desired. All that was necessary was to say that integration would cause problems in the congregation or make it more difficult to get white people to join the congregation and thus hamper the mission outreach. Thesis eleven stated:

It is not to be considered un-Christian for congregations to practice segregation when to practice integration would mean -

- a) The weakening or disrupting of their own congregation.
- b) The curtailment of their missionary outreach, provided no individual is thereby denied opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 6:12.⁵³

In that same convention reasons were listed which made it preferable to postpone integration at that time. Among these "excuses" were listed:

- A. The strong Southern tradition.

It is well known that segregation has been the pattern for many years in all areas of society, the church included. This is well known by white and colored alike.

⁵³The Proceedings of the 51st Convention of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod August 22-26, 1960 First English Lutheran Church, New Orleans, La <no date or publisher>, p. 11.

B. The present aggravated tension.

In spite of the many advances made in respect to the problem of race, tensions are running high. Extremists on both sides make this a difficult period. There is a reasonable element of doubt as to whether this is the proper time to carry out the program in its completeness.

D. Local physical problems (Hotels, dining, meeting places).

It must be remembered that there are many places where white and colored could not meet together. Public meeting places often forbid joint meetings. This would be a difficult matter.⁵⁴

The Practical Effects of Racism in the Mission

The effects of racism within the Lutheran Church are readily apparent throughout the home mission work of the Synodical Conference. In a practical way it affected both the opportunities available to black workers and the concern expressed for their own and their family's physical well-being.

In financial matters the black workers were paid a much lower salary than were the white workers who did the same work. While complaints were frequently raised, both by black and white workers in the mission field, the practice was considered completely acceptable and normal by the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the conventions of the Synodical Conference.

In January 1925 the Synodical Conference Mission Board discussed a complaint that had been raised by the Luther Conference that the black workers were not being paid the same salary as the white workers at Luther College.⁵⁵ In February of the same year, a resolution was read,

⁵⁴Proceedings Southern District, 1960, p. 87.

⁵⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 8, 1925, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

which had been unanimously endorsed in the Louisiana Luther Conference to increase the salaries of the black workers. (In reality, this was to equalize them with those of the white workers.)⁵⁶ The board took no action.

During the depression, as many cuts were made throughout the church, in order to help meet the reduced budget, the Synodical Conference Mission Board resolved to cut the additional salary paid each month to the black workers for their children and wives.⁵⁷ No such resolution can be found affecting the white workers.

Henry Nau, the president of Immanuel College, was a strong advocate of equal pay for black and white workers. He maintained that groceries cost just as much for a black man as for a white man. When The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod experienced a budget surplus in the early 1940s, Nau suggested that rather than add the surplus to the contingency fund, a portion of it should be used to raise the salaries of the black mission workers. When President John Behnken learned of the request, he sent it to Louis Wisler, the executive secretary of the Synodical Conference mission. Wisler indicated that the Synodical Conference Mission Board was aware of the problem and called Nau's suggestion untimely.⁵⁸

The fact was that, except for the teachers in the Synodical Conference higher educational institutions, white workers were paid

⁵⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, February 17-18, 1925, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁵⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, October 7-8, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁵⁸John F. Nau, Nau! Mission Inspired, (St. Louis, MO: Clayton Publishing House, 1978), pp. 62-63.

roughly the equivalent of what they would have received had they been serving white parishes. The 1934 Synodical Conference Proceedings stated, "The salary offered the men in the larger cities, is about the same offered by the Home Mission boards in the respective territories in which the men work."⁵⁹ It must be remembered that the cities were the places where the white workers were assigned, with the black workers serving the rural parishes. In 1944 the situation had not changed. In the report on the survey of black missions, it was stated:

Your Committee finds that the salaries offered the white workers in the Negro Missions compare favorably with the salaries offered in the majority of the subsidized Districts of the Missouri and Wisconsin synods. And the salaries of the Negro workers are, as a whole, in keeping with the salaries offered Negro workers in the South at large.⁶⁰

In fact, the Synodical Conference Mission Board had no choice in the matter of salaries for white workers. In contrast to the black workers, the white workers had other options in the church. If the salaries of the white workers had not been essentially equivalent, most would have taken calls out of the black mission very quickly.

The inequity in salaries was in fact never changed by the Synodical Conference until after the congregations began to be integrated into the respective districts of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. When Karl Kurth, the executive secretary of the Synodical Conference Mission Board reported the progress of the integration process to the Board of Directors of the Missouri Synod, he made a significant comment concerning

⁵⁹Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 8-13, 1934 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 90.

⁶⁰Reports and Memorials, 1944, pp. 49-50.

salaries. He stated that as the black congregations were accepted in the districts of constituent synods, "This amounts to salary increases for our negro missionaries in line with the salaries for white workers."⁶¹

Once it was recognized that salaries for black pastors would be raised significantly in the congregations affiliated with the Missouri or Wisconsin Synods, it meant that salaries would also be raised for the pastors serving congregations in the rural South. If they had not been raised, there would have soon been only vacancies in those congregations. In January 1947, the superintendent of the Alabama field, Rev. Walter Ellwanger, reported the good news to his workers. The Synodical Conference Mission Board had "resolved that all pastors and teachers be placed on the same salary scale which prevails in the respective territorial districts."⁶²

Another impact of racism in the work of the Synodical Conference mission was in the positions normally offered to the black workers. It has already been mentioned that normally the black pastors were placed in the less desirable rural congregations and the white pastors in the city congregations. In 1921, the Mission Board considered placing a black pastor at St. Paul's in New Orleans. After some discussion the suggestion was dropped because the white workers in New Orleans were opposed to the plan.⁶³

⁶¹Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, February 16, 1948, CHI.

⁶²Alabama Lutheran Pastoral Conference, minutes, January 17-18, 1947. (In the possession of Richard Dickinson.)

⁶³Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 17, 1921, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

When the faculty of Immanuel College suggested that qualified black men be prepared to become professors, the Synodical Conference Mission Board responded to the suggestion by stating that they did not consider this advisable. Rather, the black men should be trained to serve in congregations.⁶⁴

There was also a hesitancy to place black men in positions of supervision, particularly if this meant supervision over white workers. When a new superintendent was needed for the Southeastern field, the Synodical Conference Mission Board passed a resolution to make "Rev. Fr(ank) Alston superintendent of the colored workers and Prof. Kampschmidt of the four white missionaries and their charges giving him less work at I.L.C."⁶⁵ Upon learning of this arrangement, Rev. J. Ernest Shufelt,⁶⁶ who was a white pastor serving two black congregations in North Carolina, sent a letter to the Synodical Conference Mission Board expressing his regret that the Board had not included him and Prof. Hans Naether under Pastor Alston's supervision.⁶⁷ Precisely what Pastor Shufelt said is unknown, but whatever it was, the board did not like it, and issued a reprimand. In April 1927, the outcome was duly noted. "Rev Shufelt apologizes to the Board for having charged it with having

⁶⁴Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, May 12, 1931, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁶⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 21-22, 1926, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁶⁶J. Ernst Shufelt graduated in 1918 from Hartwig seminary, Hartwig, New York, an institution of the United Lutheran Church. He became a professor at Immanuel College, Greensboro, North Carolina in 1921. In January 1924 he began to serve the Synodical Conference mission as a pastor in the North Carolina.

⁶⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 10, 1926, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

violated a divine command in the matter of appointing a superintendent for the Southern field -- Apology accepted" [sic]⁶⁸

Another area of inequity that was a result of racism involved pensions. When the Missouri Synod started a pension plan, the Synodical Conference Mission Board tried to make sure the white workers would be included. After Rev. Nils Bakke's death, the Synodical Conference Mission Board argued that Mrs. Bakke should be supported. It was reported to the March 1922 meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board:

Support of Mrs. Bakke - Mo. Syn Board of Support "confuses the matter regarding support of white and colored workers." It does not act on Rev. Bakke's case as such. It was resolved to send a committee to argue the question regarding the support of a member of the Mo Synod (worker in the Colored Mission) before the Board of Support.⁶⁹

In 1926, the Synodical Conference Mission Board was still trying to work something out for the white workers.⁷⁰ In getting coverage for its white workers, the Synodical Conference Mission Board was successful. However, the black workers did not reap any benefits for many years to come.

The white pastors were members of the pension plans of their synods. The missionary board paid its share for them in the plans, but it made no compensatory allocations for its Black workers, who, because they were not white and therefore not members of a synod, were ineligible to join the pension plans. The executive secretary of the missionary board continued to negotiate with the constituent synods about this disparity and to plead that some form of security be opened, or created, for our Black workers, at least; this is what

⁶⁸Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 27, 1927, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁶⁹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, March 16, 1922, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

⁷⁰Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, April 21-22, 1926, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

he, the executive secretary, told the workers when he visited their conferences. It seems that these negotiations went on without success year after year. Five years before the missionary board discontinued work in the continental United States, the good news came. The technicalities had been worked out. The Black workers could now be covered by the pension plan of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The missionary board would pay the employer's share, also, for all the Black workers as it had paid through the years for its white workers.⁷¹

One last aspect of the Mission Work of the Synodical Conference affected by racism was the way in which discipline cases were handled. The summary statement of this procedure made in the "Report on Survey of Negro Missions" described this effect. In essence it demonstrated that the black worker was at the mercy of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.

Dealing with the increasing number of Negro pastors unworthy of the ministry and with pastors dissatisfied, the Missionary Board followed an established line of procedure. Together with the Superintendents the Missionary Board investigated the individual cases, and their verdict was final. If a case of discipline arose, it was for the Missionary Board to take action, to try the offending pastor, to remove the undeserving and unfit from the ministry. This procedure was also in accordance with the articles of incorporation defining rights and duties of the Missionary Board

There might have at one time been a reason for this method now perpetuated by "usus." The Missionary Board possibly had no other choice in the early beginnings of the Negro Missions to do otherwise, because the Negro Christians were not sufficiently advanced in their understanding of Christian doctrine and practice. Then, too, there was no complaint on the part of the Negro pastors and Christians. They were satisfied because they believed that this was solely the work of the Board and really not any of their concern.

Today, however, as the cases of discipline multiply and the number of resignations increase also because of some grievances and misunderstandings with some of the Superintendents or with the Missionary Board, our Negro Christians are not so ready to acquiesce. They are filled with indignation and resentment because they have none of their own race, no impartial committee to whom

⁷¹Richard C. Dickinson, Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 178.

they might appeal for a hearing or a rehearing. And we need not at all be surprised that these sentiments receive such prominence today if we consider the present-day trend in Negro America, with its emphasis placed on race equality, on Negro rights and privileges.⁷²

An Attempt at the Theological Validation of Racism

The low point in the various manifestations of racism within the black mission work of the Synodical Conference came when these racist views were challenged on a Biblical basis. The response of the Synodical Conference Mission Board was to try to establish a Biblical basis for segregation and to justify a continuance of the practice.

Late in 1941 Rev. Andrew Schulze, the pastor of St. Philip's Lutheran Church in St. Louis, published a little book entitled My Neighbor of Another Color. While the book was not an exegetical study, Pastor Schulze pointed out that racial segregation was without New Testament precedent, and that, in fact, the entire New Testament was opposed to the very idea. To support his view Schulze pointed out that the Jews of the Old Testament as the bearers of the promise, had been instructed by God to remain racially separate. However, in the New Testament all barriers were removed for those in Christ. This is demonstrated in the account in the book of Acts involving Peter, the Jew, and Cornelius, the Gentile. It took a special vision from God before Peter grasped that social / racial distinctions were no longer valid for those in Christ. Schulze further supported his point with the incident described in Galatians 2, when Peter had quit eating with Gentiles because some Jewish Christians had arrived who were opposed to the practice. Paul reminded the Galatians how he had corrected Peter to his

⁷²Reports and Memorials, 1944, pp. 33-34.

face before everyone, because his actions were contrary to the Gospel message.⁷³ In discussing Jesus' opposition to the separation of the races, Schulze pointed to the accusation raised by Jesus' enemies, "He eats with tax collectors and public sinners." Schulze also pointed to Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan as an example of how Jesus eliminated the walls of separation.⁷⁴

Needless to say the Synodical Conference Mission Board was not pleased with the book, especially since the book had been written without their authorization. In June 1942 the minutes of the Synodical Conference Mission Board recorded that they had been faulted for failing to publicize the book. Pastor John G. F. Kleinhans, a member of the board, was to submit a review of the book, "setting forth the basic principles underlying the entire question."⁷⁵

Pastor Kleinhans presented an oral review of the book at the September 1942 meeting of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, and at the same meeting, Prof. J. T. Mueller presented a written review. Both were thanked for their presentation, and a resolution was passed asking the Executive Committee of the Synodical Conference Mission Board to confer with Pastor Schulze about the matter.⁷⁶ This conference never took place. At the November 1942 meeting of the board, the reaction to

⁷³Andrew Schulze, My Neighbor of Another Color: A Treatise on Race Relations in the Church, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941), pp. 15-17.

⁷⁴Schulze, My Neighbor of Another Color, pp. 23-30.

⁷⁵Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, June 2, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

⁷⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 9-10, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

My Neighbor of Another Color was again discussed, and it was resolved to defer the discussion with Pastor Schulze.⁷⁷

This review of the book given by Dr. J. T. Mueller (dated August 21, 1942), is highly important for it demonstrated the theological basis on which the Synodical Conference Mission Board operated. Dr. Mueller first noted that the author wrote without the knowledge and consent of the Synodical Conference Mission Board.

