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Public Doctrine in the Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod

Waldemar Wehmeier
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, wwehmeier@att.net

PUBLIC DOCTRINE IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

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by

Waldemar W. Wehmeier

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Approved by: Robert W. Bertram
Advisor

Erwin J. Kolb
Reader

Walter Degner (for Carl S. Meyer)
Reader

Short Title

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod states its doctrinal position in the second article of its constitution:

> The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:
>
> 1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
>
> 2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (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 Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.[1]

This article has been a part of Missouri's constitution since its inception. Theoretically, this article of the Synod's constitution delineates Missouri's doctrinal stand and determines who is admitted into Missouri's fellowship, Missouri's internal discipline, its relationship to other church bodies, and is a factor in the Synod's course of action and its outlook toward issues of the day. In many

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[1] Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Handbook of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (n.p., 1971 edition), p. 15.

respects this constitutionally-stated doctrinal position of the Synod does exactly that.

There are examples, however, when more has been required than the Lutheran Confessions or examples of when particular understandings of Scripture have been insisted upon by way of doctrinal stand. Missouri has at times refused to declare fellowship with other church bodies on the basis of confessional commitment alone.[2] It has wanted agreement in practice as well as in doctrine.[3] At one time Missouri said that even non-fundamental teachings such as the conversion of the Jews

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[2]Viz., the United Lutheran Church of America or, more recently, the Lutheran Church in America. Cf. the case of the Minnesota Synod wanting to be recognized as an orthodox sister synod and be permitted to join the Synodical Conference. Missouri resolved not to take final action at the convention considering the matter until Missouri could carry out its historic practice of recognizing other synods after an official colloquy. This happened even though the Minnesota Synod president addressed the convention about Minnesota's history and doctrinal position, the Wisconsin Synod had already extended the hand of fellowship, and several Missouri pastors in the Minnesota area spoke favorably about doctrinal discussion with Minnesota Synod pastors (they admitted, however, not having covered all points of doctrine yet). LCMS, Proceedings, 1872, pp. 94-95. Cf. also Missouri's dealings with the Illinois Synod, LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, pp. 95-96; 1872, pp. 95-96; Eastern District, 1870, pp. 69-70; Western District, 1870, pp. 84-85. Cf. also Missouri's attitude toward the General Council, LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, p. 103; Western District, 1867, pp. 44-48, and toward Ohio, LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, pp. 93-95. Titles of the official minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all references to synodical and district proceedings will be cited as in this footnote. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

[3]In addition to the numerous times the phrase "doctrine and practice" occurs, cf. the negotiations with the Finnish Synod which were slowed from the Missouri point of view because of the Finnish Synod's "divergent policy" of woman suffrage in the church. LCMS, Proceedings, 1926, pp. 141-142.

should be a matter of agreement,[4] and asked another church body for uniformity in terminology.[5] One can read addresses of the Synod's presidents (with the exception of Oliver Harms) that talk about Missouri and only those Lutherans in fellowship with her as being the guardians of pure doctrine, and some of Missouri's spokesmen have said that "God is on our side" when the other side was composed of Lutherans also subscribing to Scripture and the Confessions.[6] Positive statements about and explicit recognition of the Christianity of church bodies not in fellowship with Missouri are hard to find in the official proceedings of the Synod.[7] Missouri has had controversies with other Lutheran bodies on church and ministry; election; conversion; Scripture; prayer, pulpit, and

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[4]LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, pp. 231-233.

[5]Ibid., p. 232.

[6]LCMS, Proceedings, 1908, p. 16; 1905, p. 14.

[7]Most references to other church bodies are negative and usually in "Synodalrede" or essays. E.g., the Eastern District, 1862, p. 21, attacks Grabau. The Eastern District, 1865, p. 58, in one sentence condemns atheists, rationalists, Romanists, Methodists, Baptists, Buffalo Synod, Pietists, Unionists, and those indifferent. Cf. E. L. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (August 1944), 529-563. In 1914 Missouri directed its districts to appoint committees to counteract activities of the Romanists. LCMS, Proceedings, 1914, pp. 54-55. It was typical to refer to the "so-called Lutheran General Synod," Der Lutheraner, IV (November 30, 1847), 50-52; and impugn the Lutheranism of both the General Synod and the General Council. E.g., Eastern District, 1870, p. 12; Central District, 1888, pp. 46-47; LCMS, Proceedings, 1896, p. 130. A happy exception is Missouri's attitude toward the Tennessee Synod, LCMS, Proceedings, 1849, p. 100.

altar fellowship; and the pastoral way members of lodges are dealt with. In some of these cases Missouri has been the more lenient of the church bodies in contention, usually it has been the more strict.

Missouri has expected its workers and congregations to agree, practice, and support its synodical position. At one time two pastors--one a district president--were expelled for their view of chiliasm and Christ's return to judge.[8] Several pastors were excluded and/or voluntarily left Missouri because of the Synod's mandatory view of election.[9] At another time a pastor was expelled because he said that he had communed and would continue to commune lodge members, treating them as weak Christians.[10] Another pastor was excluded from the Synod over the "doctrine" of Schwagerehe (prohibited degrees of marriage).[11] One congregation was reminded that it must be served only by certified clergy of the Synod.[12] At the same

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[8] LCMS, Proceedings, 1857, pp. 329-350. At one point in the discussions, Schieferdecker and Gruber were asked to give simple "yes" or "no" answers to questions directed to them by the Synod.

[9] Infra., p. 79.

[10] LCMS, Proceedings, 1929, p. 128.

[11] Michigan District, 1897, pp. 49-51. [O.] Fuerbringer, "Von den verbotenen Ehegraden," Beiblatt zu dem 6. Jahrgang des "Lutheraner" (December 21, 1849), pp. 3-8; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1878, pp. 5-53; Iowa District, 1882, p. 89.

[12] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, pp. 119-120.

time, however, Missouri has carefully cautioned its missionaries not to tread on the territory of another minister, even if heterodox,[13] and has clearly delineated between what a pastor can do in the service of the Synod or under a call from a congregation.[14] The clergy of the Synod have been asked to uphold all doctrinal statements adopted by the Synod,[15] and several times the Synod's A Brief Statement has been voted as reflecting the doctrinal position of the Synod.[16] Although the phrase "the Lutheran Confessions" abounds in the proceedings, one is more apt to find a specific reference to a Lutheran or synodical theologian of a previous era or a citation of a previous synodical resolution in support of a proposed memorial or resolution.

The Synod has periodically adopted statements that say more than do the Confessions. Some are prompted by controversy with other church bodies, some by the times in which the Synod finds itself. Synod has variously adopted: Recommendations for congregations in dealing with "unscientific and anti-Biblical theories" in local public schools;[17] resolutions

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[13] LCMS, Proceedings, 1847, pp. 18-20.

[14] LCMS, Proceedings, 1848, pp. 51-52; 1944, p. 165.

[15] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 91. Cf. infra., p.

[16] LCMS, Proceedings, 1932, pp. 154-155; 1947, pp. 476, 515; 1953, pp. 564-565; 1956, p. 546; 1959, p. 191.

[17] LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, pp. 161-162.

that the Bible is inspired and inerrant;[18] that creation took place in six days;[19] that Adam and Eve were real historical people, created with body and soul;[20] that Christ rose from the dead glorified in His flesh (sarx);[21] that man's soul does not cease to exist after death;[22] that capital punishment is in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions;[23] that "Old Testament prophecies of the savior find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Son of God";[24] that "the events recorded in the Book of Jonah did occur."[25]

Sometimes the Synod struggled with apparently non-doctrinal problems, but did so in terms of their doctrinal ramifications. At the start it seems that the members of the Synod had little trouble, normally, praying with other Lutheran

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[18]LCMS, Proceedings, 1962, pp. 104-105; 1967, pp. 92, 95; 1969, p. 93.

[19]LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 95.

[20]Ibid. Cf. the statement of the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality," which included that the theory of dichotomy is not the only biblical way of speaking of man. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 506-510.

[21]LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 95.

[22]Ibid. Compare, however, "A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality."

[23]LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 97.

[24]LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 100.

[25]Ibid.

Christians.[26] Then for a while this was unionism.[27] A little later it was acceptable if there was no denial of the Synod's doctrinal position involved.[28] It took the Synod years to determine clearly that Scouting can be acceptable.[29] State aid to church-related schools was at one time out of the question,[30] then permitted as student aid--but the church should not seek it,[31] then acceptable in areas of social services,[32] then acceptable for construction loans.[33] Finally the Synod resolved to study what changes might be necessary

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[26]Viz., Walther and other Missouri men opened and closed the Free Conferences of 1856-1859 attended also chiefly by Ohio Synod men with prayer. Cf. Lueker, XV, 543, 553, 556, 557; LCMS, Proceedings, 1962, p. 110. It was reported that three Pennsylvania Ministerium professors communed at Dr. Sihler's church with his "cordial consent" on May 20, 1866. Theodore G. Tappert, "Intercommunion in 1868," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XL (April 1967), 42.

[27]LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, pp. 30-31.

[28]LCMS, Proceedings, 1944, pp. 251-252.

[29]Ibid., p. 257.

[30]Missouri's earlier understanding of the "doctrine of the separation of church and state" also precluded participation in public school baccalaureate services and was one of the issues in the chaplaincy question. Walther advocated no state support for parochial schools. Cf. Carl S. Meyer, editor, Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 352-353. During the 1930's the "Theological Observer" section of the Concordia Theological Monthly repeatedly made negative comments regarding state aid.

[31]LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, pp. 132-133.

[32]LCMS, Proceedings, 1944, pp. 131-134.

[33]LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, pp. 153-154. Cf. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, p. 147.

to qualify for more state aid because "Our synodical schools are not receiving as much such aid as they perhaps might."[34] At the start of the issue there were comments about the "doctrine" of separation of church and state.[35] Later one heard about the "principle" of separation of church and state and the reader was no longer clear if this was a biblical principle or a principle of the country's constitution.[36] At other times the Synod referred to its "policy" on state aid.[37] Again, it seems that at the outset only parish pastors were full-fledged ministers of the Gospel.[38] Gradually, however, it was advocated, but not (yet) allowed, that male teachers too should be recognized as ministers and be called, ordained, and installed as part of the New Testament concept of ministry.[39] Government regulations on the military draft had something to do with the motivation to reexamine the

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[34]LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 109.

[35]Cf. note 30 above.

[36]LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, p. 283; T. H[oyer], "Roman Catholic Reaction to the Defeat of the Wisconsin 'Bus-Amendment,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XVIII (April 1947), 306-307.

[37]LCMS, Proceedings, 1950, pp. 395-396.

[38]LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 99; Western District, 1859, p. 78.

[39]LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, p. 426. Cf., however, LCMS, Proceedings, 1953, p. 327. In 1965, p. 127, a proposed resolution was not adopted by the convention, but referred to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for further study and report to the Synod. As of the Milwaukee convention (1971) the CTCR has not yet concluded its study of the question. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, p. 32. Cf. Stephan A. Schmidt, Powerless Pedagogues (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1972).

concept,[40] as well as income tax laws[41] and the availability of half-fare passes on the railroad for "ministers."[42]

In a number of other areas the Synod's position has changed. Although it is debatable if these could be called doctrine, doctrinal terminology was sometimes employed. Dancing and unions were denounced by synodical leaders as sinful.[43] Insurance was wrong,[44] but then the Synod began to insure its buildings.[45] The Synod at one time said the taking of interest was a doctrine to be determined by the Word of God like all other doctrines.[46] At that time it was sinful. Now the Synod has an interest-paying Church Extension Fund. At another point in history it took the Synod three conventions to pass a resolution including the point that conscientious objection to a particular war was also a valid

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[40]LCMS, Proceedings, 1944, p. 14.

[41]LCMS, Proceedings, 1950, pp. 363-364; 1956, p. 283.

[42]LCMS, Proceedings, 1896, p. 133.

[43]LCMS, Proceedings, 1932, p. 106. Eastern District, 1886, p. 40; Michigan District, 1898, pp. 33-34.

[44]Roy Arthur Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-five Years of Its Existence 1872-1897" (unpublished Th.D. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., 1946).

[45]LCMS, Proceedings, 1908, p. 117; 1926, p. 212; 1935, p. 247.

[46]LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, p. 106; cf. pp. 36-37; and pp. 51-85. Cf. also Der Lutheraner, III (June 1, 1847), 107-110. Beginning already with its second proceedings, the Atlantic District treasurer's report listed as income interest from the bank, Atlantic District, 1909, p. 44.

stance.[47] The role of women in the church also had its evolution from nearly silent worshipers to parochial school teachers in the lower elementary grades,[48] to membership on faculties of its theological seminaries,[49] to advisory members of committees by appointment only,[50] to voting membership in congregations and on boards and committees as long as the Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor exercise authority over men is not violated.[51] For doctrinal reasons the Synod has avoided membership in most organizations involving several different church groups,[52] although later cooperation in externals was deemed acceptable,[53] cooperative endeavors in mission fields was

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[47] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 91.

[48] LCMS, Proceedings, 1929, pp. 73-74. Cf., 1926, p. 77.

[49] Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 204.

[50] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 89.

[51] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 88.

[52] LCMS, Proceedings, 1850, p. 139 (Bibelgesellschaft); Eastern District, 1910, p. 8 (Lay Mission movements); LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 94 (World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches); 1953, pp. 557-563, 1962, pp. 144-145 (Lutheran World Federation); 1959, pp. 8-9 (National Lutheran Council). There was also a question whether the Synod's publishing house should participate with a display in the Chicago world's fair. LCMS, Proceedings, 1893, p. 139; Iowa District, 1892, p. 71.

[53] LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, pp. 14-15; cf. pp. 520-522.

approved,[54] and an official committee of the Synod recently recommended Lutheran World Federation membership.[55]

To preserve and promote its doctrinal position, the Synod has carefully watched what is published on its presses, providing for doctrinal censorship.[56] It has promoted an extensive system of parochial education to make sure that a high percentage of its members are taught the "true doctrine."[57] At times it has permitted the publication of catechisms, hymnals, and liturgies only on direct authorization of the Synod after careful examination.[58] It has maintained a system of colleges with its curriculum[59] and appointment of professors[60] controlled by the Synod. It has passed judgment

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[54] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, pp. 77-78; cf. p. 90.

[55] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 96.

[56] LCMS, Proceedings, 1914, p. 42; 1920, p. 72; 1929, pp. 134-135; 1967, p. 94.