His procedure makes the impression that he felt that the Missionary Board was not in sympathy with his views, and if that is the case it was certainly a very dubious undertaking "to aid missionaries" by counseling them contrary to the judgment of those responsible to the Church for their work.⁷⁸

Dr. Mueller indicated that the New Testament references to Peter and Cornelius, as well as the whole question of Jews and Gentiles eating together were not applicable because the individuals involved were all white, and therefore did not apply to the case of black and white relationships. Schulze was therefore accused of misrepresentation.

. . . the "social equality" between Peter and Cornelius . . . did not involve the social barriers that exist between Whites and Negroes and which God Himself has created, obviously for the purpose of a natural social segregation.

. . . the misrepresentation here lies chiefly in the fact that the New Testament does not forbid such segregation, which fact, of course the author does not mention, . . . But by failing to mention that there is no Scripture prohibition of segregation, he makes the erroneous impression as if the New Testament demands the abolition of race segregation. If that were the case, then, too, the "Indian Reservations" in our country would have to be abrogated and many other social and economic institutions which separate people. In reality, race segregation is an adiaphoron, a matter of civic

⁷⁷Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, November 10, 1942, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

⁷⁸"A Review and Opinion on My Neighbor of Another Color," (Andrew Schulze, Author), J. T. Mueller papers, CHI, 200-M J.T. Mueller, Box 7, File 4.

adjustment, and as such it has nothing to do with the spiritual truths which Christianity teaches."

But far worse is the closing paragraph on page 147: "New Testament Christianity is built on the New Testament. The New Testament makes no distinction among men in the Church on the basis of race. Arguments intended to bar men on racial grounds from other fields of human activity and association find no foundation when applied to the Church. The Negro, our common brother in Christ, is to be offered sincerely the hand of fellowship by the Christian congregation. Thus the Christian Gospel is vindicated in the Christian's relation to his neighbor of another color." The paragraph ignores the fundamental distinction between the invisible and visible Church, the heavenly and the earthly status, the spiritual and social blessings which men enjoy by the grace of God. It is the social gospel which the author here uses for the advancement of his views. The Negro indeed is to receive all the spiritual blessings of the gospel, but his social status in the world is a temporal matter which has nothing to do with his spiritual status. . . . it does not mean for a Negro or an Indian or a Chinese to enjoy all the social blessings which other Christians have when he enters the Christian Church.

But the race relations problem cannot be adjusted in the simple, superficial way which he advocates. The problem is too complex, too ramified, too deeply ingrained in the fundamental racial differences which God Himself has created to keep the races socially apart and thus to fill the earth and work out His blessings by their peculiar talents and blessings.

The reviewer himself has no solution of the race relations problem to offer. He has personally labored among the Negroes of our country for some time in the deep South. He has personally instructed theological students for service in our Negro missions and they have proved themselves very loyal to him. In his church work his relations with Negroes have been very cordial and satisfactory. He has eaten at their tables, slept in their homes, listened to their complaints and has had much opportunity to appreciate their sterling qualities of kindness and candor as also their fierce struggle for existence in a social setup that does not favor them.

Personally the reviewer does not regard the Negro race as in itself inferior to others. If Negroes are inferior to other races, it is partly because of their racial characteristics and partly because of the social and economic causes that have their roots in the deepest subsoil of racial destiny. Nor does the reviewer believe that the Negro is a servant of his brethren because of a curse pronounced upon him by Noah. That "Messianic curse" was fulfilled when Israel captured the land of Canaan, the home of Canaan's descendants. There is no other curse upon the Negro race than the common curse which sin has placed upon all human beings since the Fall of Adam.

The reviewer, however, believes that by the grace and providence of God, and for the special mission which they should perform in the world, certain races at times become superior to others. (examples given are Egyptians, Babylonians, Israel, English and Americans)

The Negro may never get what is commonly called "social equality." In fact, in the last analysis, what he understands by "social equality" is a mere figment of the mind. Perfect social equality is found nowhere in this world, not even among the whites. And so far as the White, Black and Yellow races are concerned, they differ from each other so radically that there can never be intermarriage nor perfect social equality. God, in His infinite wisdom, has created barriers among races (CF. the confusion of tongues, Gen. 11:7 ff.), just as among individuals, which men will never remove. But there should be friendly neighborly, helpful cooperation based upon the recognition of the negro as a human being and upon full justice and equity.

So far as individual aspects of the race problem are concerned, Christian love ought to be sufficient to decide whatever issues may arise. If in a Lutheran community there happens to be a Lutheran Negro, the White congregation should not deny him the right to worship in its church. But neither should the Negro demand for himself such privileges as (because of its peculiar social setup) the congregation is not ready to grant. Let him remember that it may not be lack of love that accounts for the reason why some Whites will not kneel side by side with a Negro at the Communion Table, but some other cause. The reviewer himself has communed with Negroes in their churches and this has proved no problem to him. But it may prove a problem to others and he will not charge them with lack of Christian love because of it.

As soon as a number of Negro Lutherans have gathered in one place, wisdom suggests that they form their own church, for after all the Negro will assert himself best in his own racial group just as do other groups.

The reviewer has no brief for such ignorant Whites as condemn the Negro and deprive him of an opportunity for moral, spiritual and social development simply because of his color. Such offenders are not worthy of even being mentioned and should receive due punishment. No man need be ashamed of his color, no matter whether it be black, yellow or white. It is what a color stands for that makes one proud or ashamed of it. Solid value is recognized in all worthy human beings, no matter what their color may be.⁷⁹

⁷⁹"A Review and Opinion on My Neighbor of Another Color," (Andrew Schulze, Author), J. T. Mueller papers, CHI, 200-M J.T. Mueller, Box 7, File 4.

There can be little doubt that Dr. Mueller opted for segregation in the church. His assertion was that race is God's creation for the purpose of natural social segregation. However, the only Scriptural support he attempted to give was the separation which occurred in connection with the confusion of tongues as the tower of Babel was being built. Dr. Mueller also found support for his argument in the distinction between the invisible and visible church. While admitting that the black Christian was a member of the invisible church, as a result of his faith in Christ and that therefore, there is fellowship of all believers no matter what color in the invisible church, he went on to assert that this did not carry over into the visible church, because the visible church pertained to what went on in this life. This argument, however, is valid only if Dr. Mueller's prior argument is correct, namely, that race was created by God for the purpose of natural social segregation.

Dr. Mueller's attempt to place segregation on a Scriptural foundation would not stand. He himself rejected one of the most commonly used defenses for segregation, the "curse of Canaan." Nor does the incident of the confusion of tongues at Babel demonstrate that God has created the barriers of race. Race is not mentioned in the account. The incident proves only that the phenomenon of different language has occurred as God's judgment against man's sinful pride, but also as God's blessing to prevent mankind from getting into worse trouble. With the same logic used by Dr. Mueller, the passage could be used to defend the segregation of German speaking churches from English speaking churches. Dr. Mueller distorted the meaning of the incident at the tower of Babel. While the incident could be used to demonstrate that the fear of those of

another language or race was a curse of sin, or that divisiveness within society itself was a curse of sin, it in no way puts God's sanction on this. In any case, the message of the New Testament is that those who are in Christ are one; all causes of divisiveness are removed. Contrary to Dr. Mueller's opinion, the incident of Peter and Cornelius was directly applicable. While neither one was black, the separation involved was certainly ethnic. The Jews of the Old Testament were to be a race set apart, consecrated for the purposes of God. With the coming of Jesus, that separateness is no longer valid, nor is any other. God is no respecter of persons, It makes no difference in Christ there are no barriers to fellowship.

Dr. Mueller himself, in part, refuted his own arguments in the review, although he did not draw that conclusion. When he said that the only curse the black person was under was the curse of Adam, which is common to all human beings, he in effect implied that once forgiven, the black person was no different than any other forgiven human being. Nor was Dr. Mueller consistent even in his own argument for separation. When he pointed out that he had himself eaten with black people, slept in their homes, and took communion in their churches, he was in reality affirming that fellowship with them was a natural outcome of faith. When he indicated that a Lutheran black, moving into a new area where there was no black congregation, should not be deprived of the opportunity to worship in a Lutheran Church and receive the sacrament, he was in fact admitting that there was no valid barrier which prevented fellowship.

(To Dr. Mueller's credit he later reversed his position and admitted that he had been wrong.)⁸⁰

The Synodical Conference Mission Board bought the argument of Dr. Mueller and made it its own. In September 1943 executive secretary Louis Wisler presented a paper to the Synodical Conference Mission Board entitled, "Race in the Church."

It was pointed out that "race is a division of the human species, the members of which have certain characteristics in common. One distinctive feature of race is its divisiveness. In this respect it may be compared with the confusion of tongues at Babel." - "All social reform endeavor, including the abolition of race distinction, under the guise of Christian missionary work, can only result in the greatest harm and obstruction in the Kingdom of Christ, the Christian Church." "Had it been His purpose to abolish outward differences in Society, Jesus might have demonstrated it by entering into the houses of the Gentiles and eating with them. But there is no evidence that He ever did so."⁸¹

There was little that was different in this presentation than had been stated by Dr. Mueller. When Wisler tried to demonstrate that Jesus did not intend to abolish segregation because he never ate in the house of a Gentile, Wisler had unwittingly undermined Dr. Mueller's argument that the case of Cornelius and Peter did not apply to the race question, since that was precisely what Peter had done, eaten with a Gentile.

⁸⁰Dr. Andrew Schulze, in Race Against Time described the reaction to My Neighbor of Another Color, and his effort to discuss the matter with Dr. Mueller. Schulze indicated that for months Dr. Mueller would not consent to meet with him. Finally, one day in the Fall of 1942*, when Schulze had gone to Concordia Seminary to give a lecture on race relations, Dr. Mueller asked to meet with him and told him, "I have changed my mind; I agree with you and intend to retract my review of your book." p. 101. * (The date of this cannot be correct, because the review was not written until August of 1942. It was probably in 1943, since the Synodical Conference Mission Board minutes in November 1943 referred to a comment by Dr. Mueller that he had had a friendly conversation with Pastor Schulze pertaining to the matter of race.)

⁸¹Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, September 8-9, 1943, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement I, Box 4.

Clearly the men on the Synodical Conference Mission Board were men of their age in matters of race as well. When their customary ways of thinking and applying passages of the Scriptures were challenged, rather than considering that their attitude toward race might have been wrong, they responded by rising to the defense of their long cherished view, striving to prop it up and give it a Scriptural foundation.

Efforts to Eradicate Racism

There appears to be no public statement from the Synodical Conference Mission Board which unequivocally stated that segregation was contrary to the New Testament. This was true even after 1946, when integration into the existing districts of synods became the goal. In 1952, Dr. Karl Kurth presented guidelines in an essay, "Integration of Negroes." In the essay, Kurth laid all the ground work, but then at the last moment, apparently out of a fear of offending someone, pulled back and failed to continue to the final conclusion. Kurth hesitated, stating that if a congregation continued to practice segregation, it was not desirable, but it could not be condemned as sinful.

In the essay Kurth described the function of the church as winning souls for Christ, regardless of color. Congregations in changing neighborhoods were urged to remain and work in that setting rather than sell their property and relocate.

Six facts were listed that needed to be remembered in the matter of integration. 1. God would have all to be saved. 2. God's plan of salvation embraces the entire world. 3. God's grace in Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed to all nations as indicated in the Great Commission. 4. In following Christ's command to preach to every creature, no distinction

can be made regarding nationality, race, or color. God is not a respecter of persons. 5. The holy Christian Church is the one commanded to reach out to all nations. 6. The chief function of the church is to spread the Gospel to all, irrespective of race.

Congregations must grasp these facts before integration can become possible. However, it was also recognized that in the congregations there might be some who would assent to this intellectually but would have problems assenting emotionally, and therefore might be inclined to limit the application of these principles. It would not be wise or discreet, therefore, to automatically brand such individuals as loveless, if they preferred that blacks would remain in their own congregations. It might indeed prove a more effective mission tool. However, when it was not possible that such a station be formed, then integration was the answer and should be sought, but not in a legalistic way.⁸²

In contrast with the hesitancy of the leaders of the Synodical Conference to give the full witness of the Scriptures in the matters of race, the black pastors were not afraid to do this. The Pastoral Conference of the Alabama-Upper Florida Division of the Lutheran Synodical Conference adopted fourteen theses on race relations on June 30, 1961. Theses one through nine dealt specifically with racism and segregation in church membership.

I. In keeping with Christ's earnest prayer that all his followers be one so that the world might believe that the Father had sent Him, we deeply desire to be one in faith and fellowship with all those who recognize the lordship of Christ. We are convinced that the witness to Jesus Christ by the Lutheran Church in the South

⁸²Proceedings of the Forty-Second Convention of the Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota, August 12-15, 1952, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), pp. 131-133.

would be strengthened by the complete oneness of Synodical Conference and Southern District congregations in life, worship, and witness.

II. We testify that racial discrimination and segregation is sin, Acts 2:42. 1 John 1:7; 2:15-17. John 4. Acts 10 and all passages which prove that the barrier between Jew and Gentile is sin.

III. We believe that this sin requires repentance on the same Scriptural teaching which requires repentance of any and all sin. Matt. 3:2; 24:47.

IV. We therefore preach, teach, and witness against racial discrimination with the same earnestness and emphasis which we use against any other sin. James 2:1-10. Acts 20:27.

V. We hold that any sin and particularly a sin which is as prominent as racial discrimination should not be dealt with as an adiaphoron but with the same firmness and candor which any article of faith should receive in its application. Matt. 28:18-20. "Observe all things."

VI. We believe that the fellowship within the communion of saints already confessed by virtue of membership in the Synodical Conference should be practiced. I John 1:7. Acts 2:42. Gal. 2:12.

VII. We believe that Christian fellowship (pulpit, altar, and communion) when practiced under adverse worldly conditions will serve under God's blessings to strengthen unity in Kingdom building rather than harm the congregation's mission extension, since teaching and practicing God's Word in fullness can never be antagonistic to the growth of the Kingdom. Acts 4:19-20; 5:29. Christians rejoicing in the unity which they have with the Father and with one another through Jesus Christ will gladly suffer to establish and maintain this unity and to extend it to a world dead in its separation from God and from man. Matt. 16:18. I Pet. 1:7. Rom. 8:16-18.

VIII. We believe that all rights and privileges inherent in the Church are the possession, by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, of all Synodical Conference communicants and therefore should not be denied any of these members in requests for transfers or in the acceptance of transfers. (See the confirmation rite).

IX. We believe that all rights and privileges as well as obligations and responsibilities given to a congregation by virtue of its membership in the one Body of Christ should not be denied any Synodical Conference congregation on the grounds of racial origin or man-made discrimination patterns. I Peter 2:9. Rev. 1:6.⁸³

⁸³"Thesis on Race Relations and Southern District Negotiations," The Missionary Lutheran 39 (September 1961):69,72.

Conclusions

In considering the attitude of racism in Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, it is obvious that the struggle and tensions within it were simply a miniature of what the United States as a whole was experiencing in the matter of race relations. Nor were the leaders of the black mission of the Synodical Conference in the vanguard in addressing this change. Even as these leaders became aware of the problem and recognized that it was not possible to change people's attitudes by decree from above, they still hesitated to use the unique power that was theirs just because they were the church. They hesitated to label as sin something that was condemned by the Scriptures and for this reason found it more difficult to apply the Gospel, the one power that would change also the attitudes of the heart and help the Lutheran church grow out of her racist attitudes.

The Attitude of Authoritarianism

In order to conduct its black mission, the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference established a definite structure. The basic responsibility for the work was given to the Synodical Conference Mission Board, which was to supervise the workers and to give a report at each Convention of the Synodical Conference. However, the Synodical Conference itself did little more than act on the various recommendations that were made by the Synodical Conference Mission Board. The delegates were actually in a position to do little more, for at each convention the vast majority of the delegates were novices. Throughout the years in which the Synodical Conference operated its black mission, conventions

met biennially, and normally a delegate's election to represent his district or group of circuits was a once-in-a-life-time experience. The reality was that the power to operate the black mission was vested in the Synodical Conference Mission Board. The authoritarian attitude, which was the attitude with which the board operated, therefore, made its impact on the work of the black mission.

Definition

Authoritarianism is essentially a style of administration which is built on a superior - underling relationship. Authoritarianism out of control becomes, a "we are the boss approach." "We will direct, you will obey." "I don't care if you think it is right or wrong, you do it because I say so."

Authoritarianism in the Synodical Conference

The problem of tensions in the relationship between board and worker was not unique to the Synodical Conference. In any type of work where a worker on the job is controlled by a distant board, there is an inherent potential for misunderstanding. This is also true in the work of the church. A mission board that is responsible for work done in several different locations, and which must allocate a limited amount of funds between them will have a far different perspective to any given need than will the missionary in a specific locality who sees only the needs of his field. It becomes easy for a missionary to say, "I have no input at all in the decisions."

Henry Nau, the president of Immanuel College, was a missionary in India for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from 1905 to 1913 prior to his work in the black mission of the Synodical Conference. His

relationship with the Missouri Synod Foreign Mission Board was less than ideal. While in India, when the opportunity presented itself, he took the initiative without approval from his board and moved into a new town, Trivandrum. The Foreign Mission Board in St. Louis was not pleased when they learned of his action. Nau, for his part, chided the board members because he considered them indecisive and felt they lacked confidence in their missionaries who knew first hand what the opportunities were. But in his enthusiasm, Nau had forgotten that this new work had to be done in a new language. While he might have found no difficulty in mastering this language, this still left the board with the task of finding the means to produce literature in this new language.⁸⁴

However, within the Synodical Conference black mission, the relationship between the board and its workers deteriorated to a degree that it produced far more alienation and hostility than would have been reasonably expected. The authoritarianism of the Synodical Conference Mission Board played its part in this deterioration. Many examples of the authoritarianism of the Synodical Conference Mission Board have been discussed above and need not be repeated.⁸⁵ The results damaged the work of the mission.

In 1938, executive secretary Louis Wisler developed a set of "Helpful Reminders to Mission Congregations," which were ratified by the Synodical Conference Mission Board and then sent out to the subsidized congregations to notify them of the procedures that now applied. The congregation was to set a goal for the amount that it would raise, and

⁸⁴Nau, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁵See chapter 2 above, pp. 48-50, 64-87.

then to request a subsidy for the remainder of their expenses. In conjunction with the amount of subsidy which was granted, it was stated that in the event that the offerings of a congregation exceeded its estimate, the difference would be deducted from the amount of subsidy. By its decree, without any apparent input from subsidized congregations, the Synodical Conference Mission Board declared, "We will decide exactly how much you can spend and on what, and if you raise any more and try to do anything extra, it will come off your subsidy." The effect of this policy was to destroy any incentive on the part of the congregation to venture out on its own, or to increase its giving. In that same set of guidelines the Synodical Conference Mission Board also decreed that if the congregation did not come up with their estimated amount and the salary of the pastor was not paid in full, that was his loss.⁸⁶

A further effect is that this authoritarianism prevented any significant responsibility from being given to the congregations in the black mission, which in turn prevented them from taking matters into their own hands. The following comments printed in the 1944 report of the Survey of Negro Missions made the results very plain.

Not a new mission was begun at the initiative of the Negro pastors. Several attempts were made, but all eventually failed. New fields were opened only at the initiative of the Missionary Board or of white sister congregations. The Negro congregations were urged to concentrate on self-support rather than on any new mission project. Yet experience teaches us that nothing will arouse and stimulate a greater interest in soul saving in pastors and in members of our churches than to place the responsibility for the development of given fields upon them. True, many of our Negro Christians are still rather inexperienced. Some of them, however, could exert good leadership. The Negro churches as a whole, we will agree, still need brotherly advice, guidance, and direction for a long time to carry out any mission program, be it within the parish

⁸⁶Synodical Conference Mission Board, minutes, January 12-13, 1938, CHI, 111.0R, Supplement VII.

or the near-by community. But let us give them a chance to go forward. Teach them how to do it.⁸⁷

. . . . We believe, however, that after sixty-five years of preaching and teaching of the Gospel at least some of our fellow Christians in the Negro churches together with their pastors have sufficiently advanced to understand the duties placed upon them in Matthew 18. We believe that our Negro Christians ought to gradually take matters in hand and be urged to perform their God-given duties. They ought to have a voice not only in the decision of discipline cases, but also in self-government and in matters concerning the development of Negro Missions. Will the Negro churches ever learn to stand on their own feet and ever learn to walk if we continue to hold them up in our arms? A mother knows very well that her little one will never grow strong and learn to walk unless it is given an opportunity to get on the floor and scramble around and try again and again until it succeeds and toddles along.⁸⁸

Conclusion

To specify the precise reason why the Synodical Conference Mission Board developed such an extreme authoritarianism in its relationship with its workers is not possible. One factor was perhaps an element of the racist attitude which regarded the black person as incapable of taking care of himself and whose advice was not worthy of much consideration. While it is true such an attitude is discernible in the Synodical Conference Mission Board, it is questionable if that played much of an influence in the development of the authoritarian attitude so prevalent in the Synodical Conference Mission Board, especially since this authoritarianism dominated its relations with the white workers such as Dr. Nau, and the white faculty of Immanuel College as well.

Dr. Richard Dickinson in Roses and Thorns suggests that one element may have been the dual social system in the Southern States where

⁸⁷Reports and Memorials, 1944, pp. 31-32.

⁸⁸Reports and Memorials, 1944, p.34.

for a long period of time the vast majority of the black mission work was done. It would have caused less trouble in those states if the black workers were controlled by a white superintendent, who in turn was responsible to a white board, than if the impression was given that the blacks were process.⁸⁹ While this is possible, the apparent lack of careful prior planning and evaluation, which so often characterized decisions of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, make it questionable if this was a likely cause for the development of an extreme authoritarian style of leadership.

It would appear that the real culprit was in the structure of the board itself and its relation to the Synodical Conference. The members on the board were pastors or professors, most from the Missouri Synod, and most living in St. Louis, who tended to make membership on the board a second career. Members were routinely re-elected until they asked to no longer serve because of other commitments or age. Both Christopher Drewes and Louis Wisler served many years on the board first as a member, then as secretary, then as chairman, and finally as executive secretary. Edwin L. Wilson followed much the same course, except that when they asked him to serve as executive secretary, he declined.

The Board in effect became a self-perpetuating entity in itself. The members of the Board had served so long that they were convinced that they knew what was best, knew what had worked in the past, and needed little outside advice to make their decisions. The members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board seem to have been convinced that they were doing what was best for the spread of the Gospel among black people

⁸⁹Dickinson, pp. 82-83.

and seem to have been genuinely amazed that their decisions so often met with resistance.

POSTSCRIPT

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference conducted a black mission for approximately 85 years. Was it a success? That depends on one's concept of success. In the sense that these 85 years saw a vast number of black people flocking to the Lutheran banner, the answer would have to be no. In the sense that sinners came to know their Savior, had a living and thriving faith, and died in that faith, then the answer would be an unqualified yes. In looking back over the work done in black mission of the Synodical Conference, a number of important factors are quickly noticeable.

Lack of Strategy

One factor was an apparent lack of strategy for conducting this work both on the part of the Synodical Conference itself and the Synodical Conference Mission Board. Even at its inception, the whole enterprise of black mission had an accidental character. When the question was raised, "Is it not time for us to start a mission of our own?", part of the rationale given for the affirmative answer was that the laity wanted a mission. They were giving their money. If the Synodical Conference did not begin a mission, that money might be used to support the work of one of the German mission societies with whom there was no doctrinal agreement. The mission chosen could just as well have been a mission to the American Indians as to the "freedmen" of the South,

for in 1877, as a mission was being discussed, H. A. Preus, President of the Norwegian Synod, had suggested both possibilities.

As the black mission expanded, the impetus came from external events rather than as a result of board planning. When an opportunity presented itself, if it was in a position to do so, the Synodical Conference Mission Board took advantage of it. The work in Meherrin, Virginia, was begun just because Rev. W. R. Buehler, who had formerly been a missionary in Africa, moved into the area. The work in Mobile, which had been started by Rev. John F. Doescher on a missionary trip, was pursued vigorously only during the brief time that Rev. Leopold Wahl, a former missionary in India, was available. Once Buehler and Wahl accepted calls out of the Synodical Conference mission, the work in those two cities floundered. The work in North Carolina and Alabama was started because of totally unexpected requests for help from outside sources. As massive shifts in black population occurred with the migrations from the rural South to the cities, especially in the North and West, congregations were begun. However, this was not due to an aggressive policy on the part of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, but because white congregations requested, and at times financed, a mission in the black community.

This lack of strategy became especially apparent in the efforts made by the Synodical Conference to train black workers for the field. First it was decided to send students to Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. Then, it was decided to open two seminaries in the South, apparently without any kind of analysis of the potential number of students, the need for such an institution, or the likelihood that it would be able to succeed. When it became obvious that the system was

inefficient and not working well, the Synodical Conference Mission Board was never able to find a solution and continued to operate its institutions much too long.

Segregation / Racism

Segregation was a fact of life in the United States. Without a great deal of critical thought, most people assumed it was supposed to be that way. This was also true of the vast majority of Lutherans who were members of the synods which belonged to the Synodical Conference, both the laity and the pastors. The factor of segregation had tremendous impact on the growth and operation of the black mission of the Synodical Conference. It limited the options available for the education of black clergy. If The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, in 1937, had been willing to allow black students studying for the ministry to attend Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, the story of Immanuel College in Greensboro would have been vastly different. Racism delayed for years the matter of organizing the black churches into a synod of their own. The constituent synods of the Synodical Conference were not willing to offer a black church affiliation with the Synodical Conference, or let a black church make its own decisions.

A desire to keep the races separate was responsible for the formation of many of the black congregations in Northern cities. As blacks moved into a white neighborhood and Lutheran blacks desired to attend the white churches in the area, the white churches would not

welcome them, suggesting that instead black congregations be formed. "After all they will be happier with their own kind."¹

Relation between Board and Workers

Another factor which afflicted the black mission work of the Synodical Conference was the hostility and misunderstanding between the workers in the mission and the men running the mission. This was especially prevalent from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s. A large number of black pastors left the mission during these years. These lost workers could not quickly be replaced. Many congregations were without pastors for long periods of time, which greatly hampered their growth and at times threatened their existence.

These tensions which existed between the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the workers robbed the pastors of their enthusiasm and joy in the work of the church. As this was noticed by their members, it made the recruitment of young workers for the mission more difficult.

Factors Outside of the Synodical Conference

Factors over which the Synodical Conference had no control also greatly affected its work. As the black people moved from the rural areas of North Carolina and Alabama, where Lutheranism was strong, the potential for the schools and churches dwindled. As the public

¹While the Missouri Synod adopted a resolution at its 1956 convention urging congregations to stay in changing neighborhoods and reach out to the black community (Proceedings, 1956, p. 759), the practice of congregations abandoning changing areas continued. In any case this resolution was not adopted until the mission work of the Synodical Conference had been almost completely incorporated into the Missouri Synod.

educational system in North Carolina was improved the mission potential of the Lutheran day schools was even more drastically reduced.