[57] Western District, 1870, pp. 73-84; Central District, 1936, p. 75; LCMS, Proceedings, 1847, p. 18.

[58] LCMS, Proceedings, 1853, pp. 272-273; 1854, p. 285; 1896, pp. 112-113; 1926, pp. 160-161; 1929, p. 133; 1938, pp. 237-258.

[59] LCMS, Proceedings, 1908, p. 61; 1926, pp. 52-62; 1944, p. 70.

[60] LCMS, Proceedings, 1874, pp. 57-60; 1929, p. 128; 1947, p. 427.

on Bible versions.[61] And it has generally published as much of its own literature as possible.

Methodology

The above factors and others like them prompted this writer to investigate what is meant by the "doctrinal position" of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Since this is a systematics project rather than a historical one, it was determined to look at the historic materials with primarily a theological interest in mind. The historical data have been confined to those select moments in the history of the Synod which seemed to be of special theological significance for a study of the Synod's de facto doctrinal position. Furthermore, since this is a study of Missouri's doctrinal position, the source material has been limited almost exclusively to Missouri's own literature.

The Synod's de facto doctrinal position can be seen most clearly in those times when Missouri experienced internal docgrinal controversy, was in controversy with other church bodies, exercised internal discipline, and was negotiating toward fellowship with other church bodies. Accordingly, this research centered on five historic moments: (1) The controversy regarding the doctrine of the church; (2) The controversy regarding the doctrine of election; (3) Missouri's

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[61] LCMS, Proceedings, 1926, p. 170; 1965, pp. 94-95; LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1959, p. 258.

fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church; (4) The controversy between Missouri and the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods; and (5) Missouri's fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. All of these have special significance for an understanding of Missouri's de facto doctrinal position. The controversy regarding the doctrine of the church began in the Saxon colony before the organization of the Synod. The conclusions reached became part of the doctrinal prerequisites for those who wished to be part of the organizing of the Missouri Synod, and developed into a controversy with the Buffalo Synod. The controversy regarding the doctrine of election involved internal discipline and debate with other synods, and resulted in an organizational realignment within the Synodical Conference. Missouri's fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church ultimately failed, although both Missouri and the ALC subscribed to the same confessional basis. The controversy between Missouri and the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods ended in the breaking of a long-standing fellowship. The fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church, on the other hand, did result in the establishment of fellowship.

During the investigation of these select moments in the history of the Synod, it also became clear that one must distinguish between doctrine and doctrine. Part of the Synod's de facto doctrinal position consisted of an implicit understanding of what doctrine is. However, not all within the

Synod, nor all with whom Missouri negotiated, have operated with the same implicit view of doctrine. Accordingly, each chapter raises the question "What is doctrine?" at that particular point, and this study's final chapter deals exclusively with the Synod's implicit operating view(s) of doctrine.

Resume of Conclusions

This writer's research has led to the conclusion that the Missouri Synod has indeed operated with a de facto doctrinal position which at times has been more inclusive and more specific than the Synod's constitutionally-stated doctrinal position. Missouri's doctrine of the church developed out of the Saxon colony's traumatic experiences. The theological understanding of the church which resulted was insisted upon in negotiations leading to the formation of the Missouri Synod, in the controversy with the Buffalo Synod, and were an issue a century later in negotiations between Missouri and the American Lutheran Church. Missouri's doctrine of election was likewise the result of controversy. When a large majority of the Synod came to an understanding of this article of faith, it was insisted upon as the true Lutheran and Scriptural position which all clergy within the Synod must accept. In the mid-twentieth century these conclusions were also being insisted upon as the Synod's doctrinal position that a church body in fellowship with Missouri must accept in addition to subscription of the Lutheran Confessions.

This de facto position of the Synod, its public doctrine, has also included a specific view of the nature of doctrine. Although Missouri has repeatedly emphasized the centrality of justification, Missouri has in practice traditionally related doctrine to the authority of Scripture. Doctrine has been viewed as the teachings of Scripture arranged in logical or topical order and must be accepted because these doctrines are taught in or derived from Scripture. The Synod's A Brief Statement epitomizes that approach to doctrine. Missouri's controversy with the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods came at a time when voices were being raised within the Synod questioning the Synod's inherited understanding of doctrine and when the Synod was modifying some of its views toward fellowship. The Wisconsin and Norwegian synods maintained that they were remaining with the doctrinal position Missouri once shared. Missouri's negotiations leading to fellowship with the American Lutheran Church operated on the basis of a different understanding of the nature of doctrine. Here doctrine was specifically related to the Gospel and the Common Confession does not attempt to solve theological differences as does the Synod's A Brief Statement or as Missouri's previous negotiations with the American Lutheran Church had attempted. In the last twenty years the question "What is doctrine?" has been raised repeatedly either implicitly or explicitly. Many have argued for the Synod's traditional understanding of doctrine as indicated in A Brief Statement

and endeavored to declare the Synod's doctrinal resolutions to be binding on all within the Synod. Others have emphasized the Lutheran Confessions as the norm of Lutheran doctrine and clearly related doctrine to the Gospel. Critics of this Gospel-centered approach to doctrine have charged that such a view permits denial or reinterpretations of traditionally held understandings of Scripture.

In short, Missouri has had and operated on the basis of a public doctrine, which, in addition to the Lutheran Confessions, has been normative of the Synod's internal discipline, fellowship negotiations, and controversies with other church bodies. In recent years, however, different emphases and understandings of doctrine have surfaced and Missouri is debating the question, "What is doctrine?"

CHAPTER II

MISSOURI DEVELOPS ITS DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Introduction

The first theological controversy within the Saxon immigrant group later to be a major part of the Missouri Synod concerned the issues of church and ministry. The Saxons landed in this country with a hierarchical structure of church government headed by a bishop with little indication of having worked through the theological ramifications. Two years later the colony had a congregational form of church government, this time the result of extensive theological inquiry and debate. Once the colony arrived at its latter theological understanding, it was, in their opinion, the biblical and Lutheran doctrine of church and ministry. Although they allowed for the possibility of other valid forms of church government, they were adamant about their understanding of the nature of the church, the role of the ministry, and the rights of baptised and believing Christians. They insisted on this view in negotiations leading to the formation of the Missouri Synod, in controversy with the Buffalo Synod, and in polemics carried on in their periodicals against all who disagreed. They were not willing to compromise. They would not let church and ministry be considered an open question about which the Scriptures and the

Lutheran Confessions have not definitely spoken. They supported their position with references to the Scriptures and numerous quotations from Luther and other Lutheran authorities.

This theological understanding of the Saxon immigrants of Missouri not only became the substantive position of the Synod on church and ministry, but for a century Missouri's specific theological understanding was repeated in largely the same way using the same terminology from one generation to another. Only certain applications of the theology were different as the Synod in succeeding eras concerned themselves about questions of evangelists, colporteurs, Besucher, Reiseprediger, the military chaplaincy, the role of teachers, and the possibility of joining interdenominational organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation and the Lutheran Council in the United States of America. The basic theological position remained the same; the approach was often identical.

This chapter, accordingly, looks at the early development of Missouri's position on the theology of the church. Missouri's understanding of the church is much more explicit than are the Lutheran Confessions and is, therefore, an important example of the development, nature, and function of Missouri's public doctrine.

Overview of the Critical Period in the Development of Missouri's Understanding of the Church

When Martin Stephan, religious leader of the Saxon immigration, landed in this country, he did so as a Lutheran bishop.[1] At his own suggestion he had been asked by those members of the clergy and representatives of the colony on board the same ship (Olbers) to be bishop of the colony while still enroute to New Orleans (January 14, 1839). Three days before arriving at St. Louis, those aboard the river boat (Selma) with him again pledged their subjection to Bishop Stephan (February 16, 1839). The remaining clergy and colony leaders confirmed Stephan's investiture shortly after his arrival in St. Louis, when documents were available for signature (February 26, 1839). Stephan continued to be the sole religious and financial manager of the colony until he was deposed and banished several months later (May 30, 1839).

Stephan's deposition and banishment, however, were primarily based on moral and economic charges. Theology was

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[1] The history surrounding the Saxon immigration, the Altenburg debate, Walther and early Missouri's view of the church and ministry, and the Missouri-Buffalo controversy has been researched several times and well by previous writers. See especially Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953); Carl S. Mundinger, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947); Karl H. Wyneken, "The Development of the Itinerant Ministries in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1945).

not really an issue. The remaining clergy, although they asked for and received "calls" from the colony the following day (June 1, 1839), seemed simply to move as a group into Stephan's vacated hierarchical position. Although the theological issue was formally raised by a layman as early as August 5, 1839 (Vehse's six theses on the ministry), it was generally ignored by the clergy until the following spring, when the candidates pledged to stop preaching and the issue of the call was dramatically raised (April 1840). By this time several laymen had issued a number of statements and protests, the theological import of which the clergy had largely side-stepped.

The year from April 1840 to its climax in the Altenburg Debate of April 15 and 20, 1841, was one of theological confusion as well as economic and legal difficulties. C. F. W. Walther's position in the Altenburg Debate, however, gave the colony a theological justification and a basic premise from which to operate. This line of thought developed rapidly within the colony, and when Der Lutheraner began publication just a few years subsequent (September 7, 1844) under Walther's editorship, there is little indication that the theology of church and ministry had ever been a controversy within the group, much less a traumatic experience.

Stephan as Lutheran Bishop

The document requesting Martin Stephan to be the bishop of the colony envisioned an episcopal form of church

government with other clergy forming a council subordinate to the bishop. Although it made passing references to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions, the primary argument was de facto. Stephan, the document stated, had

> remained standing as the last, unshakeable pillar on the ruins of the now devastated Lutheran Church in Germany, to which all those have clung in the name of the Lord who have still earnestly cared for the right way to salvation, the true Church, and its holy Confessions.[2]

It was Stephan, the document continued, whom the immigrating pastors had "loved and honored as spiritual father, and approached for counsel and judgment in all important matters which pertained to their own welfare or that of their congregation."[3] In effect, Stephan had "already for a long time occupied the position of a bishop and performed episcopal functions among us."[4] This, the document stated, has been especially true since the emigration plans began to materialize. "Now that you are about to step on the soil of America, it becomes urgently necessary that this inner, tacit choice receive external and public expression."[5]

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[2] "Stephan's Investiture," translated in Forster, p. 288. Cf. Carl S. Meyer, editor, Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 134-135.

[3] Forster, pp. 288-289.

[4] Ibid., p. 289.

[5] Ibid.

Similarly, the "Pledge of Subjection to Stephan," in which the subscriber gave Stephan absolute control of all matters spiritual and temporal (even to being expelled from the colony by Stephan "without protest") gave no other theological justification than that the episcopal method of church polity,

> when established according to the Word of God, has been used by the Apostolic Church, has been recognized by the true Church at all times, has been retained by the Lutheran Church of Sweden until this very day, and is in accord with the Symbolical Writings of the Lutheran Church.[6]

The "Confirmation of Stephan's Investiture" signed in St. Louis by those who had arrived ahead of Stephan, also spoke in a de facto vein, arguing that

> we have come to the conviction that our own welfare as well as the welfare of the congregations that have emigrated with us can be promoted only in the manner of the early Christian Church, with a well-ordered episcopal form of polity.[7]

Several months later, however, the "Sentence of Deposition Pronounced upon Stephan" charged him with "the sins of fornication and adultery, committed repeatedly, and of prodigal maladministration of the property of others, also because you have become guilty of false doctrine . . ."[8] The document gives no indication of what the false doctrine was.

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[6]"Pledge of Subjection to Stephan," translated in Forster, p. 294.

[7]"Confirmation of Stephan's Investiture," translated in Forster, p. 299.

[8]"Sentence of Deposition Pronounced upon Stephan," translated in Forster, p. 418.

Laymen Present Alternative Views

In the few days between the confessions of several women implicating Stephan and Walter's mission to expose Stephan in Perry County, a layman by the name of Carl E. Vehse apparently raised the theological questions of hierarchical authority. The clergy, in control of the situation, did not respond theologically.[9] Several months later Vehse presented his theological concerns in writing.

According to the August 5, 1839 "Sätze" of Vehse, (1) All Christians are priests by virtue of baptism and faith. In the New Testament priests are not made, but born. (2) The office of priest belongs to all Christians. All have equal power. All should teach God's Word. The keys have been given to the entire congregation of all Christians. (3) The priestly office has been given by God to the congregation. They, the congregation, elect and call pastors who are thereby sent in behalf of, by the will and command of, and in the name and authority of the congregation. All possess the office. One does not have more power than the others. Pastors are servants of the church. (4) It is a wall of the Papacy that a special spiritual position has been made by God. (5) It is an accursed thing to say that a priest is different from a Christian, for such is said without God's Word only on the

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[9]Ibid., pp. 401-402.

basis of human doctrine, and certainly cannot be considered an article of faith. (6) The office of the ministry is nothing more than a public service, as one person is directed by the entire congregation. The ministerial position in Christendom should be nothing other than that of an agent. When he is in office he leads; when he is dismissed or freely resigns his office, he is a farmer or citizen like the rest. In the New Testament there is simply no distinction between ministers and the general Christian. All were laymen and certain ones were chosen to preach. The only distinctions in Scripture are terms such as servant, shepherd. Even though we are all priests, not all can serve or shepherd and preach.[10]

Again the clergy did not respond theologically. A September 9, 1839 letter of G. H. Loeber, E. G. W. Keyl, E. M. Buerger, O. H. Walther, and C. F. W. Walther to the St. Louis congregation maintained that the clergy does not hold and will not accept a conception of the church that is not clearly and plainly grounded in one of the pure, reliable church constitutions (Kirchenordnungen), and warns against those spreading the seeds of mistrust in order to slander their office.[11]

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[10] Carl E. Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach America. Mit Aetenstuecken (Dresden: Verlagsexpedition des Dresdner Wochenblattes, 1840), pp. 103-105.

[11] Ibid., pp. 169-170.

The same month Vehse and two associates, H. F. Fischer and G. Jaeckel issued a public protest, enlarged several times before its final form of November 14, 1839.[12] A letter from the same five clergymen to Vehse, Fischer, and Jaeckel on November 20, 1839, again largely side-stepped the theological issues, although it did say that the clergy had decided to abandon the idea of a bishop.[13] Exactly what this meant at that time is open to question in light of the fact that several months previously it had been reported that the clergy had lamented that they had no one of Stephan's stature to take his place and the clergy did not now respond to the theological issues raised by the laymen, but were taking this position for the sake of maintaining peace in the colony.