The changes that occurred in black America, especially during the late 1930s and 1940s, profoundly affected the Synodical Conference. Blacks were no longer content with the roles which had been assigned to them by society. While the white members of the Synodical Conference Mission Board were aware of these changes, they did not deal well with them. They tried to continue to follow the old pattern. They apparently sincerely believed that the race issue was not the business of the church, and tried to avoid the race issue as long as possible. Yet it would not go away and compounded the tensions already existing between the power structure of the mission and its workers.

Nature of the Synodical Conference Itself

Perhaps one of the biggest factors affecting the conduct of the black mission work was the nature or essence of the Synodical Conference itself. The Synodical Conference was not a church. It had no constituency. Lutheran Christians would identify with their own synod. If asked about their church membership, they would have responded, "I am a member of the Wisconsin Synod, or I am a member of the Missouri Synod." If asked what work their church did, they would think first of the work of their own synod. They might or might not remember the black mission of the Synodical Conference. This was true both of the leaders and laity.

In the September 1894 issue of the Lutheran Pioneer, the editor, Rev. Rudolph A. Bischoff, commented on the reports about the 1894

Synodical Conference Convention that had appeared in other journals of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.

We have read in several papers that "aside from the discussions there was nothing of general interest," but these papers are mistaken. Their remark made our little Pioneer feel sad. An entire session was devoted to our Colored Mission, a very lengthy and encouraging report being presented by our Mission Board.²

In 1920, Rev. Nils J. Bakke wrote in The American Lutheran to stress the urgent need for funds in the black mission. He stressed to the readers that this is your mission.³ In fact this attitude plagued the Synodical Conference throughout its history. Few people seemed to identify with the Synodical Conference, It could be there or it could not be there, and it would not make much difference. This lack of identification carried over into a lack of enthusiasm for the mission work of the Synodical Conference and a lack of funds.

In the 1960 study of the operation of Immanuel College, the assessment was made that the Synodical Conference had treated the institution as a step-child.⁴ The truth is that whole black mission was treated as a step-child by the Synodical Conference.

The fact that the Synodical Conference was a federation also impacted the power of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, both in terms of what it could and could not do. When the Synodical Conference

²[Rudolph A. Bischoff], "The Outlook from the Editor's Window," Lutheran Pioneer 16 (September 1894):36.

³N[ils] J. Bakke, "The Urgent Needs of Our Negro Mission," The American Lutheran 10 (October 1920):7.

⁴Reports and Memorials for the Forty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America at Wisconsin Lutheran High School 330 N. Glenview Ave. Milwaukee 13, Wis. August 2-5, 1960, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 82, 85.

Mission Board considered moving the theological department of Immanuel College to Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, they could only do it if the Missouri Synod said yes. The Missouri Synod said no, and that was that. In another sense the nature of the Synodical Conference meant that there was no effective curb on Synodical Conference Mission Board's power as it ran the mission. If a worker or congregation did not like any action of the mission board, there was no other recourse except an appeal to a full convention of the Synodical Conference.

Conclusions

From the perspective of hindsight much can be pointed out that was not right in the way which the black mission was run. Some of the problems, such as migrations and the attitudes of the American society as a whole, were a result of factors beyond the control of the Synodical Conference Mission Board. Some of the problems arose because those running the mission were sinful men and made some poor decisions, abused their power, and were plagued by racism. Some of the problems arose because of the very nature of the Synodical Conference itself.

It is also true that if certain decisions had been made at a different time, such as allowing black students to attend the college of any constituent synod, or accepting black congregations into Missouri Synod membership in 1936, black mission work would have developed far differently. But it did not happen that way, and perhaps, while these decisions should have been made earlier, given the circumstances they could not have been.

Even if some group other than the "freedmen of the South" had been targeted by the Synodical Conference in 1877 as the object of its mission

work, crucial problems would have remained. The problems of identification of the membership with the constituent synods with the mission and the relationship between board and worker would have arisen in any case. However, because it was a black mission the problem of racism was added.

As the church bodies which were part of the Synodical Conference look at the history of their black mission, hopefully they will learn to avoid some of the mistakes that were made. If a joint venture is ever undertaken again, the churches involved must be sure to provide for a means for adequate planning, a way to insure that their members will accept the mission as their own, and a clearly defined way to control the authority of those overseeing the mission. In any case each church body can learn something about the danger inherent in having the same individuals in positions of authority over long periods of time, and the devastating effect there is on a mission, when workers and laity have the impression that all policy and decisions are handed down from above.

It is easy for us to throw stones as we evaluate the decisions, attitudes, and policies of the leaders of the Synodical Conference black mission. We must remember that they were men of their own age, and what seems obvious to us was not to them. All those who served in the mission did so because they wanted the Gospel message to be proclaimed to black men and women, and they did it in the best way they knew how, with the gifts God had given them. However, this does not change the fact that they were sinners, and as sinners they at times abused their power, had a condescending attitude toward blacks, were guilty of racism, and failed to reexamine their assumptions. For this they too needed and stood under the grace of God. As in every age, God used sinners with all their

inadequacies as his agents to proclaim the Gospel. In the synodical conference black mission that Gospel message was heard and it worked. A church was born and grew.

APPENDIX A

OHIO SYNOD, 1818

As Lutherans migrated from Pennsylvania and New York into Ohio and other regions of the frontier, the Pennsylvania Ministerium¹ endeavored to continue to serve them. The initial method was to have ministers serving established congregations near the frontier make periodic trips into the newly settled areas and serve the Lutherans they found in whatever way they could.

In 1806 a new plan was started. Two or three traveling missionaries were paid by the ministerium and spent the summer traveling the frontier with the hope of organizing congregations. When it proved to be very difficult for these scattered congregations which were established to maintain close contact with the Pennsylvania Ministerium, district conferences were organized. In 1812 the ministers in the Ohio area who were affiliated with the Pennsylvania Ministerium formed their own district conference. When their 1817 request for the right to establish their own synod was refused, the pastors of the Ohio district conference separated from the Pennsylvania Ministerium and established the Ohio Synod in 1818.

¹In August 1748 a number of clerical and lay delegates had gathered in Philadelphia for the ordination of John Nicholas Kurtz and the dedication of St. Michael's church. Their awareness of the need for a formal organization and the ensuing discussions at this time led to the formation of the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1748.

At the time of its formation, the Ohio Synod included a variety of theological views. There were some who advocated union with the Reformed. There were others much more confessionally oriented. When the General Synod² was formed in 1821 the Ohio Synod refused membership, both because it feared the new organization would prove to be hierarchical and because of the prevalence of the English language in the General Synod. However, the Ohio synod proved to be a conservative influence on the Lutheranism of its day. In 1830 it joined the conservative Tennessee Synod in celebrating the three-hundredth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. In 1833 when the German Reformed Synod of Ohio suggested a union with the Ohio Synod, the Ohio Synod replied they would be willing if it could be done on the basis of Lutheran theology. In 1867 the Ohio Synod participated in the formation of the General Council, but withdrew because of the unsatisfactory answer given to the "Four Points" which the Ohio Synod raised.³

The initiative for the formation of the Synodical Conference came from the Ohio Synod⁴ and it was one of the charter members of the Synodical Conference. By the time of the formation of the Synodical

²The General Synod, established in 1821, was a federation of Lutheran Synods. At the time of its formation there were six synods in existence, however, only four, the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the New York Ministerium, the Synod of North Carolina, and the Synod of Virginia participated in the deliberations. Of these the New York Ministerium decided not to join. The first convention was held in October 1821.

³The four points of Ohio were: "1. What relation will this venerable body in future sustain to Chiliasm? 2. Mixed Communion? 3. The exchanging of pulpits with Sectarians? 4. Secret, or unchurchly Societies?" Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, p. 156.

⁴"The Chicago Conference," Lutheran Standard 29 (February 1, 1871):20-21.

Conference in 1872 the Ohio Synod included a large number of members who were second or third generation immigrants. As a result the use of English was much more prevalent and there was a greater inclination to adapt to American customs.

Due to the predestinarian controversy, the Ohio Synod broke fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1881, and withdrew from the Synodical Conference. In 1931 the Ohio Synod, together with the Buffalo and Iowa Synods formed The American Lutheran Church.

APPENDIX B

ILLINOIS SYNOD, 1846

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Illinois was organized in 1846 when the Synod of the West¹ was dissolved and its congregations in Southern and Central Illinois banded together to form their own synod. Most of the pastors and laymen of this synod had migrated into Illinois from the East coast. At its first convention in October 1846 the Illinois Synod was offered the building of the Hillsboro Academy in which to conduct a school. Between 1846 and 1852 the Illinois Synod operated "The Literary and Theological Institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Far West" in Hillsboro. In 1852 the institution was moved to Springfield, Illinois, and renamed "The Illinois State University." During the late 1850s C. F. W. Walther enlisted Rev. Sidney Levi Harkey of the Illinois Synod in an abortive attempt to establish an English congregation in St. Louis.²

From its inception the Illinois Synod was a member of the General Synod. However, in 1867, when it decided to withdraw its membership from the General Synod in favor of membership in the General Council, a division occurred. The Synod itself was dissolved in 1867 and two

¹The Synod of the West was affiliated with the General Synod and had been organized in 1835 with congregations in Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. This Synod was dissolved in 1846.

²The precise date is uncertain. See S[idney] L[evi] Harkey, "Personal Recollections of C. F. W. Walther," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 17 (October 1944):91-94, (Originally published in Lutheran Observer, unknown date.)

separate groups were formed. Those wishing to remain with the General Synod were organized as the Synod of Central Illinois, and this group retained control of the institution in Springfield. The group which wished to join the General Council was organized as the Synod of Illinois and Adjacent states.

Because of dissatisfaction with the General Council's position regarding the four points, the affiliation of the Illinois Synod with the General Council was short lived. Already in 1869 a conference was held with representatives of the Missouri Synod.³ In 1871 the Illinois Synod withdrew from the General Council, and a second meeting with Missouri Synod representatives was held in 1872. This resulted in a declaration of theological agreement between the two Synods.⁴

While the president of the Illinois Synod, Rev. Robert Knoll, was present at the January 11-13, 1871 meeting which laid the groundwork for the formation of the Synodical Conference, he did not officially participate since at that time the Illinois Synod was still a member of the General Council. However, by 1872 the Illinois Synod had withdrawn from the General Council and was one of the charter members of the Synodical Conference.

³Protocoll der vierten Versammlung der Evangelische-Lutherische Synode von Illinois und andern Staaten, versammelt in der Gemeinde des Pastor F. Erdmann in der Horse Prairie bei Red Bud, Illinois, vom 9ten bis 13ten June 1870, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, 1870), pp. 16-17.

⁴Funfzehnter Synodal-Bericht der allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1872, (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synods von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, 1872), pp. 26-27.

In 1880 the Illinois Synod merged with the Missouri Synod. The pastors and congregations located in Illinois becoming part of the Illinois District of the Missouri Synod, and the congregations in Missouri becoming part of the Missouri Synod's Western District.

APPENDIX C

MISSOURI SYNOD, 1847

The roots of the Missouri Synod lie in two groups of German pastors. While the groups were quite different in many respects, the bond which drew them together was their common strong commitment to the Lutheran Confessions. The Saxon pastors were a very cohesive group. They were university trained, and in 1838 had participated, together with a large number of lay people, in an emigration led by Pastor Martin Stephan. The other group of pastors, the Loehe¹ men, were emergency missionaries. These were second career men, who, after receiving some basic training in Germany from Pastor Wilhelm Loehe, came to the United States to try to shepherd the scattered German settlers.

The experience of the Saxons in conjunction with their emigration is an important factor in the character of the Missouri Synod because it left a profound mark on both the pastors and the laity. As the emigrants left Germany under the leadership of Martin Stephan, they believed that the very existence of the Saxon Lutheran Church was threatened. The clergy's attitude toward Stephan was "that the means of grace were

¹Johannes Konrad Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872) was pastor at Neuendettelsau, Germany and was part of the larger confessional Old Lutheran movement in Germany, which was opposed to the 1817 Prussian union. In addition to his staunch confessionalism, Loehe favored an episcopal form of church polity with the clergy in control of the church. In 1853 Loehe broke his relations with the Missouri Synod over the doctrine of Church and ministry, and supported the newly founded Iowa Synod, which was formed by those who were sympathetic to his views. (For further information see Eric Hugo Heintzen "Wilhelm Loehe and the Missouri Synod, 1841-1853" unpublished PhD thesis, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, 1963.)

dependent upon his person and that, if he were silenced, the Lutheran Church would cease to exist in Saxony."² Stephan and the other clergy envisioned a hierarchical form of organization for their church in the United States, and while on board ship Stephan was invested as a bishop. However, shortly after their arrival in Missouri, Stephan was deposed by the clergy and exiled from the community founded by these Saxons.³ This led to a state of confusion among the immigrants. They re-evaluated the validity of their emigration and concluded that while conditions were difficult they were not impossible and their leaving did not bring the Church in Saxony to an end. But even more devastating were questions such as: did the pastors have valid calls; did they have valid sacraments; were they the church; were they even Christians?

The confusion was brought to an end by C. F. W. Walther. Through his study of Luther during this period, he was led to a correct understanding of the issues involved. Indeed, their prior conception of the church under Stephanism had been wrong. However, because of the universal priesthood of believers they could be sure that they were the Church, the congregations could legitimately call pastors, and they had

²Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 63.

³Soon after landing in St. Louis during January and February of 1839 a general sense of dissatisfaction with Stephan's leadership developed among the pastors, lay leaders, and to some extent the laity. As long as Stephan remained in St. Louis with the main group, there was little organized opposition. However, Stephan left St. Louis on April 26, 1839, for Perry county to supervise the development of the land, which had been purchased by the group. After a May 5 confession by one of the women in the group, which was a charge of adultery against Stephan, a series of actions by the clergy led to Stephan being deposed and expelled from the community on May 30. (For a complete description see Forster and Carl S. Munding, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947)).

valid sacraments. On the basis of theses he had developed, Walther was able to convince the majority of the group and resolve the chaos. However, as a result the laity were left with a fear of clergy domination.

The second group which joined in the formation of the Missouri Synod was represented by Rev. Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken and the Loehe men. Wyneken had come to the United States in 1838 to minister to the scattered German immigrants. The spiritual starvation he found distressed him greatly, which moved him to write a general appeal to Germany and eventually to return there to obtain help. Rev. Wilhelm Loehe of Bavaria was moved to action, training men for a year in his parsonage and then sending them to the United States as emergency helpers to serve the scattered German Lutheran immigrants.

Loehe's strong confessional background was passed on to his recruits, and although he had instructed them to seek ordination and membership in one of the existing Synods, they were not totally satisfied with the confessionalism of these synods.⁴ Through Der Lutheraner, which C. F. W. Walther had begun to publish in 1844, the men sent by Loehe became aware of the Saxon group. Several of the Loehe men met in Cleveland, Ohio, in September of 1845 and initiated the process which

⁴Most of Loehe's recruits had associated with the Ohio Synod, which was the most conservative of the synods at that time. However, there were two aspects of the Ohio Synod which were a source of discomfort. The one was the growing ascendancy of the English language and the other was the hesitancy of the Ohio Synod to take an official stand against the General Synod's lax confessional basis. (In 1820 the threat to German Lutherans posed by the spread of German rationalism and union with reformed bodies led to the formation of the General Synod. However, a question regarding the extent to which distinctive Lutheran doctrine and practice applied to the American scene was left unresolved.)

culminated in 1847 with the formation of the German Evangelical Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States.

The zeal for reaching the German immigrant, which had characterized Wyneken and Loehe, a unique church polity forged out of their experience with Stephanism, and the strong Lutheran Confessionalism which characterized both groups, remained prominent in the newly formed Synod. As a result of their efforts to reach the host of German immigrants arriving in the United States during these years, the congregations of the Missouri Synod were soon spread throughout the United States, making the Missouri Synod a truly national church body.

APPENDIX D

THE WISCONSIN SYNOD, 1850

The roots of the Wisconsin Synod lie in the plight of the German settlers who had settled in Wisconsin and the three pastors who had been sent by the Langenberger Mission Society¹ to serve them. These three were joined by two other pastors (the five serving a total of eighteen congregations) and formally organized the Wisconsin Synod in May of 1850 at Granville, Wisconsin.²

Initially, as a result of its close ties with the Langenberger Mission Society, the fact that its early leaders had been trained at the Barmen Training School for Missionaries,³ and its ties with the Pennsylvania Ministerium, in its early years the theological position

¹In 1837 a few Christians from the German cities of Langenberg, Wilberfeld, and Barmen organized the Langenberger Mission Society. The goal of the society was to provide trained pastors for the German immigrants in the United States. The three pastors, John Muehlhaeuser, who was a former baker, J. Weinmann, and W. Wrede, were graduates of the Barmen Training School for Missionaries. Wrede served a union congregation of Reformed and Lutheran members. During its first years of existence the Wisconsin Synod continued to receive both pastors and money from this society.

²Erwin Kowalke, You and Your Synod: The Story of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1961), pp. 8-9.

³The Barmen Training School for Missionaries was a German branch of the Basel mission Society, which was ecumenical in character, with pietistic tendencies especially under the influence of the Moravian Brethren. There was a strong tendency to mix Reformed and Lutheran theology.

of the Wisconsin Synod reflected the Spirit of the Prussian Union.⁴ This confessional laxity was sharply criticized by the synods like Missouri and Iowa, which bound themselves much more strictly to the Lutheran confessional writings. The leaders of the Wisconsin were well aware of this and characterized these more conservative synods as "old-style Lutherans," by which they meant bigoted and reactionary.⁵

As the influence of more conservative leaders such as John Bading and August Hoenecke began to grow in the Wisconsin Synod its spirit gradually changed. The Wisconsin Synod became more conservative and sought to establish ties with its more conservative former opponents. This change within the Wisconsin Synod is summarized by one of its own historians, Erwin Kowalke, who states:

In the earliest days of our Synod many pastors and members of the congregations, who were accustomed to the laxness that prevailed in Germany, did not take differences in doctrines very seriously. For some it was enough if a congregation called itself Lutheran or Evangelical; little attention was paid to doctrine or practice. So it happened that a goodly number of Germans, when they saw the name Evangelical, believed that they had found the same church they had belonged to in the Fatherland, and thus drifted into churches that were more Methodist than Lutheran. For others the name Lutheran seemed a sufficient guarantee that the church was a safe one to join. It was a painful struggle for pastors and congregations to win their way to a firm Lutheran foundation in their preaching and practice and to take a stand against the loose unionism of some of the Eastern synods and particularly against the church in Germany, which was a merger of Lutheran and Reformed elements, without any firm conviction in either direction.⁶

⁴In 1817 the king of Prussia, Frederick William III, had initiated the Prussian Union, which united by decree the Lutheran and Reformed churches under his jurisdiction. They were not required to change their doctrinal positions, but the intention was that they be considered as one communion and celebrate the Lord's Supper together.

⁵A. P. Voss, ed., Continuing In His Word 1850-1950: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), pp. 63-66.

⁶Kowalke, pp. 20-21.

Thus in 1872 the Wisconsin Synod was one of the original members of the Synodical Conference. In the years following 1872 the Wisconsin Synod was involved together with the Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska⁷ synods first in a federation⁸ and then in a merger.⁹ After the 1917 consolidation it was known as the "Evangelical Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States."

⁷The Nebraska Synod was originally the Nebraska District of the Wisconsin Synod, which, in 1904 for efficiency of administration became a separate Synod and part of the federation.

⁸On October 11, 1892, the Allgemeinde Evangelische Lutherische Synode von Wisconsin und anderen Staaten was organized in Milwaukee. This synod was in reality a federation of the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods. Each of the member synods retained their independence, with the Joint Synod having only advisory powers. However, they coordinated their home mission activities and jointly operated the educational facilities for their professional church workers.

⁹Beginning in 1911 the Joint Synod began to consider an actual organic union. A constitution was accepted in 1915, and in 1917 the constitution took effect. Final ratification of the constitution took place in 1919 after modifications of a few unclear sections. With this merger, all property and institutions of the individual synods were transferred to the Evangelical Joint Synod, and the Joint Synod was divided into eight geographic districts.

APPENDIX E

THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD, 1853

The situation among the Norwegian Lutherans presents a very complex picture, for the full variety of convictions and attitudes present in the church of Norway are represented among the Norwegians who emigrated to the United States. There were elements of pietism and puritanism. Some favored a strongly centralized system, while others were congregationally oriented. In addition, among these groups there were also varying degrees of confessional commitment.¹

One of those groups of Norwegians, the Norwegian Synod, was an original member of the Synodical Conference. At the time of its founding in 1853 the leaders of the Norwegian Synod were determined to be staunchly orthodox. Their need for training pastors brought them into contact with the Missouri Synod. After visiting Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, the Norwegian Synod resolved to train its pastors at the Missouri Institution.

The 1881 predestinarian controversy generated severe internal problems within the Norwegian Synod. While the majority of the Norwegian Synod supported the Missouri position, in order to facilitate a resolution of the dispute within their own synod, the Norwegian Synod withdrew from the Synodical Conference in 1883, although they did not sever fellowship with the Missouri Synod.

¹Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 220.

The Norwegian Synod was unable to resolve the dispute over predestination, and about one third of the synod withdrew and formed the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood. In 1900 the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood, the Norwegian Augustana Synod, and the Conference for the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, all foes of the Norwegian Synod, formed the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America.²

One goal of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America was the eventual unification of all Norwegian Lutherans in the United States. In order to achieve this goal a series of committee meetings were held between representatives of the various churches. The Norwegian Synod agreed to participate in these discussions. Theses covering the various areas of disagreement were developed between 1906 and 1910. These theses proved to be acceptable to all parties. However, in 1910, because of a difference over the role of man's will in conversion and the fact that the theses contained no antitheses specifically condemning former errors the discussions were nearly ended. However, the Norwegian Synod expressed a willingness to continue the negotiations and appointed a new committee. Finally, in 1912 with the "Austin Settlement," agreement was reached and the way was prepared for the merger of virtually all Norwegian Lutherans.³

²Theodore A. Aaberg. A City Set on a Hill: A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian Synod 1918-1968) (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishing Company, 1968). p. 44.

³The main problem had been the doctrine of election. The "Austin Settlement" (Opgjoer) allowed both positions to stand, calling them "two forms" of the doctrine of election. So long as they remained within certain bounds, avoiding the dangers of Calvinism and synergism, each side was free to use either approach in its expression of this doctrine. For further discussion see: E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 371-373. For the text of the "Austin Settlement" see Wolf, pp. 228-235.

The approval given to this settlement was far from unanimous within the Norwegian Synod. While the majority favored the merger, a significant minority were opposed, believing the Austin Settlement was a compromise. While most of this minority were eventually coaxed into participating in the merger, a remnant emerged from the minority who adamantly insisted that this agreement was a compromise of the Lutheran faith and that participation in the merger was in reality a forsaking of the Lutheran heritage, which they refused to do. This remnant which did not participate in the merger then formed the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1918 and rejoined the Synodical Conference in 1920.

APPENDIX F

THE MINNESOTA SYNOD, 1860

The roots of the Minnesota Synod lie in the Pennsylvania Ministerium and the Pittsburgh synod. Rev. John C. F. Heyer¹ was sent to Minnesota to try to organize the congregations into a synod. He became pastor of Trinity Church in St. Paul, and spent six years working in Minnesota. In 1860 he succeeded in organizing the Minnesota Synod. At its inception the Minnesota Synod reflected the more lax Lutheranism of the General Synod, and for a brief period was a member of the General Synod, having joined in 1864. When the General Council was formed, the Minnesota Synod was a member of that organization.

Beginning already in the early 1860s, the Wisconsin Synod pastors who were serving in Minnesota developed close ties with the pastors of the Minnesota Synod. As a result the Minnesota Synod shared the movement toward a more conservative posture that was occurring in the Wisconsin Synod. This became especially prevalent when Rev. Johann H. Sieker, who had been trained in the Gettysburg Seminary and ordained by the Wisconsin Synod in 1861, became pastor of Trinity Church in St. Paul in 1867, and then president of the Minnesota Synod. In 1871 the Minnesota Synod withdrew from the General Council and in 1872 agreement was reached with

¹John Carl Friedrich Heyer (1793-1873) was connected with the General Synod serving both as home missionary and the first General Synod missionary in India.

the Missouri Synod.² In 1892 the Minnesota Synod, together with the Michigan Synod and Wisconsin Synod formed a federation.³ The synods of this federation merged organically in 1917, forming the "Evangelical Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States."

²"Bericht uber das mit der ehrwürdigen Synods von Minnesota abgehaltene colloquium", Der Lutheraner 28 (July 1, 1872):149-150.

³On October 11, 1892, the Allgemeinde Evangelische Lutherische Synode von Wisconsin und anderen Staaten was organized in Milwaukee. This synod was in reality a federation of the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods. Each of the member synods retained their independence, with the Joint Synod having only advisory powers. However, they coordinated their home mission activities and jointly operated the educational facilities for their professional church workers. Beginning in 1911 the Joint Synod began to consider an actual organic union. A constitution was accepted in 1915, and in 1917 the constitution took effect. Final ratification of the constitution took place in 1919 after modification of a few unclear sections. With this merger, all property and institutions of the individual synods were transferred to the Evangelical Joint Synod, and the Joint Synod was divided into eight geographic districts.

APPENDIX G

THE ENGLISH SYNOD, 1888

Prior to the 1839 arrival of the Saxons in Missouri, Lutherans with roots in the Tennessee¹ and Holston Synods² had migrated into Missouri. As a result of the contacts between the Missouri Synod and the Tennessee Synod, these English congregations desired a closer relationship with the Missouri Synod. In 1872 Professor C. F. W. Walther, Professor Friedrich A. Schmidt, and Rev. C. Samuel Kleppisch were invited to attend a meeting at Gravelton, Missouri. The result of this meeting was the drafting of a constitution for "The English Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri." This constitution was to be acted on by the three English congregations, represented by Pastors Polycarp C. Henkel, Jonathan R. Moser, and Andrew Rader.³ By 1879 this conference had grown to seven pastors and congregations.

In 1878 the English Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri attempted to join the Synodical Conference. However, the Synodical Conference recommended that they unite with the Western District of the

¹As a result of a disagreement with the North Carolina Synod involving the licensing of clergymen and because of laxity of doctrine in the North Carolina Synod, four pastors serving in Tennessee formed the Tennessee in 1820. This Synod was a conservative influence and were strong opponents of the General Synod which was judged confessionally lax.

²The Holston Synod was formed in 1860 by the pastors of the Tennessee Synod who lived in Tennessee. Both it and the Tennessee Synod became part of the United Synod of the South in 1886.