The public protest of Vehse, Fischer, and Jaeckel argued that Stephan's doctrine of the relationship of the clergy and the congregation was wrong and must be corrected or the colony will be in danger of lapsing back into it.[14] Accordingly they compiled many quotations from Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, Luther, other Lutheran theologians, and early church fathers to support their position. Their protest maintained the following: In regard to the rights of the congregation in religious and church matters in

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[12] Ibid., pp. 43-103; Forster, pp. 463-469; Mundinger, pp. 96-102.

[13] Vehse, pp. 151-153.

[14] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

relation to the clergy, the congregation has the right of appointment, calling, installation, and dismissal of the minister; supervision, judgment and punishment of the minister and fellow congregational members; supervision and judgment of doctrine; has the highest decision in all religious and church matters and in all private disputes relating to the congregation; has authority to be on the council with equal right as the clergy; is to use the office of the keys in controversial and important cases, especially where it concerns the bann; has the power to settle adiaphora and to determine the entire liturgy and ceremonies and to establish church constitutions. The rights of the congregation have been given to them by God and are therefore holy and unimpeachable, and the congregation is not to be prevailed upon to give them up and transfer them to the clergy. The preservation of the universal spiritual priesthood persists as the chief bulwark against falling again into papal power. Congregations, as congregations, have preference over the clergy.

There is no actual clergy class, the protest continued. The only ground of the church is the promise of Christ in Matthew 18, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The signs of the true church are not only the outward, pure Word and Sacrament, but also the inward, the Holy Spirit, faith and love. The church is bound neither to place time, person or other outward things, but only to the confession of Christ and faith

in Him. The true church is invisible. It is dangerous to judge people always according to doctrine and how they please the teachers. Equally dangerous it is to raise too high the clergy as a class. One falls thereby into servitude, fear and hypocrisy.

The protest maintained that the best church organization is that of the first two centuries of the Christian church, where individual smaller and larger congregations existed independently side by side. The dependence or subordination of the church, one under the other, is not apostolic or commanded. The fellowship of the church consists in the same doctrine, not in the same external head. An external union of congregations is not necessary. Councils of more than one congregation are not apostolic.

The ecclesia repraesentativa (the church represented in its clergy) was rejected by the protest because it leads to callousness, laziness, uncertainty, apostasy, and denial. Eventually it leads to the coersion of the papcy. The ecclesia repraesentativa can also err, and it changes God's ordinance, "tell it to the congregation" (Gemeinde). The holy Scriptures and the symbolical books give clear instruction that all pastors should have the same power.

Ordination, the protest continued, does not make a pastor, but only the regular call. Ordination is a commendable ceremony, but not a necessity. "Faith comes by hearing" does not apply only to pastors who have studied and are ordained,

it applies to all Christians. In case of necessity a congregation can have pastors who have not studied. Compare, for example, Ambrose and Augustine. Such pastors who have not studied, even any Christian, can in cases of necessity administer the sacraments. All Christians also have the right of absolution. In judging teachers the chief thing is doctrine, but life should also be looked at, as Christ said, "By their fruits you will know them." The ministry can not claim absolute obedience.

Finally, Vehse ventured his private opinion that the Stephanite immigration is not God's work, but rather the work of the devil, a work of lies and deception.[15]

Although the theological position of Vehse and his companions was never adopted in its entirety by the clergy, it did contain much that Walther and his colleagues later defended and reoriented in contrast to more extreme thinking. Apparently many in the colony such as Pastor Buerger and lawyer Marbach presented the case as a moral issue. Buerger, for example, wrote in his memoirs:

> My conscience became ever more disturbed over the sins of our emigration; I recognized that it had been premature, that, since the pure confession still had legal standing in Saxony, we should have remained and fought; that we, disdaining the cross, had lightly forsaken our divinely committed offices, that we had torn family ties asunder, and misled many souls into error and brought them into much misery. These questions and doubts pressed more

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[15] Ibid., pp. 49-51.

> and more upon my conscience. I doubted the legality of my call to the ministry in Perry County, and whether I was worthy to administer the ministerial office. Added to that was the fact that my congregation had grown indifferent and distrustful toward me.[16]

Accordingly, Buerger wrote:

> Doubt began to be expressed concerning the legitimacy of our emigration. The question arose: What are we? Did our pastors rightfully resign their office in Germany? Do they here have a proper call? Are they not seducers, who have enticed us to this man, and helped toward tearing asunder family ties, so that children forsook their parents and spouses their mates? Are we to be designated a Lutheran congregation, and is the Lutheran Church in our midst, the Lutheran ministry, the rightful administration of the Sacraments, etc.?[17]

Similarly teacher Winter described the situation this way:

> In all the treatises which were written [Winter had just referred to treatises by Vehse, Brohm, Sproede, and Wege] that which was in itself good and by no means to be rejected, such as the call of a preacher of the Gospel, the ministerial office, the preaching of the divine Word and the sacred Sacraments, and still other things, was all too sorely overlooked. However, they had the good effect of bringing about more reflection on the sins which had crept in at the time of the emigration and on the whole Stephanistic tendency . . .[18]

Marbach, too (with whom Walther officially debated at Altenburg) presented the matter morally, according to Mundinger, who summarizes Marbach's position this way:

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[16] Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger, translated by E. J. Buerger, reprinted in Meyer, pp. 137-138.

[17] Ibid., p. 137.

[18] "Mr. J. Frederick Ferdinand Winter's Account of the Stephanite Emigration," translated by Paul H. Burgdorf, reprinted in Meyer, p. 140.

> They . . . had committed a grave sin; and therefore they could not possibly be the properly constituted authority to call a pastor. The entire crowd, leaders and followers, were all under the same condemnation. There was only one thing to do, and that was to right the great moral wrong they had been guilty of. This could be done only by a solemn collective public confession on the part of the whole company, for all shared equally in the guilt, and a return to Germany, where they belonged.[19]

Walther, too, wrote that he "sustained emotional disturbances, doubts, and inner struggles" about his association with Stephan and the emigration, which at one point he termed "an abominable undertaking."[20] These doubts, however, led Walther to different conclusions than those arrived at by Marbach and others,[21] which Walther presented publicly at Altenburg.

Walther's Approach to Church and Ministry

Against this specific background, Walther came forward with his view of the church. His "Altenburg Theses" contained essentially three basic premises and four specific applications to the situation of the immigrants. Walther's basic premise was that the true church is to be defined as believers in Christ, called by God. Since true believers are known

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[19] Mundinger, p. 117.

[20] "Letter to the Rev. Otto Herman Walther," dated May 4, 1840, translated in Carl S. Meyer, Letters of C. F. W. Walther: A Selection (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 32-39.

[21] Ibid., pp. 40-52.

only by God, the church is invisible; it is the spiritual body of Christ. Secondly, Walther argued that the name of true church also belongs to visible societies clustered around Word and Sacrament. Hypocrites, however, are not really part of the church. Thirdly, the name of church also belongs to those groups who have partially corrupted the faith, as long as they retain enough of the Word and Sacraments whereby children of God may be born. Applying these premises to the colony, the following applications may be paraphrased from the remaining theses: We, too, are the church and members of our group may be saved. Accordingly, we have church powers, namely, to establish the ministry, administer the Sacraments, and exercise the office of the keys. We are not to be dissolved, but reformed. We should be judged primarily by the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

In their entirety, these theses containing the position of the Missouri Synod *in nuce*,[22] read:

Altenburg Theses

> I. The true Church, in the most perfect sense, is the totality of all true believers, who from the beginning to the end of the world, from among all people and tongues, have been called and sanctified by the Spirit through the Word. And since God alone knows these true believers

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[22] Ibid., p. 115.

(2 Tim. 2:19), the Church is also called invisible. No one belongs to this true Church who is not spiritually united with Christ, for it is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ.

II. The name of the true Church also belongs to all those visible societies in whose midst the Word of God is purely taught and the holy Sacraments are administered according to the institution of Christ. True, in this Church there are also godless men, hypocrites, and heretics, but they are not true members of the Church, nor do they constitute the Church.

III. The name Church, and in a certain sense the name real Church, also belongs to such visible societies as are united in the confessions of a falsified faith and therefore are guilty of a partial falling away from the truth, provided they retain in its purity so much of the Word of God and the holy Sacraments as is necessary that children of God may thereby be born. When such societies are called true Churches, the intention is not to state that they are faithful, but merely that they are real Churches, as opposed to secular organizations.

IV. It is not improper to apply the name Church to heterodox societies, since that is in accord with the manner of speech of the Word of God itself. And it is not immaterial that this high name is granted to such societies, for from this follows:

(1) That members also of such societies may be saved; for outside the Church there is no salvation.

V. (2) That the outward separtion of a heterodox society from the orthodox Church is not necessarily a separation from the universal Christian Church or a relapse into heathenism and does not yet deprive that society of the name Church.

VI. (3) Even heterodox societies have church power; even among them the treasures of the Church may be validly dispensed, the ministry established, the Sacraments validly administered, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven exercised.

VII. Even heterodox societies are not to be dissolved, but reformed.

VIII. The orthodox Church is to be judged principally by the common, orthodox, and public confession to which the members acknowledge themselves to have been pledged and which they profess.[23]

What Is Doctrine?

At this point several summary sentences might be helpful as it relates to the topic of public doctrine in the Missouri Synod. This writer's research has indicated that the clergy had made little effort to defend the colony's original hierarchical structure theologically. It was laymen, who, even if their anti-clerical spirit was excessive, had correctly called attention to the spiritual priesthood of all believers. Laymen had led the way in documenting their position with extensive quotations from Lutheran authorities, which would have been expected from both sides of a group that prided themselves in being the remaining vestige of old, pure Lutheranism. Some laymen dwelt heavily on the moral issue and its necessary remedial action of breaking up the colony and returning to Germany in order once again to be part of the church. Walther emerged defending a mediating position

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[23] "Altenburg Debate and Theses," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 21. On the Altenburg Debate see also William Schmelder, "Walther at Altenburg," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXIV (October 1961), 65-81; and William Schmelder, "The Altenburg Debate" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1960).

emphasizing the existence of the true church among them in light of the spiritual priesthood of all believers.

Yet to be noted is the basic soteriological context in which Walther presented his understanding of the church. Once Walther's position was accepted by the colony, it became heavily documented with quotations from Lutheran authorities. It was constantly repeated as the true doctrine. It was insisted upon in negotiations leading to the formation of the Missouri Synod. It was staunchly defended against attacks by Grabau, and held as the ideal in contrast to the often-criticized view of the Methodists.

Walther's Soteriological Context

One aspect of Walther's doctrine of the church that seems often to be taken for granted or overlooked is the basic soteriological context in which he expressed his understanding of the church.[24] The very first sentence of his Altenburg Theses proceeds from that context:

> The true Church, in the most perfect sense, is the totality of all true believers, who from the

[24] One who has consistently pointed out this context is Erwin L. Lueker. At one point he writes: "Walther endeavored to structure his doctrine of the church from the vantage point of the doctrine of justification. . . . He therefore emphasized that the church is invisible because faith, which establishes a relationship between Christ and the believer, is invisible." Erwin L. Lueker, "Church and Ministry in the Thought and Policies of Lutherans in America," Studies in Church and Ministry (unpublished research project in archives of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1967), V, 46.

> beginning to the end of the world, from among all people and tongues, have been called and sanctified by the Spirit through the Word.[25]

In the same way, early volumes of Der Lutheraner consistently define the church as the assembly of all believers,[26] true disciples of Christ and children of God.[27] Walther often starts from the action of God in baptism and the operation of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith, rather than undue emphasis on the purity of faith of those who are part of the church. In a series of articles responding to the charge of a certain Mr. Nollau that Der Lutheraner held an erring doctrine of the church, one article carefully explained this soteriological context:

> God foresaw from eternity that man, whom He wanted to create, would through sin fall into death and eternal condemnation. From eternity, accordingly, he decided to gather out of this lost and condemned human race from every period of time an eternal church, i.e., a chosen people. Although these would be permitted temporarily to struggle here, they would finally be united in heaven as a triumphant congregation for eternal salvation. In due time this eternal and adorable decision was splendidly put into effect. Out of unspeakable love, God's only begotten Son became a man, fulfilled the law for all men by His holy life, propitiated all sins by His holy life, propitiated all sins by His bitter suffering and death, and brought righteousness, life and salvation to light by His resurrection. All this God has now proclaimed to all the world. In part it was proclaimed by himself in person, in part it was

[25] Lutheran Cyclopedia, p. 21.

[26] Der Lutheraner, I (September 23, 1844), 5; I (November 18, 1844), 21; I (May 31, 1845), 82.

[27] Ibid., VI (September 4, 1849), 1; VI (September 18, 1849), 9.

> proclaimed by His prophets and apostles. To all who receive this Gospel, this happy message of universal redemption through Christ, and would be His own is promised salvation and blessedness. On this account, all of the world where the Gospel has been preached is divided into two great parts, namely, those who reject the gracious word of their God or still do not receive it from the heart but remain in their unbelief or false belief and therefore are lost, and those who receive this word in faith, follow the gracious call of God, and therefore, if they remain in faith, finally will be saved. These latter are precisely the church. The church is, accordingly, the total number [Gesammtheit] of all those whom God has called from darkness to His wonderful light and who have received this call. It is the total number of all those made righteous through faith, of all those born again by the Holy Spirit, of all those converted to God from the power of satan. It is the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the chosen people, His own people. It is the fellowship of all those who have become partakers of the divine nature. It is the holy family of children of God on earth perpetuated by God. It is the leaven which God blends in among the mass of the children of this world by which more and more will be permeated.[28]

The same context occurs in Walther's 1852 book, The Voice of Our Church in the Question of Church and Ministry. Again the first thesis proceeds from a soteriological approach:

> The Church, in the proper sense of the term, is the communion of saints, that is, the sum total of all those who have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel from out of the lost and condemned human race, who truly believe in Christ, and who have been sanctified by this faith and incorporated into Christ.[29]

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[28] "Antwort auf die neueste Vertheidigung der Union," Der Lutheraner, I (August 9, 1845), 97.

[29] C. F. W. Walther, Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt, translated in Walther and the Church, edited by Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 56. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Kirche und Amt.