³Proceedings of a Free English Lutheran Conference. Columbus. 1873, pp. 1-2.

Missouri Synod. This also was attempted. Delegates from the Western District attended the 1879 meeting of the English Conference. While close relations were established, the Missouri Synod was not at this time ready to accept these English speaking congregations into membership.

When the Ohio Synod withdrew from the Synodical Conference as an outgrowth of the predestinarian controversy, a few congregations favoring the Missouri Synod position severed their connection with the Ohio Synod and formed the Concordia Synod of Pennsylvania and Other States in 1882. The few English speaking congregations, which supported the Missouri position in the dispute, were left isolated. On May 21, 1882, a group of pastors in Cleveland, Ohio began to publish the Lutheran Witness in order to provide English readers with the Missouri Synod side of the predestinarian controversy.

In 1884 the English congregation at Coyner's Store, Virginia, which had been left without synodical affiliation by the controversy, petitioned the Synodical Conference asking it to consider the formation of an English Synod or district synod. The congregation pointed out that it did not see an advantage of affiliating with a synod whose language they did not understand. At this time, however, the Synodical Conference resolved that it was not yet time for such a Synod due to the lack of English speaking congregations. ⁴

In 1887, this congregation in Coyner's Store, Virginia, as well as the English Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri petitioned the

⁴Verhandlungen der zehnten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Cleveland, Ohio vom 13. bis 19. August 1884, (St. Louis, Mo.: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1884), pp. 76-77.

German Missouri Synod to allow them to join as a separate English district. While the German Missouri Synod acknowledged that doctrinal agreement existed, they felt there were insurmountable obstacles preventing these English congregations from actually becoming part of the synod. The Proceedings of 1887 say in part:

Since according to its constitution our Synod is a purely German one, it would hardly be possible to harmonize the establishment of an English District within its midst with this provision. And even if it were possible to set aside this objection, there are still other very serious reasons which make it seem extremely inadvisable to us to grant these congregations their petition. Nevertheless we are ready to extend the hand of fellowship to those congregations and to assist them in word and deed as much as we are able. Accordingly Synod passed the following resolutions:

Resolved, That the request of a number of English Lutheran congregations for permission to form a separate mission District within our Synod (that is, as a constituent part of the Missouri Synod with equal rights) be declined.

Resolved, That those English Lutheran congregations be encouraged by us to unite in an English-speaking Lutheran Synod of their own.

Resolved, That if in the opinion of those English-Lutheran congregations the time is not yet ripe to follow the advice just given and they would therefore prefer to remain dependent on us for the present, that their wish be granted in that a special mission commission be set up for them under the name "Mission Commission for English Missions."⁵

This advice to form their own organization was followed, and the congregation in Coyner's Store, Virginia, the congregations of the English Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri and other newly formed English congregations drafted a constitution in 1888, which was published in the August 7, 1888 Lutheran Witness.

⁵Carl S. Meyer, Moving Frontiers, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 361.

In October of 1888, with the encouragement of the Missouri Synod, a meeting of those interested in the formation of a new synod was held in Bethlehem church in St. Louis. At this meeting the constitution was signed and the organization began to function. Rev. Frederick Kuegele from the church in Old Coyner's Store, Virginia was elected the first president of "The General English Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri and Other States." The Lutheran Witness was given to the new synod and became one of its official periodicals. In 1890 the name was changed to "The English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States."

In 1890 the new synod, which numbered eight pastors and congregations asked to be admitted to the Synodical Conference. After a committee examined the new synods constitution, the English Synod was accepted into the Synodical Conference.⁶

In 1905 the president of the English Synod, Rev. Adolphus W. Meyer again came to the German Missouri Synod requesting if ways could be found to eliminate the barriers which in 1887 had prevented the English Synod from becoming an English District within the Missouri Synod. By 1905 the German Missouri Synod also had English speaking congregations and was more receptive to the request of the English Synod. It was reported to the English Synod that while the official language at conventions will remain German, the Missouri Synod was now ready to receive them as an English district. In 1908 a resolution was passed by the German Missouri

⁶Verhandlungen der dreizehnten Versammlung der Evangelische-Lutherischen Synodal Conference von Nord-Amerika zu St. Paul, Minn, vom 13. bis 19. August 1890, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1890), pp. 32-34.

Synod stating that a union with these English congregations was desirable and a committee was appointed to discuss the matter with the English Synod and give a report to the 1911 convention. The English Synod at its 1909 convention resolved to effect a union, and the union was consummated May 15, 1911, when the English Synod became the English district of the German Missouri Synod.

APPENDIX H
THE MICHIGAN SYNOD, 1860

The Michigan Synod, which was formed in Detroit in 1860, was actually the second attempt by Rev. Friedrich Schmid to establish a synod in Michigan. In 1833 he had been sent by the Basel Missionary Society, and with the support of the Pennsylvania Ministerium began to serve a number of Wuerttemberger immigrants who had settled in Michigan. He and two others founded the Michigan Synod in 1840. Since one of its main objectives was to reach to the tribes of American Indians in the area, it was also called the Missionary Synod. Based on Schmid's pledge that soundly confessional Lutheranism would be the basis of this Synod, Loehe's first missionaries to the Indians became affiliated with this Synod. They left, however, in 1846 as they realized the actual practice of the Synod was much more lax. Schmid himself then joined the Ohio Synod, although he continued to train men to supply the Indian missions which he had started.

By 1860 Schmid was ready to try again. In 1860 eight pastors gathered in Detroit and organized the Michigan Synod. This time the confessional basis was much more conservative as a result of the insistence of two conservative pastors, Stephan Kingmann and Christoph Eberhardt, who were a part of this new synod. However, there was leniency in the practice of church fellowship. Schmid's strong interest in missions remained prominent in the newly organized Michigan Synod, as evidenced by Eberhardt's travels even into the mining regions of Lake

Superior. This interest in missions was a contributing factor in the Michigan Synods decision to form a federation in 1893 with the Minnesota and Wisconsin Synods, because they believed this would open many new mission opportunities to them. In order to train their own pastors the Michigan Synod opened a Seminary in Manchester, Michigan in 1885. In 1887 the seminary was moved to Saginaw, Michigan.

The shift toward conservatism occurred more slowly in the Michigan Synod than it did in the Wisconsin and Minnesota synods. The Michigan Synod remained in the General Council until 1888. The reason they finally withdrew was because the General Council was not willing to insist that Lutheran pulpits and altars should be only for Lutheran preachers. In 1891 talks were held between the presidents of the Michigan and Minnesota Synods concerning the possibility of the Michigan Synods joining in the proposed federation which was to come into being in 1892. The Michigan Synod did become part of the federation in 1892 and in that same year the Michigan Synod also asked to be accepted into the Synodical Conference and was received.¹

Becoming a part of the federation in 1892 with the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods caused a significant disruption within the Michigan Synod. This involved the fate of their seminary in Saginaw. According to the plan of federation, the theological department of the Saginaw school was to be closed and the school was to continue to function as a preparatory school. The majority of the pastors and congregations were opposed to this plan and withdrew from the Michigan Synod in 1896. Those

¹Verhandlungen der verzehten Versammlung der Evangelische-Lutherischen Synodal Konferenz von Nord-Amerika zu New York, N. Y., vom 10. bis 16. August 1892, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1892), pp. 49-50.

who withdrew then formed an alliance with the Augsburg Synod. However, this proved unsatisfactory and lasted only until 1900. Gradually the wounds were healed. In 1904 the majority held a conference with the Missouri Synod. In 1906 a second conference was held with the minority of the Michigan Synod which had remained part of the federation with Wisconsin and Minnesota synods, and had retained its membership in the Synodical Conference. These efforts brought about a reconciliation, and in 1909 the majority returned to the Michigan Synod and the federation. The school in Saginaw became an academy in 1910. The Michigan Synod then became part of the 1917 merger of the Wisconsin Synod.

APPENDIX I
THE SLOVAK SYNOD, 1902

The immigration of Slovakian people began after 1848, with a dramatic increase in numbers after 1875. The poor economic conditions in their homeland prompted a large percentage of the immigrants and, in many cases only the head of the family would come, viewing his stay as temporary, until he was able to attain financial independence, after which time he planned to return to his homeland. This attitude obviously impeded the establishment of churches.

A further factor which hampered the establishment of Slovakian Lutheran churches was the process of Magyarization in their homeland of Hungary. The goal of the Hungarian government was to impose Hungarian culture on the racial minorities of the country. The natural outcome of this was that the Hungarian Lutheran church had little inclination to encourage the preservation of Slovakian Lutheranism in a foreign land.

The result was that when the large scale immigration of Slovaks began about 1880, there were no Lutheran pastors, and for many years after their number was woefully insufficient. While Lutheran pastors from other synods tried to help, the result was that union congregations of Lutheran and Reformed would often be formed on the basis of a common nationality and language, reflecting the liberal and unionistic spirit of the Hungarian Lutheran Church. The conditions among the Slovak Lutherans remained essentially chaotic until the formation of the Slovak Synod in 1902. A pastor might not even try to form a congregation but rather just

minister to the needs of the Slovaks in a particular city as circumstances required. Sometimes, because of the scarcity of pastors unqualified individuals would foist themselves on congregations.¹

The first attempt at forming an organization came in 1894. However, this attempt proved to be futile because the pastors had a diversity of opinion regarding the relation of the proposed synod to the other established synods. One group wanted independence and the other wanted affiliation with the Missouri Synod. Nor did the second attempt by the Slovak Evangelical Union in 1899-1900 fare any better.

The pastors who favored affiliation with the Missouri Synod met on April 16, 1901, in Cleveland, Ohio. Their goal was to form their own synod and affiliate with the Synodical Conference. In June of 1902 the pastors reached an agreement and arranged for a meeting in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, on September 2, 1902. Congregations were invited to send representatives to this meeting, and this meeting led to the founding of the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church. While there were some within the SELC who at first were opposed to affiliation with the Missouri Synod, this gradually changed, both because of the increased contact with individuals in the Missouri Synod and the growing number of pastors who served in the Slovak Synod and had been trained in the Missouri Synod's Springfield Seminary.

¹George Dolak, A History of the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America, 1902-1927, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), pp. 26-31.

APPENDIX J
THE PROCESS OF FORMATION

In 1872 the Synodical Conference did not somehow magically pop into existence instantaneously. In a sense the Synodical Conference was the outgrowth and culmination of many years of contacts between these synods. Beginning in the mid 1800s Lutheranism in the United States experienced a trend toward conservatism. In a reaction to this trend and in an effort to resist it, Simon S. Schmucker, who was president of Gettysburg Seminary and a leader of the General Synod, issued the "Definite Platform" in 1855.¹ In essence this was an attempt to bring Lutheranism into the main stream of American Protestantism by a modification of the Augsburg Confession along Reformed-Puritan lines. Schmucker's proposal was not well received even within the General Synod. Those Synods which were consciously confessional were appalled at the suggestion. In January 1856, C. F. W. Walther of the Missouri Synod

¹Samuel Simon Schmucker had been educated at Harvard and thus had come under Puritan influence. As a young man, when the General Synod was about to disintegrate after the withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, he was influential in holding the General Synod intact and emerged as its leader. At the beginning of his career he was among the most conservative of the Lutherans, while at the end he was considered to be among the most liberal. The change in this instance does not seem to have been in Schmucker but in Lutheranism. In the Definite Platform Schmucker advocated an American recension of the Augsburg Confession correcting only a few errors, which he assured did not involve fundamental doctrines. The errors he wished to remove were: "1. The Approval of the Ceremonies of the Mass. 2. Private Confession and Absolution. 3. Denial of the Divine obligation of the Christian Sabbath. 4. Baptismal Regeneration. 5. The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of the Savior in the Eucharist." [Carl S. Meyer, Moving Frontiers, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 43.]

reacted by proposing that Free Conferences should be held in order to promote unity in the faith and commitment to the Lutheran Confessions.² When the first free conference was held in October 1856, representatives from the Ohio Synod, Pennsylvania Ministerium, and New York Ministerium were among the seventy three individuals in attendance.

Shortly after its formation the Norwegian Synod began to visit the seminaries of other Lutheran Synods in the hopes that an arrangement could be worked out for the training of pastors for the Norwegian Synod. This brought them into contact with the Missouri Synod, and in 1857 an agreement was reached to use the St. Louis seminary of the Missouri Synod,³ and fellowship was declared between the Norwegian and Missouri Synods.

In 1866, when the Pennsylvania Ministerium proposed the formation of the General Council after it withdrew from the General Synod because the latter was not sufficiently conservative, its goal was to incorporate the conservative midwestern synods as well. In its 1866 convention the Pennsylvania Ministerium appointed a committee which was:

To prepare and issue a fraternal address to all Evangelical Lutheran Synods, ministers, and congregations in the United States and Canada, which confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession,

²In issuing his proposal for free conferences Walther pointed out that this had worked well for those in the state churches in Germany who wished to promote an increased loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions. The initial call was printed in the June 1856 issue of Lehre und Wehre. In addition to Walther, Wyneken, Schaller, Buenger, and Biewend signed the original notice, which invited all who acknowledge and confess without reservation the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530.

³Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 217-218.

inviting them to unite with us in a Convention, for the purpose of forming a Union of Lutheran Synods.⁴

When this planning meeting was held in 1866, men from the Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin, Norwegian, and Iowa Synods were among those in attendance. However, when the General Council was formed in 1867, even though its doctrinal position was considerably more explicit and conservative than the General Synod's, and its power was less centralized, the Missouri, Norwegian, and Ohio Synods declined to participate. While the Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota Synods had joined the General Council initially, they shortly withdrew because of dissatisfaction with the General Council's hesitancy to commit itself on the "Four Points"⁵ which the Ohio Synod had raised and were the reason why the Ohio Synod had refused membership in the General Council.