In line with that context, Walther viewed Lutheranism as a return to the old, pure, true apostolic church, teaching the unchanging doctrine of the true church of all time. Walther in this sense did not think of Lutheranism as a denomination, but as comprising all those who hold to the pure teachings of the apostolic church as revealed in Scripture.[30] Because of that same soteriological context, Walther also repeatedly affirmed that there are children of God where the Word is preached only sparingly and with the admixture of many human doctrines.[31]

Missouri Documents Its Doctrine

The theological understanding of the church promoted and defended by Walther at Altenburg became heavily documented with quotations from Lutheran authorities. When Walther published his Kirche und Amt ten years after Altenburg, it consisted primarily of documentation. One writer tabulated the quotations:

> There are one hundred thirty-three excerpts from Luther's writings, some running into several pages; sixty-five from John Gerhard ("the arch-theologian and standard dogmaticiam of the period of orthodoxy"--Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 283); eighteen from Martin Chemnitz ("If Chemnitz had

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[30] Viz., Der Lutheraner, I (August 9, 1845), 97.

[31] Viz., Altenburg Theses, Theses III, IV, V; Der Lutheraner, I (September 23, 1844), 5; I (October 19, 1844), 13-14; I (November 18, 1844), 22; VI (September 4, 1849), 1; VI (September 18, 1849), 10; Kirche und Amt, Thesis VIII.

not come, Luther had not stood"); thirteen from Quenstedt ("book-keeper of Lutheran orthodoxy"; he was the nephew of Gerhard); twelve from Dannhauer ("foremost Lutheran theologian of his age, 1603-1666"); nine from Calov ("the staunchest champion of strict Lutheranism"); eight from Balduin (member of the faculty at Wittenberg); five each from Baier, J. B. Carpzov, and Huelsemann. In addition, twenty-seven other writers are quoted at length from one to four times each.[32]

This documentation of theological position by appealing to Lutheran authorities was so extensive that opponents of Missouri sometimes referred to Walther and his followers as repristination theologians, and the Buffalo Synod once charged that Missouri made Luther a source of doctrine rather than Scripture.[33] It became standard procedure in the essays presented at Missouri's synodical (general) and district conventions that the format consisted of theses and words of explanation, Scriptural citations, and quotations ("witnesses") from Lutheran fathers.[34]

Missouri Repeats Its Doctrine

Another factor in the development of Missouri's theological position is the constant repetition of doctrinal

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[32] Mundinger, p. 123.

[33] Suelflow, p. 73.

[34] Within two years after his death, Walther was sometimes included among the Lutheran authorities quoted. Cf. Michigan District, Proceedings, 1889, pp. 47 and 57; Eastern District, Proceedings, 1889, pp. 11-12. Titles of the official minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all references to synodical and district proceedings will be cited as in this footnote. See bibliography for full printed titles.

concepts. Once a position was accepted as the true doctrine,[35] its accepted formulation was repeated.[36] In the doctrine of the church, for example, one would normally expect a traditional Missouri presentation of the doctrine to define the church as the total number of believers in Christ, to state that the church in the proper sense is invisible. This repetition of certain ideas and formulations in regard to a doctrine is reflected years later in Eckhardt's Reallexikon, where he was able to catalog synodical documentation according to a rather concise and predictable outline:

> (1) The doctrine of the church. (2) Meaning of the word church. (3) What is the church? (4) The church is invisible. (5) Antitheses. (6) No visible church is the only saving church. (7) Also the Lutheran church is not. (8) Attributes of the church: One, holy, Christian church. (9) The church is a fellowship. (10) Names and descriptions of the church. (11) Treasure and benefits. (12) The glory of the church. (13) There has always been a church. (14) The church

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[35] One exception to this observation is the "doctrine" of Schwagerehe which the Synod adopted at several conventions and used in the exclusion of a pastor from the Synod, but rarely occurs again in synodical literature. Cf. supra, p. 4, note 11.

[36] In a May 18, 1876 letter to Rev. E. W. Kaehler regarding doctrinal discussion at a district convention, Walther indicated how he thought a topic should be covered and concluded: "To clothe the matter in [originality] [conjecture; original not decipherable] would indeed be nice, but that requires a Luther, who has so experienced all doctrines and has mastered them so thoroughly that he can allow his genius free play in treating each [doctrine]. An attempt at originality is a disgusting thing." Meyer, Letters of C. F. W. Walther, p. 119.

is a building. (15) Marks. (16) The visible church. (17) There are hypocrites in the visible church. (18) Hypocrites do not belong to the church. (19) How is one to restrain tares in the church? (20) In spite of hypocrites the visible church is still called a church. (21) What is said of the invisible church also applies to each local congregation. (22) True and false visible churches. (23) The Lutheran church is the orthodox church. (24) The false church. (25) To what extent is the false church still a church and to what extent is it not? (26) Also in false believing churches there are still Christians. (27) The use of this doctrine. Self-examination. (28) Association with the visible church. (29) One should remain only with the orthodox church. (30) One is to avoid the false church. (31) Comfort of this doctrine. (32) The task of the church.[37]

A few years after Eckhardt the third volume of Francis Pieper's Christliche Dogmatik was published in 1920. He treated the doctrine of the church according to a similar outline, defining the church as consisting of "all those, and only those, who believe in Christ." He stressed the invisibility of the church and distinguished between the universal church and local congregations.[38]

The Synod's 1943 Catechism defined the church as "the whole number of believers in Christ; for all believers, and only believers, are members of this Church. (The invisible

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[37] E. Eckhardt, Homiletisches Reallexikon (St. Louis: Success Printing Co., 1910), IV, 700.

[38] Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 397-435.

Church.)" It explained why the church is invisible, that it is one, holy, and wherever the Gospel is in use. Distinguished from the invisible is the visible church.[39] Well into the mid-twentieth century one can expect to read doctrinal expositions of the Synod (such as synodical and district essays, synodical periodicals, books published at Concordia Publishing House) that treat the doctrine essentially as outlined in the early history of the Synod.[40]

Missouri Convinces Others

Having arrived at a theological consensus in the Altenburg Debate of 1841 regarding the doctrine of the church and at the same time a theological basis for the continued existence of the Lutheran congregations in Perry County and St. Louis, the

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[39] A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), pp. 131-137. Similar in outline is A. L. Graebner, Outlines of Doctrinal Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 205-222. See also L. W. Spitz, "The Holy Christian Church," Abiding Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), I, 267-287.

[40] The Synod's 1971 convention encouraged continued use of the terms "visible" and "invisible." LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, p. 117. At least in part this observation regarding Missouri's public doctrine can be explained by recalling that Missouri was convinced that the doctrine Missouri taught was the biblical doctrine. As one non-Missouri Lutheran has observed, "Missourians are possessed of an exceptionally strong sense of being right." E. Theodore Bachmann, "Missouri and its Relations to Other Lutherans: Some Observations on the Shaping and Exercise of Conscience," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLV (May 1972), 159.

Missourians were emphatic and apparently rather convincing in their position. Early volumes of Der Lutheraner reveal no lack of confidence in Missouri's newly-found understanding of the church. Missouri's view is defended against attacks from those who differ[41] and explained to immigrants who are now in a country of religious freedom and therefore have . both the option and responsibility to exercise their Christian freedom properly in regard to establishing congregations, calling a pastor, and their relationship over against the pastor.[42] When pastors (Loehe men)[43] not associated with the Missourians responded favorably to the theology they read in Der Lutheraner and made overtures to the Missourians regarding the establishment of fellowship or synodical association, the Missourians insisted on their understanding of the church. Walther wrote under date of August 21, 1845, to Pastor Ernst encouraging the formation

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[41] Viz., a series entitled "Antwort auf die neueste Vertheidigung der Union," Der Lutheraner, I (May 31, 1845), through I (August 9, 1845), 78-79, 82-84, 86-88, 95, 97-100.

[42] Th. Brohm, "Von ordentlicher Berufung zum Predigtamt," Der Lutheraner, I (April 5, 1845), 61-63; I (April 19, 1845), 65-66.

[43] J. K. W. Loehe, a conservative Lutheran pastor in Neuendettelsau, Germany, was instrumental in recruiting a number of theological students for the ministry in America and collected funds for missionary and educational projects in this country. The men he sent for the ministry here settled largely in Indiana and Michigan, deliberately avoiding what they considered the liberal eastern synods of this country.

of a new synod. In addition to the synod being founded on the Word of God and the Scriptures, Walther's understanding of the church surfaced when he continued that the new synod should

> 4. . . . exist not so much as a powerful court, but rather as an advisory body, to which a perplexed congregation may take recourse; it must particularly abstain from all encroachments upon the congregation's right to call; 5. That the lay delegates, yes, everyone who belongs to the Synod, be entitled to suffrage in the same manner as the pastors.[44]

In May 1846 three Loehe men journeyed to St. Louis to discuss the organization of a new synod with the Missouri men. One of these pastors, Friedrich Lochner, wrote a description of the trip and meeting, including this paragraph germane to the topic:

> Those were precious and blessed days, which I shall not forget as long as I live, and for me they were in more than one sense decisive for my whole life. We were welcomed in a most cordial and brotherly manner in St. Louis by Pastors Walther, Buenger, Fuerbringer, and Schieferdecker, who had been expecting us. Our "instructions" were taken up first, and the unclear and doubtful points were ironed out orally or referred to Pastor Loehe for explanation. When I to-day look back upon those "instructions," I realize that the doubts of the Saxon brethren were justified, and I most gratefully confess that, although we--some more and some less--were very unclear in points of doctrine, especially regarding the Church and the ministry, yea, had weaknesses in us, yet we received very fine consideration from these brethren, who did not withdraw the hand of fellowship because they saw that we were honest and upright in our

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[44] Quoted in Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 86.

> attitude toward the Lord's Word and the Church. They began at once to confer with us on the draft of our present synodical constitution.[45]

A July meeting in Fort Wayne the same year (1846) with Walther, Loeber, and Barthel representing the Missourians, drafted a constitution. Hattstaedt's report of the meeting to Loehe again shows the influence of the Missourians' understanding of the church:

> The constitution of the future synod has taken a different shape from what you desired. According to the experience of all brethren who were assembled here and who have been in office for some length of time, a democratic form of synodical government is the only feasible one for the Lutheran Church in America. The Word of God is the only power with which to rule the people, and if this power does not accomplish the desired end, nothing else will. Your plan of granting greater powers to the President was rejected by all present. The congregations were given all rights in settling their own affairs. They may call their preachers, and they may dismiss them, provided that the pastor proves to be a wolf and preaches false doctrine or leads an ungodly life. If the congregations dismiss their pastors for other reasons, they cannot be members of Synod and must be regarded as non-Christians and as unorthodox.[46]

Missouri Loses a Benefactor

Walther and his associates were able to convince most of the Loehe men, but not Loehe himself. Loehe objected to the practical applications of Missouri's view of church and ministry in the constitution of the new synod in a letter

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[45] Reprinted in Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 147.

[46] Quoted in Baepler, p. 94.

written to Walther in September 1847 just a few months after the organization of the Synod in which Loehe had actually supplied slightly more of the original pastors of the Synod than did the Missouri group.[47] Church and Ministry became a serious problem and eventually devisive between Loehe and the Missouri Synod when Missouri and the Buffalo Synod disagreed on the subject. Both appealed to Loehe for support of their position. When Loehe was unable to come to America, Walther and Wyneken visited Loehe in Germany, and two years later two representatives of the Buffalo Synod did the same. Although Loehe had financed a seminary for the Missouri Synod and had contributed many of its pastors, Missouri insisted on its understanding of church and ministry, unwilling to consider it an open question as one way of stopping the controversy. Eventually this uncompromising position of the Synod led to the formation of the Iowa Synod by several pastors supported by Loehe.[48]

Missouri's Controversy on Church and Ministry With Buffalo

Missouri also maintained its new understanding of church and ministry in the face of opposition from the

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[47] James L. Schaaf, "Wilhelm Loehe and the Missouri Synod," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLV (May 1972), 59-60.

[48] Ibid., XLV, 63-64. Cf. Wm. Schaller, "Gottlieb Schaller," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XVI (July and October 1943), 34-48, 65-96.

Buffalo Synod. During the winter of 1840-1841, when the Missouri immigrants were in the midst of their internal strife regarding the nature of the church and its application to their group, Pastor Grabau, later to become senior ministerii of the Buffalo Synod at its organization in 1845, sent a copy of his December 1, 1840 Hirtenbrief to the Missouri pastors. Part of the group that had immigrated with Grabau had moved on to Freistadt, Wisconsin. When unable to secure a pastor, they elected their teacher Lueck to hold services and wrote to Grabau seeking his approval. He responded with his Hirtenbrief, sending a copy to the Missourians, apparently expecting their approval.[49] The Missouri pastors did not respond per se to the Hirtenbrief for several years, but did send Grabau a copy of their "Missouri Basic Church Principles and Congregational Constitution of 1839 and 1840."

A comparison of the two documents shows great difference between Grabau and the Missourians regarding church and ministry. Grabau's Hirtenbrief argues that no one should publicly administer the sacraments without a proper call. Such a proper call, Grabau wrote, includes the following: The person must have been thoroughly instructed in all Christian doctrine. He must have the gift of the Spirit. He must have proven himself through service (for example,

[49] Suelflow, pp. 51-52.

vorsingen, vorlesen, Seelsorge helfen). He must have been ordained by the laying on of hands. There must have been an examination in the presence of the congregation before ordination. Ordination is to be according to the form of old church constitutions. Only then may the ordained person be installed as a pastor and shepherd of God. Until such a properly called pastor is obtained, Grabau advised, children should be baptised in cases of necessity by their father. Faith should be strengthened only through the Word. Communion should not be celebrated. Marriages should be postponed. An elder or teacher should read printed sermons in worship services.[50]

The "Missouri Basic Church Principles," however, evidence a different perspective. According to this document, each congregation possesses all rights of the church. Through baptism every Christian is a priest and there is, accordingly, no special priestly class. Every member of the congregation, therefore, is capable of validly performing the function of the ministry, of preaching, baptising, administering Communion, and absolving. Since no one person can arrogate to himself the spiritual rights of each individual, God has established the holy office of the ministry

[50] [G. H.] Loeber, Der Hirtenbrief des Herrn Pastors Grabau zu Buffalo vom Jahre 1840. Nebst den zwischen ihm und mehreren lutherischen Pastoren von Missouri gewechselten Schriften. Der Oeffentlichenkeit übergeben als eine Protestation gegen Geltendmachung hierarchischer Grundsätze innerhalb der lutherischen Kirche. (New York: H. Ludwig and Co., 1849), pp. 11-20.

to which the church is to transfer this public administration through a regular call to one or several persons. No one, therefore, is to administer Communion publicly without a regular call. In cases of necessity, however, laymen can perform all activities of the ministry. The right to call belongs to the congregation. Although the congregation owes its pastor obedience when he teaches God's Word and admonishes them from it, he does not have dominion over them. The congregation is the highest and final court of appeal in the church, and is to examine and supervise doctrine, and with its pastor to decide disputes over points of doctrine according to God's Word. Church discipline likewise belongs to the congregation in cooperation with the pastor. The congregation has the right to depose its ministers, not arbitrarily, but according to God's Word.[51]

When the Missourians in July 1843 answered Grabau's Hirtenbrief, some overtures regarding fellowship had been made between the two groups.[52] Accordingly, Loeber, writing for the Missourians, said that a few matters of the Hirtenbrief must first be cleared up for complete unity of faith and confession. The Hirtenbrief, Loeber wrote, appears to make too much of the ministry and too little of the

[51] "Die missourischen Kirchen-Grundsatze und die Parochial-Ordnung von 1839 und 1840," as translated by Karl Wyneken, "Selected Aspects of C. F. W. Walther's Doctrine of the Ministry," Studies in Church and Ministry, III, 25-27.

[52] Loeber, p. 21; Suelflow, p. 41.

spiritual priesthood of the congregation. The main part of the ministry is not, as the Hirtenbrief suggests, the administration of communion, but the preaching of the Gospel as well as holy baptism. Communion is only a supplemental seal. Ordination, Loeber wrote, is not a divine command, nor is ordination according to an old Lutheran order part of the essence of a proper call, or even necessary. To prescribe a certain order is a violation of Christian freedom. Similarly, rather than saying as does Grabau that the congregation is to be obedient to the pastor in all things not against God's Word, it should rather be that the congregation owes obedience only when and so far as we preach God's Word. Obedience cannot be claimed, for example, Loeber wrote, on a matter like building a church or school building. Every member should be able to decide what is or is not against God's Word, not, as Grabau said, only the church itself in its symbols, church constitutions, and synods. God deals with us in His Word, Loeber wrote, by means of the ministry. The sacraments, therefore, have their power in the Word, not in the office of the ministry. With correct words, Loeber added, the devil in the guise of a man could give a real sacrament. The congregation has every right to issue a proper call without the necessity of help from a clergyman. It is valid even if the congregation makes a bad choice and chooses someone not very qualified, as long as they are not acting separatistically.[53]

[53] Loeber, pp. 20-36.

This reply of the Missouri pastors to the Hirtenbrief was denounced by Grabau. When his Buffalo Synod was organized in June 1845, the Missouri men were called mob-preachers who used the ploy of claiming that Buffalo did not put proper emphasis on the spiritual priesthood. The Buffalo Synod declared that ordination was divinely commanded and made a number of demands. The Missourians were to retract their "Basic Church Principles" of 1839-1840 and maintain a higher regard for the office of the ministry rather than give the congregation papistic powers. The Missourians were to correct their doctrine of the call. Ordination must be acknowledged as necessary in addition to the call of a congregation, and it is further divinely commanded that ordination is to be performed by pastors already in office. The Buffalo Synod also complained that Missouri's critique of the Hirtenbrief had not been brotherly, but hypercritical. In addition, Luther's writings to the Bohemians should not be used as part of Missouri's argument about the ministry and the call, and Missouri should admit its guilt and take steps to correct several matters of causuistry in which Missouri was charged with sheep-stealing, receiving people excommunicated by Buffalo, and establishing opposition altars.[54] Buffalo continued its attack against Missouri in succeeding issues of Buffalo's proceedings.[55]

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[54]Suelflow, pp. 110-113; LCMS, Proceedings, 1849, pp. 95-98; 1850, pp. 119-121; 1851, pp. 169-170; 1852, p. 211; 1853, pp. 247-261; 1854, p. 285; 1857, pp. 351-352; 1866, pp. 23-24, 38-39.

[55]Suelflow, pp. 161-169.

C. F. W. Walther opened Missouri's 1850 convention with a synodical address that assailed rationalism, unionism, syncretism, and the idea that the one holy church is visible, an outward organization. He lamented that some teach that the ministry is transmitted through the power of ordination, that instead of the ministry being like a housefather over God's secrets, it is now considered as a favored, special position before the priesthood of the laity. Now the preachers of the Gospel have control by divine right also over things which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word. They make the power of the Word and Sacrament depend on the office of the one who handles these means of Grace. Accordingly, Walther said, the battle for or against is now passed to us. This does not deal with adiaphora, discipline, usages, ceremonies, and questions of constitutions. It concerns doctrine which is not in our power to forgive and relax for the sake of love and peace. To permit false doctrine in one's midst unprotested is to become a union church. This matter is one on which the Lutheran Confessions have clearly spoken and affects the entire character of our church for which the Reformation fought. Although the point of contention is not a fundamental article of the Christian faith, Walther said, yet it stands in such close connection with the basic articles of our Christian faith,

that by inference departure here will finally and necessarily invalidate the ground of faith.[56]

The following year Walther wrote his Kirche und Amt which the Synod adopted as its reply to the Buffalo Synod.[57] After a number of years of invitations from Missouri to meet and discuss the issues, demands from Buffalo that certain conditions first be met,[58] and trips to Europe by representatives of both synods,[59] a colloquy was held at Buffalo in 1866.

Lay and clergy delegates from each synod spent the first several days of the Buffalo Colloquy discussing Walther's Kirche und Amt thesis by thesis and related Lutheraner articles. Point by point they adopted explanations (Erklärung) on which they all agreed. This was followed by a discussion in which the Buffalo colloquents explained their present understanding of previous statements of their synod. For example, the Buffalo men explained how they now understood Grabau's statement that outside the Lutheran church there is

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[56] LCMS, Proceedings, 2nd edition, 1850, pp. 118-121.

[57] LCMS, Proceedings, 2nd edition, 1852, p. 211; 1857, p. 352.

[58] LCMS, Proceedings, 2nd edition, 1853, pp. 247-261.

[59] A number of theologians in Germany considered church and ministry an open question. This Walther and Missouri vigorously rejected, and for a number of years attacked the Iowa Synod for holding it as such. Suelflow, pp. 199-203; Western District, Proceedings, 1867, p. 13; LCMS, Proceedings, 1929, p. 110.

no salvation--they understood "Lutheran" to mean those who have the apostolic faith.[60] The Missouri men similarly explained certain statements in synodical literature about which Buffalo had questions. The main topics covered during the colloquy were: Church, ministry, excommunication, adiaphora, and ordination. At the conclusion colloquents of each synod made a statement agreeing with the position of the other synod as they now understood their position.

Following this meeting, twelve Buffalo pastors joined the Missouri Synod.[61] Three years later Missouri expressed the thought that the time had come to carry out the apostolic word in regard to the remnant of the Buffalo Synod: "A heretical person avoid, if he is once and again admonished."[62]

Walther's Kirche und Amt follows the same understanding of the church and ministry presented and implied in the Altenburg Theses. Kirche und Amt defines the church as all who truly believe in Christ. The church is invisible. The believers are the real and sole holders of all spiritual rights and powers which Christ has given to the church. The word church can also be applied to visible groups of believers gathered around word and sacrament. Although believers are

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[60] Das Buffaloer Colloquim (St. Louis: Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1866), p. 6.

[61] Suelflow, p. 228.

[62] LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, p. 96.

to be found wherever the Word and sacrament exist in their essentials, Christians should flee and avoid fellowship with heterodox churches. The ministry is an office of service established by God, distinct from the priestly office of all believers, with authority to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. The ministry is conferred by God through the congregation to administer the rights of the spiritual priesthood on behalf of all. The ministry is the highest office in the church, from which all other church offices stem. Obedience is due the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God. The congregation, however, is to participate in excommunication and have the right of judging doctrine along with the preachers.[63]

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[63] Kirche und Amt. Another example of Missouri's insistence on its doctrine of church and ministry is shown in the negotiations with the Ohio Synod. Following an invitation from the Ohio Synod, delegates of Ohio and Missouri met in Columbus in 1868 and adopted a statement recognizing each other as orthodox. (This appears in translation in Meyer, Moving Frontiers, pp. 263-264.) Since the Ohio Synod convention of 1868 had discussed the doctrine of the ministry but not all within Ohio were willing to accept that position without further discussion at Ohio's next convention, Missouri took no action on the joint Ohio-Missouri statement of 1868 until after Ohio's following convention (1870) when Ohio adopted a position on the ministry in agreement with Missouri. (For the final form of the adopted "Die sieben Thesen über die Amtsfrage," see Verhandlungen der achtzehnten regelmässigen Versammlung der Allgemeinen, Evang.-Luth. Synode von Ohio und angrenzenden Staaten, 1870 [Columbus: Schulze und Gassmann, 1870], pp. 22-23. They are translated in Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], pp. 184-185.) At Missouri's 1869 convention some Missouri men had expressed disapproval of Ohio's go-slow approach of gradually convincing all of its pastors of the correct position. (LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, pp. 28-29, 93-95.)

Shortly before these relations of the Missouri and Ohio synods regarding the ministry, Missouri (chiefly Walther and

Conclusion

Missouri has a more specific understanding of church and ministry than the Lutheran Confessions, developed through its traumatic search for justification of its emigration and in controversy with other Lutherans. When the theological understanding of the church presented by Walther and his associates at Altenburg was accepted by the colony, it rapidly became

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Craemer) mediated a dispute within the Norwegian Synod regarding the ministry, which centered on lay preaching:

> The problem was to reconcile the practical inferences from the scriptural teaching of the universal priesthood with a strict interpretation of Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession. How and when could a layman preach and teach God's Word? If no one should "publicly teach" unless "regularly called" (Article XIV), what was meant by "public" teaching? Did it mean merely in public or on behalf of the public, i.e., the congregation, the people of God? If laymen were not "public" teachers in the latter sense but had the right and duty to edify and admonish each other mutually, what was meant by "mutual edification"? Was not "public" teaching involved, and hence a violation of the Augsburg Confession? Moreover, was "teaching" to be extended to include public prayer by laymen? (E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960], I, 165.

Walther and Craemer served as arbitrators in several meetings on the subject beginning in 1858. In 1862 the Norwegian Synod called a special session of the synod at which Walther made a presentation which resulted in theses agreeable to both parties. In his presentation,

> Walther suggested that the ministry was to be seen from three viewpoints: (1) as belonging to the universal priesthood, (2) as being the special office of the ministry in the congregation, and (3) as conditioned by necessity which knows no law, i.e., as an emergency ministry. The first two points were interpreted according to the traditional pattern. The third, however, was nothing more than Johnson's justification of lay preaching undergirded by a quotation from the Smalcald Articles. . . . Johnson's "emergency principle" . . . now appeared on American soil with a Missouri halo about it. (Nelson and Fevold, I, 168.)

the colony's public position. It was presented in the colony's periodical, Der Lutheraner, as the true biblical and confessional doctrine. It was extensively documented with quotations from Luther and the Lutheran dogmaticians. It was defended despite lack of agreement from Lutheran theologians in Germany and in the face of opposition in this country, although Missouri did convince some of its position. Missouri's accepted understanding was repeated from one era to another, carefully perpetuating its specific view.

To put it another way, the spedific understanding of church and ministry developed by Missouri through its experiences became part of the doctrinal criteria of the Missourians. Missouri insisted on its understanding of church and ministry as a condition of fellowship. Missouri not only carried on controversy with those who differed, but battled and castigated as unlutheran and having a faulty subscription to the Confessions those who were willing to permit Missouri to have its view but considered Missouri's view as saying more than the Lutheran Confessions and therefore as not binding on all Lutherans. Being convinced that its view was the true biblical and Lutheran understanding, it was repeated with virtually identical formulation from one generation to the next. Missouri's accepted understanding of the church was an *a priori* with which succeeding generations began as they

approached fellowship with others[64] and worked through new applications of the Synod's public doctrine to contemporary situations.[65]

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[64]Cf. Chapter IV, *infra*, where Missouri asked the American Lutheran Church for "uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching" regarding the doctrine of the church.

[65]Viz., whether or not the Lutheran World Federation is a church, LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 66-67, 192-193; and in what way a teacher is a minister, LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1953, pp. 374-415; LCMS, Proceedings, 1959, pp. 113-114.

CHAPTER III

MISSOURI DEVELOPS ITS DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Introduction

The controversy over election, at times involving discussion of free will, conversion, objective and subjective justification, is another example of the development, nature and role of public doctrine within the Missouri Synod. Prior to the outbreak of this controversy within Missouri and the Synodical Conference, Missouri had not always treated this article of faith so clearly and carefully, and, in fact, had rarely treated it at all. Once Missouri had been publicly accused of Calvinism, however, the position of Walther and his associates was insisted upon as the only correct scriptural and confessional Lutheran position. Those who felt otherwise had to leave the synodical fellowship. This resulted in a loss of pastors from the Missouri Synod, a realignment of synods within the Synodical Conference, a frequent topic of doctrinal discussion, and a divisive polemic between synods that was still being negotiated in the mid-twentieth century.

This chapter, accordingly, looks at the election controversy within Missouri and the Synodical Conference between the years 1877 to 1882 as illustrative of the development, nature and role of public doctrine within the Missouri Synod.

Although both sides of the controversy found its understanding of election in the Lutheran Confessions and the Lutheran dogmaticians, Walther and his colleagues insisted on their view of election as the only truly biblical and Lutheran doctrine. When Walther's view was publicly labeled as Calvinistic and it became known that there was a controversy within Missouri regarding two different views of election, Walther and the Synod insisted that there can be only one biblical doctrine. Accepting this one view adopted by the Synod became a prerequisite for synodical membership and fellowship. Missouri's public doctrine of election, accordingly, took on the confessional role of identifying the Synod's position and setting the legal bounds of membership on this article of faith.