Following their contact in the attempt to form the General Council these various synods further explored their relations with one another. When the Ohio Synod invited the Missouri Synod to join them in a colloquy, which was held in March of 1868, the representatives, after a few days of discussion, announced that there was complete theological agreement between the two Synods.⁶ Later in October of 1868 the Missouri

⁴Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, p. 141.

⁵The four points for which the Ohio Synod had requested a more definite answer were: 1. "What relation will this venerable body in future sustain to Chiliasm?" 2. Mixed Communion? 3. The exchanging of pulpits with Sectarians? 4. Secret, or unchurchly Societies?" (Wolf, p. 156.)

⁶Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten (extra) Versammlung der allgemeinen Evangelische-Lutherischen Synode von Ohio und angrenzenden Staaten gehalten zu Hamilton Butler County, Ohio, vom 13. bis (incl.) 19. Juni A.D. 1867, (Pittsburg: Gedruckt bei Neeb, Bauer & Co., 1867), pp. 7, 10-11.

and Wisconsin Synods met in a colloquy. Even though the Wisconsin Synod was at this time still a member of the General Council, the representatives of the two synods quickly became aware that they shared the same attitudes toward the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and after two days doctrinal unity was reported.⁷ Conferences between the Illinois and Missouri Synods were held in 1869 and again in 1872 which resulted in a declaration of doctrinal agreement.

The actual process which led to the formation of the Synodical Conference began with the initiative of the Eastern District of the Ohio Synod. When this Eastern District met during June 1870, it acknowledged that there was full theological agreement with the Missouri Synod. In a resolution which called on the full Ohio Synod to give official recognition to this, the Eastern District also suggested that the Missouri and Ohio Synods establish cooperative activities especially in the field of education. When the full Ohio Synod met later that year, it concurred and a committee was appointed to confer with the Missouri Synod. A meeting was held in 1871 and a plan was devised for cooperation in the training of pastors.

Later, from November 14-16, 1871, a larger meeting was held, involving more synods. At this meeting Friedrich A. Schmidt presented an essay which analyzed the current situation in the General Synod, General Synod, South, and General Council, and detailed the reasons which supported the formation of new conference. A second item of business

⁷ C. F. W. Walther, "Wieder eine Friedensbotschaft," Der Lutheraner, 25 (November 1, 1868):37-38.

was discussion of a preliminary constitution for this new organization. After some changes were made, the proposed constitution was adopted. Thus the ground was prepared for the first meeting of the Synodical Conference, which took place in July 1872.

APPENDIX K

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

In order to portray a full picture of the Synodical Conference it is necessary to discuss two major controversies which gravely effected it. The first of these is the Predestinarian controversy, and the second is the controversy involving fellowship and other matters which finally destroyed it.

In less than ten years after its formation the harmony of the Synodical Conference was shattered by the Predestinarian controversy.¹ The roots of the controversy lie outside of the Synodical Conference itself, going back to an 1872 dispute between Prof. Gottfried Fritschel of the Iowa Synod² and C. F. W. Walther of the Missouri Synod. As an

¹The essence of the controversy was the question "Why are some saved and not others?" What was it that prompted God to elect certain people to salvation. Was election solely rooted in God's grace or did God foresee something in man which prompted this election. Walther answered that it was all solely God's grace and nothing whatsoever in man. This led his opponents to accuse him of double predestination, i.e. the reason some are not saved is because they were not elect, and ultimately the fact that some are damned is God's doing, God's fault. Schmidt and the Ohio Synod answered that God elected those whom he foresaw had persevering faith, and so God elected them in view of their faith, "intuitu fidei." Walther accused them of synergism, that is there is finally something in man which determines whether or not he will be saved, there is something man does which causes his salvation.

²The Iowa Synod was formed in 1854 by pastors George Grossmann, Johann Deindoerfer, and Samuel Fritschel, as an outgrowth of the dispute between Wilhelm Loehe and the leaders of the Missouri Synod, primarily C. F. W. Walther. While a variety of areas of disagreement developed between the Missouri and Iowa synods, initially the two main concerns were the doctrine of church and ministry and the sufficiency of the Lutheran Confessions. While both Walther and Loehe agreed that the

outgrowth of that controversy, the Western District of the Missouri Synod studied this doctrine at its 1877 convention. A series of theses on predestination was presented by Prof. C. F. W. Walther. The controversy erupted two years later when on January 2, 1879, Prof. F. A. Schmidt of the Norwegian Seminary in Madison, Wisconsin, accused Walther of false doctrine and indicated that he would make his dissent public.³ The Ohio Synod sided with Schmidt against Walther, and in 1881 withdrew from the Synodical Conference and severed relations with the Missouri Synod. The Norwegian Synod was divided. In 1883 in an effort to heal its own wounds

office of the ministry was a divine institution, they differed over whether the office of the ministry flowed out of the congregation or whether the ordination of the pastor give validity to the ministerial acts of the congregation. Walther asserted the former, Loehe, the latter. The dispute involving the Lutheran Confessions pertained to the relation between the Scriptures and the Confessions. Loehe asserted that the Confessions were to be interpreted on the basis of the Scriptures and therefore were incomplete and open to development. Walther asserted that in discussions among Lutherans the Confessions were to determine the interpretation of the Scriptures. Ultimately the dispute over the Confessions evolved into whether there were open questions in which there could be disagreement without either side insisting that it was correct.

³Friedrich August Schmidt had originally been a member of the Missouri Synod. He had been raised in St. Louis and confirmed by Walther. After his graduation from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1857 he had held pastorates in the Missouri Synod. He was involved as a representative with Walther in negotiations with the English Conference. In 1861 because of his ability with the Norwegian language he was called to be Professor at Luther College, Halfway Creek, Wisconsin, a Norwegian institution. Later he was called to the Norwegian chair at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis where he was a colleague of Walther. While there he had supported Walther during 1872 when Fritschel had charged Walther with Crypto-Calvinism. When the Norwegian Seminary was opened at Madison, Wisconsin, Schmidt was transferred there in 1876. In 1878 Schmidt indicated that he would be willing to be called to St. Louis as the understudy of Prof. Walther. Franz Pieper was the understudy selected, (Walther wanted Stoeckhardt), and in January 1879 Schmidt launched his attack on Walther. While there seems to be a direct relation between the two, this cannot be proven, and the precise reason for Schmidt's accusation and bitter hostility to Walther remains an enigma. (For further information see Walter A. Baepler A Century of Grace, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 198-207).

the Norwegian Synod withdrew from the Synodical conference. However, it did not break fellowship with the Missouri Synod.

The final controversy was actually a complex series of controversies with the Wisconsin Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Little Norwegian Synod) pitted against the Missouri Synod. Generally the Slovak Synod tended to support the Missouri position, but it was not directly accused by the other two.

The key doctrinal issue in the dispute involved the question of fellowship. More specifically the question revolved around whether or not the efforts of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church to resolve their past differences had, in fact produced agreement. It was this issue which both initiated and permeated the controversy. The dispute then quickly spread to the practical areas of joint work and joint prayer. If church bodies were not in fellowship, could they do any kind of work together and could they ever pray together? Drastically different answers were given to these questions. The Missouri Synod was accused of unionism, practicing fellowship without a declaration of fellowship, and the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods perceived this as further proof that it was no longer orthodox. This issue was so pervasive that it also complicated the other areas of the controversy, which were the military chaplaincy and scouting.⁴

Behind the destruction of the Synodical Conference was the conclusion on the part of the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods that the Missouri Synod had effectively departed from her historic doctrinal position regarding the inspiration of the Scriptures and the degree of unity prerequisite for a declaration of fellowship with other church bodies. Throughout the controversy both the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods insisted that the Missouri Synod had changed its position. The official attitude of the Missouri Synod was equally insistent that even though some things were different, there had been no change in its doctrinal position.⁵

The controversy began with the efforts of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church to reach doctrinal agreement and declare

⁴George J. Gude "A Description and Evaluation of the Pressures and Difficulties within the Synodical Conference which led to its Destruction," (STM Thesis Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1986), pp. 3-4.

⁵Gude, p. 196.

fellowship with the publication of the Brief Statement and the Sandusky Declaration in 1938. When objections were raised by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Wisconsin Synod to a declaration of fellowship on the basis of these two documents, a further attempt was made to reach agreement. This resulted in the publication of a joint document between the Missouri Synod and the ALC in 1944 which was called the Doctrinal Affirmation. When neither side found this satisfactory, a third attempt was made and the Common Confession was adopted in 1949 and ratified by the Missouri Synod in 1950. Dissatisfaction with this agreement led the Wisconsin Synod to declare itself in a state of official protest in 1952. In 1955 the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Little Norwegian Synod) severed relations with the Missouri Synod, but it did not withdraw from the Synodical Conference. In 1960 the Wisconsin Synod declared an impasse had been reached in its doctrinal discussions with the Missouri Synod and voted in 1961 to sever relations with the Missouri Synod. In 1963 both the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods withdrew from the Synodical Conference, leaving only the Missouri and Slovak Synods.

APPENDIX L

THE STATUS OF BLACKS - 1878-1960

It is not possible to achieve a true perspective of the Synodical Conference's work among Afro-Americans in the United States without a basic grasp of the status of Blacks during this period and their reaction to their status. The following brief review of Black History is given in order to provide this background. The dates chosen mark the beginning and official end of the Synodical Conference mission among Black people.¹

Reconstruction and Its Aftermath

When the Synodical Conference began its work among the blacks, the United States had just recently emerged from the Reconstruction which followed the Civil War. The Civil War had set the slaves free, but how were these Freedmen to be incorporated into American life.

Under President Abraham Lincoln's plan, the great majority of the rights of supporters of the Confederacy would have been restored, and the planters, the ex-slave owners, would have been allowed to retain their control over Southern society, including the blacks.

Lincoln saw no other possibility. The black people, he felt, despite their wartime advances, were too poor and too uneducated to take responsibility. The poor whites in the South were too used to accepting orders from "their betters" to make good leaders. For

¹In some ways 1946 marks the end of the Synodical conference black mission, because at that time it was decided to allow the black congregations to merge with the existing districts of the Constituent Synods.

Northern politicians and soldiers to do the job would only embitter the South and lead to further strife, perhaps a second Civil War.²

After Lincoln's assassination President Johnson attempted to follow the same plan. However, when the state governments which he set up began suppressing the rights of blacks, congress passed Reconstruction Acts which were designed to guarantee the black's rights and to disenfranchise white planters. Blacks were given citizenship and the presence of the Union army was designed to ensure that their rights were protected. New constitutions, molded on the Constitutions of Northern states, were drafted in the former Confederate states, which gave the vote to all rather than just propertied whites as had been the case in the South prior to the Civil War. Under these constitutions free schooling was to provided for all children.

In spite of these improvements which gave further rights to the black people, much remained the same. The Freedmen had no land. They were forced to enter into sharecropping agreements with white landowners. In many cases their daily lives were little different than had been the case while still in slavery. Nor was there any basic change in attitude.

Much white supremacy continued into Reconstruction. By custom or by law most Reconstruction schools refused to permit blacks in with whites; white lawmakers would not allow it. Jails, hospitals, asylums, and some coaches also separated the races after the war. Negroes themselves had no desire to mix with white and were generally not aggressive in pressing for integrated accommodations during Reconstruction - even though segregation meant decidedly inferior treatment.³

²Ethan R. Dennis, The Black People of America: Illustrated History Ed. Victor B. Liberman, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), p. 133.

³Dennis, pp. 148-149.

Even though they had lost political power, the old leaders of the South retained their economic power and their prestige, and remained vocal and active in public office. "As early as 1868, the Democratic leaders of South Carolina had said to the Negroes of the state, 'It is impossible that your present power can endure, whether you use it for good or ill.'"⁴ The cooperation between the poor whites, and the blacks who at first were united by their opposition to the old leaders, soon disintegrated. Competition between the poor whites and blacks had been present during slavery, and in the years following the civil war this traditional hostility was intensified by their competition for jobs and land.

The society and governments imposed by Reconstruction probably could not have lasted in any case. Their demise was hastened on the one hand by terror organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan,⁵ and on the other hand by the change in the political climate in the Northern states.

⁴Dennis, p. 157.

⁵The KKK was simply one of many terror organizations, whose goal was to maintain white supremacy by "teaching" the Negroes their proper place and convincing them that it was safer not to vote. Other organizations included the Knights of the White Camellia, the Knights of the Rising Sun, the White Line, and the Pale Faces. The Ku Klux Klan was organized in 1865 at Pulaski, Tennessee, almost by accident.

"A group of young men, wearing sheets and pillow cases for the initiation ceremony of a local social club, discovered by chance how effective such costumes could be in terrifying the more superstitious Negroes. The club promptly seized the opportunity. The Ku Klux Klan was organized as the Invisible Empire of the South, under the direction of a Grand Wizard assisted by Genii, Dragons, Titans, and Cyclops, and throughout the South white-hooded horsemen began to ride about the countryside warning the Negroes to stay away from the polls." Foster Rhea Dulles, The United States Since 1865, (Ann Arbor: The university of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 27.

When warnings were not heeded, the blacks were often whipped, maimed or lynched to bring the lesson home. "A local organization in Mississippi boasted that it had killed 116 Negroes and thrown their bodies into the Tallahatchie River." Dennis, p. 158.