Historical Sketch of the Election Controversy

The antecedents of the election controversy within Missouri stem in large part from a Northern District essay of the Missouri Synod. The 1868 and 1871 conventions of that district heard a discussion of twenty-four theses on the doctrine of good works with respect to the doctrine of free will, election, and justification.[1] This essay was attacked

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[1] Northern District, 1868, pp. 12-26; 1871, pp. 15-21. Titles of the official minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all references to synodical and district proceedings will be cited as in this footnote. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

by the pastors of the Iowa Synod. Two years later C. F. W. Walther presented an essay at the same district on the subject of conversion which specifically attacked the Iowa Synod position.[2] A number of articles and tracts ensued during the next several years between several pastors of the Iowa Synod and Walther, F. A. Schmidt, and others from the Missouri position.[3]

In 1873 Walther had begun a series of essays for the Western District of the Missouri Synod on the topic that "only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is God alone given all honor, an incontestable proof that only its doctrine is true."[4] In the 1877 convention of that district Walther was at that point of his outline which covered election. Walther argued that "it is false and incorrect if it is taught that not only the mercy of God and the all-sufficient merits of Christ are a cause of God's election, but that there is also in us a cause which motivated God to have elected us to eternal life."[5] Walther's former colleague and fellow polemicist, F. A. Schmidt, questioned some of Walther's statements when

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[2]Northern District, 1873, pp. 19-58.

[3]Roy Arthur Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-five Years of its Existence" (unpublished Th.D. thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946), pp. 101-109.

[4]Western District, 1873, p. 26.

[5]Western District, 1877, p. 50.

these 1877 proceedings appeared in print.[6] When Walther continued this topic at the next convention of the Western District in 1879, Schmidt argued that the gentleman's agreement to discuss the issue privately had been broken. He began publication of a new periodical, its first issue proclaiming its reason for existence. The publications of the Missouri Synod, Schmidt wrote, which justly have been viewed as carrying the banner of the Synodical Conference, have presented in the last years a doctrine of election that can be recognized as nothing less than Calvinistic error contradicting both Scripture and Confession. The Western District report of 1879, he continued, was an open declaration of war and a breaking of the previous agreement to deal privately with the matter. Therefore, "in God's name it will be battle, open and decisive battle against this new crypto-Calvinism."[7] He reported that the current Missouri doctrine of absolute predestination was first clearly presented in the 1868 session of the Northern District.[8]

Missouri responded immediately (especially Walther, F. Pieper, and G. Stoeckhardt) with a number of articles

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[6]As to possible reasons why Schmidt began to differ with Walther at this time, see Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), pp. 70, 75; Suelflow, pp. 110-112.

[7]F. A. Schmidt, "Vorwort," Altes und Neues, I (January 1880), 1-2.

[8]Ibid., I, 2.

chiefly in Lehre und Wehre. Articles related to election covered the history of Calvinism, crypto-Calvinism, pelagianism, exegesis of key passages, quotations from and explanations of terminology used by Lutheran dogmaticians, and the Lutheran Confessions. Missouri prided herself that during this time (1880-1881) when she was being pointedly attacked and publicly labeled as Calvinist, Missouri's articles were only of an historical and doctrinal nature without personal polemics.[9]

Not only did Schmidt of the Norwegian Synod attack Walther's position as being Calvinistic, but there were pastors within Missouri who sided with Schmidt, thought too much emphasis was being put on the controversy, or were undecided as to the correct position. Accordingly a number of special meetings were held in addition to the regularly scheduled district and synodical conventions that discussed the matter. Chronologically the special meetings were: July 1879: Walther, Schmidt and others met following the Synodical Conference meeting, in Columbus, Ohio;[10] September 29-October 5, 1880: the first general pastoral conference of all pastors

[9]LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, p. 38.

[10]Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1882, p. 54.

of Missouri met in Chicago.[11] The theological faculties and all synodical and district presidents of the Synodical Conference met in Milwaukee, January 5-9, 1881, for a colloquy called by L. Larsen, president of the Synodical Conference.[12] And Missouri had a second general pastoral conference immediately following its May 1881 synodical convention in Fort Wayne.[13]

The doctrinal discussion within Missouri resulted in the adoption of thirteen theses on election prepared by Walther. The Synod adopted these theses as its official position and

[11]Verhandlungen der Allgemeinen Pastoralconferenz der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u.a. Staaten über die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl (St. Louis: Druckerei des "Lutherischen Concordia-Verlags," 1880). Hereafter this will be referred to as First General Pastoral Conference.

[12]W[alther], "Das Colloquium," Der Lutheraner, XXXVII (January 15, 1881), 9-10. This article reported that there are no printed minutes for the Columbus and Milwaukee meetings where Schmidt was also present. Cf. p. 7 of work cited in following footnote. Schmidt reported that the ten sessions of the colloquy were opened with a devotion and closed with the Lord's Prayer led by the chairman, except for the final session on Monday afternoon which was closed with a silent prayer at the suggestion of a member of the Missouri Synod. This seems to be the beginning of Missouri's practice of not praying with those with whom there is doctrinal disagreement. "Das Fakultäts-Colloquium zu Milwaukee," Altes und Neues, II (January 1881), 26-28.

[13]Verhandlungen der Zweiten Allgemeinen Pastoralconferenz der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u.a. St. über die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl (St. Louis: Druckerei des "Lutherischen Concordia-Verlags," 1881). Hereafter this will be referred to as Second General Pastoral Conference.

declared that those who did not accept that position could not be considered brothers in fellowship.[14] The Synod also resolved that its delegates to the forthcoming Synodical Conference convention were not to sit in fellowship with any who had publicly branded Missouri as Calvinist, and were not to recognize any synod as a member of the Synodical Conference that had raised the charge of Calvinism against Missouri.[15]

At this 1882 convention of the Synodical Conference, the Missouri, Wisconsin, and Minnesota Synods protested F. A. Schmidt's appearance as a delegate from the Norwegian Synod. The protest was sustained; Schmidt was not permitted seat or voice at the meeting.[16] The Ohio Synod withdrew from the Synodical Conference because some of its delegates had also publicly accused Missouri of Calvinism and were in sympathy with Schmidt's position.[17] Some of Ohio's pastors, however, banded together as the Concordia Synod and was accepted at the same meeting as a member of the Synodical Conference.[18] Although that ended one phase of the election controversy, polemics, negotiations, and special meetings on the topic continued into the mid-twentieth century.

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[14] LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, pp. 33-45.

[15] Ibid., p. 45.

[16] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1882, pp. 6-28, 38, 54-56.

[17] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[18] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

Missouri Attitude Toward the Election Controversy Per Se

The presidential address of the Western District convention of 1880, its first meeting since being publicly branded as holding a Calvinistic doctrine of election, spoke of doctrinal controversy in the church. God permits controversy, President F. J. Biltz said, so that the truth is made firmer and more certain. The doctrinal controversy now does not belong to the ABC's of revealed holy truth with which a teacher or learner would begin, but election is revealed in Scripture. It may not be omitted or overlooked.[19]

President H. C. Schwann opened Missouri's synodical convention the following year with the words directed to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). He applied these words to Missouri who has now been attacked, not by the old enemies, but by those "who stood with us in the bond of holy brotherhood, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone." They have not only accused us of false doctrine, but have branded us before all of Christendom as perverters of the eternal Gospel.[20] In the doctrine of election, Schwann continued, we have said only what God's Word and the Confession of our

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[19] Western District, 1880, pp. 12-13.

[20] LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, p. 12.

church says. We have taught nothing except what His Word reveals. Where this Word is silent, we wait. "He knows that we hate Calvinism." Throughout the address there breathes the confidence that Missouri is right and God is on Missouri's side.[21]

Similarly, the presidential address at the Synod's next convention (1884) meeting in St. Louis' new seminary building, breathed a confident sigh of relief. The last time we met, President Schwann said, an article of our Christian faith had been attacked which the Scriptures clearly revealed and our Confessions clearly witnessed, an article which threatened the ground of our salvation. Now the danger is past. We have peace. However, this is not a worldly type peace--the enemy is still there. The dear, holy Scriptures, in the controversy studied and more deeply opened, have become higher, more splendid, sweeter to us. The Confessions of our church have proved to be the good confession of faith. We have shown ourselves against all human consideration to stand only on the Word of Scripture and for this Word to become fools before the world. Our hearts are firm in the truth. Now we stand more united and stronger than before.[22]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 12-16.

[22] LCMS, Proceedings, 1884, p. 14.

In short, although Missouri disliked controversy, was deeply wounded that this was a strife between brothers, and was horrified that the Synod had been publicly labeled as Calvinist, Missouri was willing to go through the controversy for the honor of God and the vindication of the Lutheran Confessions. Once the controversy had been started, Missouri was willing to enter it because the article of faith being debated also affected justification, the ground of faith.

Missouri Relates Election to Justification

Throughout the controversy, Walther consistently maintained a view of election in which man would in no way be a cause of salvation. Whether the question of why some and not others was explained in a way that some people actively contributed to conversion, resisted less, or were elected in view of foreseen future faith and perseverance in faith, Walther rejected them all because to some extent they made man a cause of election. There are only two causes of election, Walther argued many times, God's grace and Christ's merits.

Already at the Western District's 1877 convention which Schmidt first questioned, Walther treated election from the topic sentence, that

> it is false and incorrect if it is taught that not only the mercy of God and the allsufficient merits of Christ are a cause of God's election, but that there is also in us a cause which motivated God to have elected us to eternal life.

Specifically, Walther listed six points that could not be considered a cause of election: Man's work or sanctification, man's correct use of the means of grace, man's self-decision, man's desire and prayer, man's non-resistance, man's faith.[23]

Accordingly, Walther rejected the views presented by Allwardt and Stellhorn at the Synod's first general pastoral conference. Allwardt at one point summarized his position: God has decided that He would save no one outside of those who believe in Christ. This is a general rule, Allwardt continued, according to which God has decided to save people. We therefore believe that God elects according to a specified rule, not according to an absolute and to us indiscernible will. He has decided to save only those who He in time would bring to faith in the Gospel. The elected persons are those who should believe, and the actual election is mediated through fore-seeing, that is, God has known from eternity which persons would believe and He has elected these persons out of the others ordained to eternal life. These are elected not because of faith, but because of Christ's will. The Gospel is preached to all. God actually wants all to come to faith through it. He wants to be powerful through His Word. However, God from eternity saw how it happened in time. Many hardened their hearts. God cannot therefore

[23] Western District, 1877, p. 50.

convert them. He cannot bring them to faith. These He has not elected. He has elected only those whom He foresaw before the foundation of the world, and only those, who are justified through faith. Whoever has the Gospel has election. Election does not first make the Gospel effective.[24]

Stellhorn argued similarly that election in the narrow sense is the same as subjective justification. Predestination in the narrow sense, he said, "consists therein that God judicially applies the designation of the universal way of salvation to the individual." To Walther's objection that in this view election is superfluous, Stellhorn replied that it is no more superfluous than is subjective justification in relation to objective justification in Walther's theology.[25] Both Allwardt and Stellhorn viewed election as following faith, whereas Walther viewed faith as a fruit of election.[26]

Walther prepared thirteen theses on election for the Synod's 1881 convention the following year. These theses "believe, teach and confess" that God earnestly wills the salvation of all men. Christ redeemed all men, excepting no one. Through the means of grace God earnestly calls all men to repentance, faith and salvation. No one perishes because God was not willing that he be saved or was not offered the

[24] First General Pastoral Conference, pp. 47-48.

[25] Ibid., pp. 49-50.

[26] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

grace of perseverance. All who perish do so because of their own fault, their unbelief and resistance of the Word and grace. The cause of this resistance of man is not God's foreknowledge or predestination, but man's perverted will. Only true believers who persevere in the faith are the elect. No elect person can become a reprobate and perish. Rather than attempting to search out the secret decree of God, believers should endeavor to become sure of their election from God's revealed will. Election does not consist of foreseen faith and is not merely God's universal will to redeem and save man. The cause of election are God's grace and Christ's merit, not anything good foreseen in man. Election is therefore a cause of salvation. The mystery of election should be reserved for God. Man should not attempt to harmonize what seems contradictory to human reason. Yet, election is clearly revealed in God's Word and should accordingly be presented to Christian people.[27]

Walther again explained that there are only two causes of election, God's mercy and Christ's merits. Persevering faith cannot be added as a third cause. Man has nothing to

[27] LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, pp. 33-35. Translations of these theses occur in: Carl S. Meyer, editor, Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 272-273; Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 199-203; Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 203-206; Erwin L. Lueker, editor, Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 1057-1058.

do with his salvation. Everything that belongs to the making of man's salvation can be ascribed only and alone to divine grace.[28]

Walther similarly put election in the context of justification at the start of the Synod's second general pastoral conference. After repeating his definition of election as presented in the Formula of Concord, Walther went on to describe how one should handle the topic of election. Do not simply preach of a secret decision of foreordination to salvation, Walther said, but first of all of universal grace, universal forgiveness, and the universal call. Then one should preach of conversion, justification, salvation, of cross and finally of glory. When these themes are properly treated the believer should be certain that God chose him. Those who do not believe are themselves at fault--God used every means and with His spirit earnestly worked on them. The fault is theirs, not God's because He did not elect them.[29]

At one point Walther summarized the difference this way: The opponents say that the love of God must first see if the people will remain in faith to the end, and then decides who will come to heaven. We, however, say that if I come to heaven, I owe everything from beginning to end to God's eternal decision. This pure grace they deny and accuse us

[28] LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, pp. 29, 37.

[29] Second General Pastoral Conference, pp. 4-5.

of being against universal grace.[30] Many articles and booklets authored by Walther during 1880-1881 repeat this same basic concern.[31]

Missouri's formal protest of Schmidt's theology to the Synodical Conference likewise charged Schmidt with holding a synergistic doctrine of free will, conversion, and election, whereby election is no longer a work of grace, but of man's natural power or free will. This basic doctrine not only falsifies election, Missouri said, but also the crown of all doctrines, the doctrine of justification by grace alone.[32]

Missouri Viewed Its Doctrine

The Scriptural position

Although Missouri like many church bodies has consistently viewed its doctrinal position as being Scriptural,

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[30] Ibid., p. 15.

[31] In addition to booklets and articles written by Walther and referred to elsewhere in this chapter, see also the following: "Streitet die Lehre, dass die Wahl nicht intuitu fidei geschehen sei, mit der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung allein durch den Glauben?," Lehre und Wehre, XXVI (December 1880), 353-368; "Die 'Absolute' Prädestination," Lehre und Wehre, XXVI (October 1880), 289-302; "Dogmengeschichtliches über die Lehre vom Verhältniss dess Glaubens zur Gnadenwahl," Lehre und Wehre, XXVI (February-June 1880), 42-57, 65-73, 97-110, 129-137, 161-170; Lehre von der Gnadenwahl in Frage und Antwort dargestellt aus dem elften Artikel der Concordienformel der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (St. Louis: Lutherischen Concordia Verlags, 1881); Beleuchtung des Stellhorn'schen Tractats über den Gnadenwahlslehrstreit (St. Louis: Lutherischen Concordia Verlags, 1881); Berichtigung der "Prüfung" Hrn. Prof. Stellhorn's (St. Louis: Lutherischen Concordia Verlags, 1881).

[32] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1882, pp. 14-15.

Missouri had a special point to make in the election controversy in regard to the role of Scripture in the formation of doctrine. Missouri published a number of exegetical articles in Lehre und Wehre and often complained that her opponents were not constructing their doctrine of election from Scripture.[33] The idea of election in view of faith, Missouri charged, cannot be found in Scripture. Missouri also accused her opponents of constructing their doctrine of election out of other doctrinal articles (rather than basing their doctrine on Scripture): for example, Missouri charged the opponents with saying that election cannot be a cause of faith, for that does not correlate with the doctrine of the universal gracious will of God.[34]

Scripture, Missouri contended, is to be the sole source of doctrine. Theology is not to be developed from one or several central doctrines. Theology is not a system. Every article of faith must have its source in clear Scripture.[35]

Nor is doctrine to be based on the writings of the fathers rather than Scripture, Walther argued in his essay

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[33] Viz., W[alther], "Die Synergistisch-pelagianische Gnadenwahlslehre," Lehre und Wehre, XXVII (August 1881), 353.

[34] F. P[ieper], "Vorwort," Lehre und Wehre, XXVII (January 1881), 5-6. Cf. W[alther], "Was soll ein Christ thun, wenn er findet, dasz zwei Lehren, die sich zu widersprechen scheinen, beiderseits klar und deutlich in der Schrift gelehrt werden?," Lehre und Wehre, XXVI (September 1880), 257-270.

[35] P[ieper], XXVII, 5-6.

at the Synodical Conference's next convention following Schmidt's suspension. Matters of faith based on the writings of church fathers rather than Scripture contradict the authority of Scripture.[36]

The confessional position

When a controversy arises within a church body, Walther further wrote, one is not to ask

> "What does this or that 'father' of the Lutheran Church teach in his private writings?" for he also may have fallen into error; on the contrary, we must ask: "What does the public CONFESSION of the Lutheran Church [sic] teach concerning the controverted point?"[37]

Accordingly, both general pastoral conferences of the Synod based their discussion on Article XI of the Formula of Concord, pastors having been expected to bring the Book of Concord "in both languages."[38] Articles in Lehre und Wehre expounded the Confessions.[39] And Walther's thirteen theses on election were adopted by the Synod as the doctrine of holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.[40]

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[36] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1884, pp. 5-75, especially pp. 28-30.

[37] C. F. W. Walther, The Controversy Concerning Predestination, translated by Aug. Crull (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881), p. 5.

[38] First General Pastoral Conference, p. 3.

[39] G. St[oeckhardt], "Zur Apologie des 11. Artikels der Concordienformel," Lehre und Wehre, XXVII (May, September 1881), 170-176, 417-428.

[40] LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, p. 41.

The position of the Lutheran fathers

Since Walther's opponents frequently quoted Lutheran dogmaticians as authority for speaking of election in view of faith, Walther also dealt with this. Walther wrote in January 1881 that although Missouri does not have many big names to support its position, it does have the clear Word of God and the clear Confessions, not to mention Luther and Chemnitz. This is the first time Missouri has had to battle the big names, the great teachers of the church, Walther wrote, and referred to the doctrine of Sunday.[41]

Several months later Walther told his readers in Lehre und Wehre that they should remember the context from which those dogmaticians wrote who spoke of election in view of faith. On the one hand, Walther explained, they were battling the Calvinist absolute predestination, and on the other hand were fighting Huber, who taught an election of all people, heathen, Jews, Turks, and unbelievers. Not everything in the private writings of our Lutheran theologians, Walther reminded, is the doctrine of our Lutheran Church. Our authority is Scripture and the Confessions, not the tradition of the fathers as in Rome. However, Walther continued, a number of Lutheran theologians used the expression

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[41] W[alther], "Das Colloquium," Der Lutheraner, XXXVII, 10.

"in view of faith," but at the same time they explained election in a non-synergistic way.[42]

The same convention of the Synodical Conference that refused to recognize Schmidt as a delegate also adopted a resolution rejecting "in view of faith" as used by Missouri's opponents. The resolution carefully stated, however, that it does not imply that the old teachers of the church taught false doctrine as they used the term.[43]

In response to the charge of Missouri's opponents that Missouri was now teaching election differently than it had previously,[44] Walther responded that such quotations of earlier writings of Missouri men were the private writings of the men involved.[45] Similarly, the Synod's protest to the Synodical Conference stated that the Synod bound itself to

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[42] W[alther], "Die Synergistisch-pelagianische Gnadenwahlslehre," Lehre und Wehre, XXVII (July 1881), 289-291.

[43] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1882, pp. 65-66, 78.

[44] Schmidt, I, 1-2; First General Pastoral Conference, pp. 88-89; Suelflow, pp. 92-98. Cf. F. W. Stellhorn, The Present Controversy on Predestination, translated and published in George H. Schodde, editor, The Error of Modern Missouri: Its Inception, Development, and Refutation (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1897), especially pp. 53-55; Gottfried Fritschel, Die Lehre der Missouri Synode von der Prädestination. Aus ihren eigenen Publikationen dargestellt (New York: E. Steiger, 1883).,

[45] First General Pastoral Conference, pp. 88-89.

its adopted thirteen theses on election and rejected everything that contradicts them, even if found in the Synod's own publications.[46]

What Is Doctrine?

A few summary observations related to our theme at this point might be helpful. Prior to the outbreak of the election controversy, writers in Missouri had rarely treated the doctrine of election[47] and had not always taught a careful and uniform view. Missouri became deeply involved in a study of election when the Synod was publicly charged with Calvinism. Since the Synod was lacking complete agreement on the doctrine of election, two special general pastoral conferences were held. Many articles on election were printed in the Synod's primary theological journal, Lehre und Wehre, and several district conventions studied the doctrine. Prior to the Synod's 1881 convention, one could not speak of a position of the Synod as such on election other than its treatment in the Lutheran Confessions. Also prior to the Synod's 1881 convention this researcher uncovered no evidence of any person having been excluded from the Synod for his view of what the Lutheran Confessions taught regarding election. However, things became different when the Synod adopted a specific

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[46] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1882, p. 26.

[47] The indices for the first twelve volumes of Der Lutheraner, for example, do not list a single article on election.

view of election as its public doctrine. No longer was subscription to the Lutheran Confessions enough. One must also subscribe to the Synod's public position on election as the Synod understood it.

Missouri's Adopted Position Becomes A Prerequisite For Fellowship

The first semi-official indication from Missouri that fellowship was involved in the election controversy, came at the end of the Synod's first general pastoral conference. It was resolved there that those who have publicly slandered Missouri no longer be viewed as brothers but as enemies.[48]

This was repeated and explained at the Synod's convention the following year. Whoever has accepted persevering faith as a third cause of election and has made this doctrine against God's Word and the Confessions his own and propagated it in our congregations, the proceedings report, can no longer go hand in hand with us. We cannot permit someone within our fellowship who has publicly labeled us as Calvinists. All the world knows that two different doctrines of election are in our midst. We must say that this and only this is the doctrine of the Synod. We will not allow another doctrine among us. Whoever will not agree with us on the recognized doctrine can also not belong to us nor we to him.

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[48] First General Pastoral Conference, p. 115.

Synod cannot permit a dualism. Nor do we want unionism, the proceedings continue. Although we cannot go the same way with our opponents, we do not damn them. We only say this, that we can no longer go together. We can no longer pray with one another. For you will pray for our conversion and we for yours. Such praying together is an abomination before God. If you are not able according to your conscience to believe what we believe, we cannot change that, for the gift of faith does not stand within the power of man. But we can, want, and must explain to you that from now on our ways go apart.[49]

After officially adopting Walther's thirteen theses on election as the position of the Synod, it was explained that whoever contradicts a doctrine which we consider Scriptural and confessional and explains it as a false doctrine is to be brought under discipline. The president of the district is to deal with him in the proper steps of discipline.[50] District proceedings of succeeding years report that some pastors did leave the Synod because of a different understanding of election.[51]

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[49] LCMS, Proceedings, 1881, pp. 29-30.

[50] Ibid., pp. 42-43. In regard to the discipline indicated here to be carried out in the districts, the proceedings explain that the group assembled in convention is not the Missouri Synod, only a part of it. The Synod as such has not spoken, which would be the case only if the collected districts had dealt with this matter.

[51] The following districts reported that one or more of its clergy had left the Synod because of the election controversy: Iowa District, 1882, p. 13; Michigan District, 1882,

At the conclusion of the Synod's second general pastoral conference immediately following Missouri's 1881 convention, several pastors stated that although they could not agree with the Synod's doctrine of election, they wished to remain in the Synod. They testified that they had not charged others with Calvinism and had not made an issue of election in their congregations. Walther responded that although he could consider someone a brother who errs from weakness, he could not work with him. In his opinion they would work against each other. Thereupon the conference resolved that the opponents cannot be recognized as fellow workers, even though the conference stated that it knew it did not have powers of church government.[52]

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p. 11; Western District, 1882, p. 17; Illinois District, 1882, pp. 15, 20; Southern District, 1883, p. 10. The Eastern District reported that Pastor H. Grätzel had been expelled over the doctrine of election: Eastern District, 1885, p. 42; and the Wisconsin District supported the action of its president in suspending Pastor H. A. Allwardt: Wisconsin District, 1882, pp. 14, 87.

[52] Second General Pastoral Conference, pp. 51-56. On October 11, 1881, ten pastors, two teachers, and four congregational delegates from the North-West Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois area met to discuss election and the possibility of a new synod. They adopted "The Blue Island Theses" as their view of election. A Testimony against the False Doctrine of Predestination Recently Introduced by the Missouri Synod: On the Basis of the Scriptures and of the Lutheran Confessions, by Several Former Members of the Missouri Synod, translated by R. C. H. Lenski and W. E. Tressel, as found in Schodde. One Missouri parish pastor, A. D. Stecher, apparently resigned from the Missouri Synod as early as 1877 in opposition to Walther and his view of election. Stecher published several writings and poems critical of Walther (one referred to Walther as a pope) and Walther's view of election, sometimes using the pseudonym Antibarbarus Logikus. Robert M. Stecher, "The Life and Times of Anton Daniel Stecher, German-American, Lutheran Missionary," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLII (May 1969), 51-78.

Missouri's protest of Schmidt's status as a delegate to the Synodical Conference convention the following year argued that to sit in fellowship with Schmidt and his syncretistic errors would be taking part in the sins of the opponents.[53] However, when a Synodical Conference committee presented a resolution that Schmidt no longer be recognized as "our brother in Christ," an amendment to substitute "a" for "our" brother in Christ was not accepted, because the convention did not want to give the impression that Schmidt was being excommunicated or no longer considered a Christian.[54] Those who argued that Schmidt at least be given seat and voice for the purpose of holding doctrinal discussion with him were reminded what the Synodical Conference is. It is not a free conference, but an association of brothers in the faith. Schmidt has refused to answer the question put to him by this session of the Synodical Conference whether he considers his opponents in the controversy brothers or enemies, thus making it impossible to discuss the doctrine of election with him in a brotherly way.[55]

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[53] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1882, pp. 20-21.

[54] Ibid., p. 38.

[55] Ibid., pp. 45, 54-56.

Missouri's Position Remains Firm

Even a cursory scan of the Synod's history reveals long-lasting effects of the election controversy within Missouri and a determination to remain firm on the Synod's public doctrine. Election was occasionally touched upon in presidential addresses or treated in doctrinal essays of district and synodical conventions.[56] It was the subject of several publications.[57] A series of four free conferences on election and conversion were held in the years 1903-1906.[58] It was the subject of negotiations between the Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio and Iowa Synods.[59] Election played a part in Missouri's rejection of the Intersynodical Theses in 1929,[60] partly because of Missouri's opposition to the understanding of

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[56] LCMS, Proceedings, 1893, pp. 35-38; Central District, 1894, pp. 10-64; Eastern District, 1894, p. 16; Michigan District, 1895, pp. 12-75; LCMS, Proceedings, 1902, p. 16; LCMS, Proceedings, 1905, pp. 16, 20-21; Central District, 1906, pp. 7-10; Eastern District, 1922, p. 8.

[57] F. Pieper, Grund-differenz in der Lehre von der Gnadenwahl (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903); Fred Kramer, "The Doctrine of Election, or Predestination," Abiding Word, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), pp. 522-543; C. M. Zorn, Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl. Zweiter Theil: Zur Einigung der amerikanisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1913).

[58] Meyer, Moving Frontiers, pp. 286-288.

[59] LCMS, Proceedings, 1920, pp. 83-84.

[60] LCMS, Proceedings, 1929, pp. 110-113.

election in the Norwegian Opjoer.[61] The Synod's A Brief Statement, adopted in 1932, treated election extensively.[62] An agreement on election between Missouri and the United Lutheran Church was once reported as the result of conferences.[63] The Synod's Concordia Theological Monthly periodically spoke of election, some of its articles indicating that election was a topic of discussion in pastoral conferences.[64] When Missouri and the American Lutheran Church were involved in fellowship negotiations, the "Doctrinal Affirmation" specifically rejected election in view of faith,[65] and

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[61] Ibid., p. 112. Cf. A[rndt], "Theological Observer: Are Synodical Conference Lutherans Separatists?," Concordia Theological Monthly, I (December 1930), 940-943. Hereafter this periodical will be referred to as CTM.

[62] A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), paragraphs 35-40.

[63] LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 227.