Attention was shifting to industrial growth and the expansion of business. The public was inclined to bring the army home and let the South solve its own problems. The final act came with the elections of 1876. In a compromise with the Democrats involving a charge against the Democrats of vote fraud, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared president over Samuel J. Tilden. Included in the compromise was the removal of the last federal troops from the Southern states in 1877.

In the period following 1877 the South with its white majority was allowed to handle race relations in whatever way it wanted. The goal was to keep blacks in submission. In doing this they were so successful that by 1900 Senator Ben Tillman of South Carolina boasted on the floor that:

South Carolina had disfranchised all the Negroes it could. "We have done our best," he added. "We have scratched our heads to find out how we could eliminate the last one of them. We stuffed ballot boxes. We shot them. We are not ashamed of it."⁶

The effort to deprive the blacks of their rights was aided by several decisions of the Supreme Court. Congress had passed a Civil Rights Act in 1875 which attempted to assure all citizens equal access to hotels, theaters, and other public places. The Supreme Court declared this unconstitutional in 1883. In essence the court said that the Fourteenth Amendment did not apply to actions by individuals but only prohibited discrimination by the states. In 1896 the Supreme Court, in the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision, declared that laws requiring segregation could be enforced by the police powers of the state. Thus began the separate but equal doctrine.⁷

⁶Dennis, p,169.

⁷"A Negro, Homer A. Plessy, had charged that a Louisiana statute requiring railroad cars to provide 'separate but equal' accommodations

The threat of violence was not an idle one. Over 3,000 blacks were lynched between the years 1882 and 1900. While most of these occurred in the South, the North experienced its share of lynchings. The extreme Southern view of race relations began to gain favor in the North as well. Senator Tillman, on a tour of Northern cities, referred to Northern violence and congratulated them, saying, "I see you are learning how to kill and burn 'niggers.' That's right; let the good work go on. Keep it up; you are getting some sense."⁸ In addition, attempts were made to legitimize racism.

. . . respected Northern scientists came out in support of Southern racist doctrines. They claimed that the Negro was a separate species of animal next to the ape. Books with such titles as The Negro, A Beast (1900) and The Negro, A Menace to American Civilization (1907) became popular.⁹

In addition the black population in both the North and South was becoming more urban. Blacks were hard hit by economic discrimination and segregation in schools and housing. As the plight of the Negro became worse, the issue of the proper response to this humiliating segregation

for whites and blacks violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. He said such a law implied Negro citizens were inferior. One justice on the Supreme Court, John Marshall Harlan, agreed with Plessy's argument. 'Our Constitution is color-blind and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens,' Harlan wrote. His eight fellow justices overruled him, however, and approved the 'separate but equal' doctrine. The Court thus lent support to a system of state-enforced segregation not only in transportation, but in all areas of public life. 'Jim Crow,' as the system became known, spread with thoroughness all across the South in these years. In practice, of course, separate accommodations never were equal. But the Court, concerned with the letter of the Fourteenth Amendment, ignored its spirit." Dennis, pp. 166-167.

⁸William A. Sinclair, The Aftermath of Slavery, New York, Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969, p. 245.

⁹Dennis, p. 170.

began to emerge within the black community. In essence three responses were advocated. Some advocated fighting segregation and insisting on integration into white society and full political rights. Others saw the goal as a complete separation, with blacks having full independence to govern their own affairs. The third was a more compromising position. Integration was the ultimate goal, but at the moment black people had to accept their lot, striving to improve themselves and earn citizenship.

Initially this third approach of accommodation and self help was the generally accepted one,¹⁰ and its chief spokesman was Booker T. Washington.

Rather than protest segregation to the unsympathetic ears of whites, accommodation spokesmen urged their people to educate themselves, make money, and develop habits of thrift and industry. If Negroes developed skills and wealth, and, if they showed a 'high moral character,' white people would be so impressed they would freely grant Negroes their rights. According to this philosophy, therefore, the Negro's problems stemmed from his own shortcomings as much as white persecution.¹¹

With this philosophical background leaders of the black community accepted their isolation as a fact and tried to use it as an opportunity. Segregation at least gave them a chance to run their own black newspapers, and gave jobs to black teachers. The church too was segregated. Most Southern ministers accepted this and had a conservative

¹⁰The call to protest was raised by a few, such as Frederick Douglas, who was one of the foremost spokesmen for abolition prior to the Civil war, an editor and a statesmen, and Ida B. Wells, who was an editor and spoke out against lynchings. The second choice, while tried by "Pap" Singleton who led about 40,000 blacks into Kansas in 1879, and Bishop Henry M. Turner who advocated a return to Africa, was never really a possibility due to the poverty of the people involved and the fact that the majority had no desire to migrate.

¹¹Dennis, p. 191.

attitude toward race relations. They believed that God would enable the black man to emerge victorious. What was needed was faith and patience.¹²

A New Emphasis

But as time passed conditions did not get better. As the twentieth century began, segregation became more pervasive. In some states such as South Carolina, when blacks went to work, they were forbidden by Law from using the same entrances, drinking fountains, restrooms, or even to work in the same room as white employees. Fewer and fewer blacks were permitted to vote. As more and more blacks migrated to the North, segregation in housing became more dominant. Race riots broke out. One particularly severe riot with anti-Negro brutality occurred in 1908 virtually in the backyard of Lincoln's former home in Springfield, Illinois. It became clear that accommodation was not going to work. Gradually more and more leaders of the black community became convinced that it was necessary to demand equal rights and integration.

Already in 1905 William E. B. Du Bois along with others from the black elite initiated the Niagara Movement which espoused the goal of integration and full voting rights.¹³ While this initial movement failed due to a lack of connection to the black masses, it was followed shortly by the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, which advocated essentially the same goals.

¹²Dennis, pp. 192-193.

¹³The Niagara Movement was vigorously opposed by Booker T. Washington and his followers.

Initially progress was slow. However, the beginning of World War I, especially when the United States entered, brought rapid acceleration to the movement. Much of this was from outside factors. World War I virtually ended European emigration to the United States and thus eliminated a source of labor. As white workers entered the army, the shortage became more severe. Suddenly job openings became available for blacks which had never been there before. Between 1914 and 1920 some sections of the South lost the vast majority of their population. Black workers were employed in steel mills, munitions plants, shipyards, and packing plants. Since these jobs were largely in urban areas, particularly in the North and West, large numbers of blacks left the rural South for a chance to earn wages. While conditions in the North were far from ideal, the new residents found that they could vote, had better schools, and had a chance to live in a somewhat less segregated environment. "'When I got here and got on the streetcars and saw colored people sitting by white people all over the car, I just held my breath,' one migrant to Chicago told a social worker." ¹⁴

While the black who moved North found better opportunities and political power, the specter of racial prejudice remained. Many Northern whites resented black competition in jobs, and politics. As more blacks moved into the cities, the little black settlements grew into large, overcrowded ghettos. Whites felt especially threatened when blacks tried to move into previously all white neighborhoods. At times this would lead to violence.

¹⁴Dennis, p. 247.

Between the World Wars

After World War I this white resentment increased dramatically. The war had produced some changes in race relations and many whites sought to reverse these. When the wartime factories were closed, and the large number of returning servicemen swelled the labor pool, this caused white workers to feel even more threatened by black competition.

During the summer of 1919 the suspicions and fears of whites burst forth in the worst period of racial strife in American history. In urban centers across the country mobs hunted down Negroes and murdered them in the streets. Three days of rioting in the nation's capital left six dead and many injured. Other serious riots occurred in Elaine, Arkansas; Knoxville, Tennessee; Omaha, Nebraska; Chicago, Illinois - at least twenty cities altogether. The summer of 1919 became known as the "Red Summer".¹⁵

If anything things were worse in the South where blacks were lynched for virtually any reason. The Ku Klux Klan was revived and spread its appeal through the nation, so that during the 1920s the bulk of its membership was no longer in the Southern states. A substantial number of the Klan's adherents came from working and middle class whites, who considered the black an inferior race and resented the black's cry for equality.

As 1930 approached the position of the black was far from ideal. To be sure conditions were better in the North and West than in the Southern states, but segregation was still the law of the land. The best paying jobs were closed to black workers. White unions refused to admit blacks, and blacks were generally given inferior education in their

¹⁵Dennis, p. 248.

segregated schools. Black people were "considered half-child, half-savage by most whites, a fit object for amusement or abuse."¹⁶

The coming of the Great Depression hit the average black harder because he was low man on the totem pole. He was the last hired and the first fired. Jobs, such as street cleaners and bellhops, which had once been left for the black as beneath the dignity of the white man, were taken by needy whites.

The Tide for Change

While initially Roosevelt's New Deal programs were of little help for black workers, they eventually proved to be a significant advantage. One of the biggest aids was the fact that the government gave blacks jobs. The projects of the Works Progress Administration such as building bridges and roads employed both white and black workers. In addition, as the government built hospitals, schools, and apartment buildings in ghetto areas, these provided doubly beneficial providing both jobs and enhanced the community.

Not only were greater opportunities made available in government service, but efforts were made to end discrimination on the part of the federal government. Segregation was forbidden in government cafeterias. Beginning in 1941 companies that wanted government contracts could no longer practice discrimination.

During the mid-1930s the labor unions began to admit black workers. While it cannot be construed as a basic change in attitude which was willing to welcome the black as fully equal, it was a definite improvement. The unions realized that if all workers were not included,

¹⁶Dennis, p. 269.

the employers would be able to divide and conquer. While many locals remained closed to black workers, progress was made. By 1945 there were over one million black members of the CIO.

World War II also brought great changes in race relations. As the nation began to gear for war one of the concerns of black leaders was the role that would be given blacks in the armed services. While initially the armed forces were slow to give black soldiers combat roles and none of the branches of the services had integrated units, black service men and women were given more responsible positions. Black officers were no longer trained in segregated facilities. By the end of World War II there was a black general and over seven thousand black officers.¹⁷ World War II greatly increased jobs for black workers in the defense industry. These new jobs opportunities were not limited un-skilled and semi-skilled positions. The lure of jobs began a second great exodus of blacks from the rural south, with the result that eventually the majority of the United States black population was no longer rural and Southern.

While these new arrivals to the urban centers provided a greater power base for the movement toward racial equality, it also instigated anti-Negro rioting. This was in large part due to the housing shortage during World War II. When blacks searching for housing tried to move into previously all white regions of cities, they met deep resentment.

Mob scenes or bombings shook Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and other cities. Worst of all was the outbreak in Detroit in June of

¹⁷Dennis, pp. 290-292.

1943. Thirty-four people of both races died, and much property was destroyed before federal authorities finally restored order.¹⁸

The racist attitude of Nazi Germany proved to be an unexpected aid in the black struggle for racial equality. It helped demonstrate how the United States own attitude toward racism was inconsistent with its democratic spirit. Following World War II President Truman placed great stress on equal rights for blacks and voter registration. In 1948 by presidential order segregation was eliminated in the armed forces. The Supreme Court issued several rulings which had tremendous impact. In 1946 the NAACP won a suit which prohibited segregation from public interstate transportation. In 1948 the Court ruled that restrictive housing agreements prohibiting sale to blacks could not be enforced. The greatest impact was produced by the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision.

In a unanimous decisions written by the new Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Court first observed that "education is perhaps the most important function of the state. . . . It is the very foundation of good citizenship . . . [and] a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values. . . . The opportunity of an education . . . is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."¹⁹

The Court thus rejected Plessy v. Ferguson and outlawed discrimination in the schools. ". . . in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," the justices said. "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. . . . In a separate ruling the same day the justices ruled that segregation also violates the due-process clause of the Fifth Amendment.²⁰

The old doctrine of "separate but equal" was now dead, and with it all legal basis for segregation. Yet a change in the Law does not

¹⁸Dennis, p. 300.

¹⁹Dennis, pp. 305-306.

²⁰Dennis, p. 306.

necessarily bring about a change in attitude. Resistance to integration continued, particularly in the deep South, where a reaction occurred which can best be described as "massive resistance." Over one hundred Southern members of Congress issued a statement describing the Brown v. Board of Education decision as an abuse of judicial power, and vowed to use all legal means to counteract it. State legislatures proposed laws designed to circumvent the ruling. The Ku Klux Klan experienced a resurgence. The National Guard had to be called out in Tennessee and Kentucky to disperse mobs which had gathered to protest even token integration of schools. As the 1957 school year was about to begin, Governor Orville E. Faubus stationed state troopers at the previously all white Central High School in Little Rock to prevent integration. President Dwight Eisenhower responded by federalizing the Arkansas National Guard and sending one thousand paratroopers into Little Rock. The nine black students were escorted to Central High School. This, however, was followed by another approach in Prince Edward County, Virginia, which closed all public schools in 1959 rather than integrate.²¹

As the decade of the 1960s began, there had been vast improvements in the status of the black person in the United States. The Law of land had decreed that there could be no segregation and that the rights of the constitution applied unequivocally to all. However, prejudice cannot be eliminated by decree, and no matter what the Law might say, it is clear that the issue of race relations had not been resolved. Racial equality

²¹Charles H. Wesley, International Library of Negro Life and History: The Quest for Equality from Civil War to Civil Rights, (New York: Publishers Company, Inc. 1968), pp. 245-248.

and equal opportunity are ends that have not yet been attained. What had come to an end was the black Mission work of the Synodical Conference. It is solely for that reason that this account of the status of Afro-Americans in the United States now comes to a conclusion at this point.

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