[64] F. Pieper, "Vorwort," CTM, I (January 1930), 2-15; F. Pieper, "Thesen, die dem 'theologischen Schluszexamen' dienen können," CTM, I (June 1930), 401-406; P. E. Kretzmann, "Das Verhältnis der gratia universalis zur Gnadenwahl," CTM, IV (September 1933), 676-682; P. E. Kretzmann, "Propositions Concerning the Election of Grace," CTM, IV (September 1933), 682-684; E[ngelder], "Theological Observer: Let Us Get Together on the Doctrines of Conversion and Election," CTM, VI (July 1935), 539-543; Martin S. Sommer, "That Review of Pastor Goerss's Book in the 'Lutheran,'" CTM, IX (September 1938), 674-677; A[rndt], "Theological Observer: On the Doctrine of Election," CTM, XI (February 1940), 134-135; Theodore Graebner, "The Missouri Synod's Attitude Towards the Doctrine of Election 'Intuitu Fidei,'" CTM, XV (September 1944), 616-621.

[65] Doctrinal Affirmation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States and of the American Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 14.

the Common Confession stated that God elected "solely because of His grace in Christ and without any cause in man."[66]

Conclusion

This writer's research of Missouri's election controversy has led to the following conclusions in regard to the Synod's public doctrine. Prior to the outset of the controversy, Missouri spent little time on the doctrine of election. One can find differing interpretations of the doctrine in the Synod's literature.

When controversy began on election and related articles of faith, leading theologians of the Synod more carefully explained and documented their position. During the first part of the controversy differences among theologians within the Synod were not considered divisive and an agreement had been reached to treat the matter privately and in a brotherly manner.

When Missouri was publicly attacked and labeled in print as Calvinist, leading theologians of the Synod insisted that their theological understanding of election be officially adopted as the position of the Synod. This was done by Synod, and further recorded that the issue involved fellowship. Although differing views of election were considered divisive of fellowship, however, the Synod clearly stated

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[66]LCMS, Proceedings, 1953, p. 502.

that it did not involve excommunication. Pastors with differing views severed their fellowship or were expelled from the Synod, but were not branded as unbelievers. They simply could not remain within the Synod with a different theological understanding, even though both sides found its position in the Confessions and the writings of Lutheran dogmaticians. Differing theologies, the Synod said, cannot stand within the Synod and people with opposing views cannot pray together as each would be praying for the other's conversion.

In effect, the Synod again defined itself as permitting only one theology. There must be uniformity within the Synod. Two differing views of a Scriptural teaching cannot be allowed. Since the Lutheran Confessions did not necessarily exclude all but one point of view, the Synod adopted what it saw as the correct theology as its public position. Fellowship became equally dependent upon accepting this publicly adopted position as subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. Denial of fellowship, however, even when excluding pastors from the Synod, is not to be construed as excommunication.

Public doctrine in the Missouri Synod, therefore, is incipiently the theology publicly proclaimed in the Synod's conventions, periodicals, and publications. In times of controversy it is officially adopted as the Synod's position. Public doctrine within Missouri serves the same role as do the Lutheran Confessions, that of identifying the Synod's position. It also serves the legal function of defining the boundaries of fellowship.

CHAPTER IV

MISSOURI NEGOTIATES WITH THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Introduction

When a church body operates de facto with an understanding of doctrine that is more inclusive than its formal confessional definition, that church body's operating definition must be inferred from its actual practice--for example, from its relationship with other church bodies, who is admitted into the Synod (its internal discipline), and its doctrinal controversies. This chapter investigates the Synod's operating definition of doctrine (its public doctrine) by looking at its fellowship negotiations with another church body.

These negotiations with the American Lutheran Church[1] are especially significant for an understanding of the doctrinal position of Missouri for a number of reasons. These negotiations, beginning in 1935, specifically aimed for an official mutual declaration of church fellowship. Unlike some doctrinal negotiations in earlier Missouri history, the Lutheran Confesssions were not at issue and in fact played an extremely minor role in the negotiations. Some of Missouri's words and actions in the course of negotiating

[1]Hereafter the American Lutheran Church will be referred to as ALC and the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as Missouri.

with the ALC were the occasion for a negative reaction from two synods with whom Missouri was already in fellowship, causing Missouri to justify its position from two points of view. Missouri had to explain its position on the one hand to the ALC with whom it was attempting to establish fellowship, and on the other hand to the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods with whom Missouri was already in fellowship, but who protested that the doctrinal basis agreed upon by Missouri and the ALC was inadequate for fellowship.

As will be seen in this chapter, Missouri began its negotiations with the ALC with the understanding of doctrine implicit in A Brief Statement, and attempted to use A Brief Statement as the basis of fellowship. From this point of view, doctrine is understood as the summary of Scriptural teaching on subjects arranged in logical or topical order. For each such doctrine there is only one correct, truly biblical understanding. Obedience to the authority of Scripture demands complete agreement on all such doctrine. Since all doctrines are biblical teachings, there can be no fellowship with those who differ on even what might be a relatively minor point. All doctrines are Scriptural teachings. To deny any is to go against Scripture. Fellowship, therefore, depends on complete agreement in doctrine.

At the outset Missouri endeavored to arrive at just this kind of total agreement with the ALC. Even though Missouri fathers had occasionally and very logically said that certain

teachings were not divisive of church fellowship, Missouri was not able actually to grant another church body that kind of latitude and resisted fellowship without complete agreement in every aspect of biblical teaching. This in spite of synodical periodicals promoting fellowship.

Although the negotiations sometimes lagged and ultimately seemed to fizzle out due in part to two apparently different approaches to doctrine, Missouri did adopt a doctrinal statement towards the close of the period with a significantly different doctrinal orientation. Whereas Missouri at first approached doctrine as a series of biblical teachings, at the end a different approach surfaced in the Common Confession, which explicitly related the importance of doctrine to the Gospel rather than primarily to the authority of Scripture, and avoided dealing specifically with the matters which had previously been in contention, as Missouri had resolved doctrinal disagreements in the past.

Beginning of the Negotiations

Negotiations with the ALC began when President C. C. Hein of the ALC in his opening speech to the 1934 convention of that body included the question of fellowship and merger among American Lutherans in his remarks. He did not favor immediate organic union as urged by some within his synod and quoted from an article in Missouri's Lutheran Witness that spoke of the practical headaches such a move would create at this

time.[2] He did, however, favor moves toward fellowship "that endeavors to bring about Lutheran unity on the basis of the Scriptures and the Confessions,"[3] and asked:

> Will your honorable body authorize its President to appoint a Committee to confer with those synodical bodies with which we are not in fellowship in case these bodies express their willingness to confer with our Church?[4]

It was his opinion that

> It is not a difference in doctrine that separates us from the United Lutheran Church in America, but a difference in practice, i.e. . . . relative to anti-Christian secret societies and fellowship with non-Lutherans. . . .[5]

He stated that the United Lutheran Church in America had become more conservative since its organization.

> Yet, before the two church bodies can officially declare pulpit and altar fellowship, they must come to an agreement on these matters which are of vital importance to the life and work of the Church.[6]

In regard to the Missouri Synod, however, President Hein lamented:

> Will we ever come to an agreement with the Missouri Synod? The Chicago Theses, which were adopted by representatives of the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin

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[2] Official Minutes, Third Convention of the American Lutheran Church held at Waverly, Iowa, October 12-18, 1934 (Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.), pp. 22-23.

[3] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[4] Ibid., p. 25.

[5] Ibid., p. 23.

[6] Ibid.

> Synod and the Synods of Buffalo, Iowa and Ohio, after most thorough deliberations of more than a decade, were rejected by the Missouri Synod in 1929. The committee advised to reject them "since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate; at times they do not touch upon the points of controversy; at times they are so phrased that both parties can find in them their own opinion; at times they incline more to the position of our opponents than to our own. Your committee considers it a hopeless undertaking to make these theses unobjectionable from the view of pure doctrine. It would be better to discard them as a failure." The results of ten years of work were declared nil.
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> In the January, 1933, issue of the "Concordia Theological Monthly" a series of doctrinal statements is submitted upon whose adoption the recognition of other Lutheran bodies on the part of the Missouri Synod is made dependent. In conclusion, the editor states: "A few other questions which will have to be discussed and settled according to the Word of God are those of the celebration of Sunday, which cannot be said to be divinely commanded, certain questions of marriage and divorce, particularly the validity of rightful betrothal, the value of John's baptism and a number of other points, chiefly in the field of Christian ethics." If these matters are essenti to unity in the faith and if this type of unity is to be the basis of a union with other Lutheran bodies, there is no hope whatsoever for the Lutherans of this country ever to get together.[7]

Accordingly, the ALC convention adopted the report of a committee commending the president and calling for support of "every movement that endeavors to bring about Lutheran unity on the basis of the Scriptures and the Confessions." They further resolved that

> the Church authorize its President to appoint a committee to confer with those synodical bodies

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[7] Ibid., p. 25.

> with which we are not in fellowship with the end in view of establishing pulpit and altar fellowship on the basis of the Minneapolis theses.[8]

Apparently the Missouri Synod was not expected to accept the offer, for the adopted report nowhere mentions the Missouri Synod, but in two separate paragraphs the convention requested President Hein "in person, to convey its greetings to the United Lutheran Church in America in convention assembled in Savannah, Georgia" and reminds the synod that congregations are not to practice fellowship with them "Until such time as pulpit and altar fellowship is officially established between the United Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Church . . . ."[9]

Responding to this invitation of the ALC and one from the United Lutheran Church's 1934 convention in Savannah, the Missouri Synod in 1935 resolved

> That we declare our willingness to confer with other Lutheran bodies on problems of Lutheran union with a view towards effecting true unity on the basis of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions . . .[10]

Missouri's president was asked to appoint "a standing committee of five, to be known as the Committee on Lutheran Church

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[8] Ibid., p. 235.

[9] Ibid.

[10] LCMS, Proceedings, 1935, p. 221. Titles of the official minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all such references will be cited as in this footnote. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

Union . . ."[11] The convention also resolved by amendment that the other members of the Synodical Conference be kept informed.[12]

Acting President Em. Poppen reported to the 1936 convention of the ALC that its committees had met with like committees of the United Lutheran Church and twice with Missouri. In regard to the latter it was reported that "agreement was reached in regard to the doctrine of conversion and inspiration. A matter still under discussion is the interpretation of what constitutes unionism."[13] Accordingly the convention expressed its satisfaction and thanks to God for the negotiations and resolved that they continue with the end in view that "our negotiations with the United Lutheran Church in America and the Missouri Synod is not organic union but establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship."[14]

The Fellowship Resolutions

Reporting to the 1938 convention of the Missouri Synod, the Committee on Lutheran Union informed the Synod that six meetings had now been held with representatives of the ALC.

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Official Minutes, Fourth Convention of the American Lutheran Church held in San Antonio, Texas, October 9-15, 1936 (Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.), pp. 6-7.

[14] Ibid., pp. 236-237.

The result was a "Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church" which supplemented certain sections of A Brief Statement, especially in regard to terminology on the doctrine of the church, of the anti-christ, regarding the conversion of Israel, the possibility of a physical resurrection of martyrs, and the thousand years of Revelations 20. The ALC representatives declared that if the Missouri Synod will accept this declaration

> concerning our attitude toward the Brief Statement, as correct and declare that the points . . . [listed above] are not disruptive of church fellowship, the American Lutheran Church stands ready officially to declare itself in doctrinal agreement with the Hon. Synod of Missouri and to enter into pulpit- and altar- fellowship with it.[15]

The ALC representatives also noted that it was their "duty to do what we can to bring about the acceptance of these doctrinal statements by the bodies with which we are now in church-fellowship [namely, the synods of the American Lutheran Conference]."[16] Missouri's committee, accordingly, asked the Synod to "state its position on the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives."[17]

This the Missouri Synod did by adopting its floor committee's report which had analyzed the ALC "Declaration" and

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[15] LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1938, p. 183. The ALC "Declaration" is printed on pp. 178-182.

[16] Ibid., p. 183.

[17] Ibid., p. 184.

concluded that in the fundamental doctrines, although the "phraseology employed was sometimes not that which we use, we feel . . . that these statements contain the truth as expressed in the Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessional writings."[18] This report examined the ALC request for latitude on the non-fundamental doctrines noted, and concluded that within the framework expressed in the "Declaration," these doctrines were non-fundamental, they did not endanger the analogy of faith, and at various times within the history of the Synod synodical fathers had called them non-fundamental doctrines that need not be divisive of church fellowship.[19] The more pertinent parts of the resolution read:

> 1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached and imploring His further guidance toward the consummation of the efforts to bring about church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, even though we believe that under the most favorable circumstances much time and effort may be required before any union may be reached.

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[18] LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 231.

[19] Ibid., pp. 229-233. An article in the Lutheran Witness nearly five years later reports that this "Declaration" had been studied by the faculty of Concordia Seminary [St. Louis] on December 7, 1937, which voted that the points therein were not divisive of fellowship. "Does the Missouri Synod Want Union," Lutheran Witness, LXII (May 25, 1943), 177.

> 2. That Synod declare that the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod's actions thereupon, be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship [sic] between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.
>
> 3. That in regard to the points of non-fundamental doctrines mentioned in the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives (Anti-christ, the conversion of the Jews, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, the fulfilment of the thousand years) we endeavor to establish full agreement and that our Committee on Lutheran Union be instructed to devise ways and means of reaching this end.
>
> 4. That in regard to the propriety of speaking of "the visible side of the Church" we ask our Committee on Lutheran Union to work to this end that uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching be attained.
>
> 5. That, since for true unity we need not only this doctrinal agreement but also agreement in practise . . . where there is a divergence from Biblical, confessional practise, strenuous efforts must be made to correct such deviation. We refer particularly to the attitude toward the anti-christian lodge, anti-Scriptural pulpit- and altar-fellowship, and all other forms of unionism.[20]

The resolution went on to point out that fellowship further depends on the approval of the other synods of the Synodical Conference and if the ALC can establish "doctrinal agreement" with those church bodies with which it is in fellowship. Until such time that fellowship is announced

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[20] LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, pp. 231-232.

officially by the president of the Synod, fellowship is not to be implemented by any pastors or congregations.[21]

What is Doctrine?

A number of things are significant for an understanding of Missouri's implicit operating definition of doctrine at this point. In this adopted report, Missouri showed concern about "the truth" expressed in Scripture. The disagreement that did exist between Missouri and the ALC was justified by referring to the distinction between fundamental andnon-fundamental doctrines, and by pointing out that disagreement in the points cited does not endanger the "analogy of faith."

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[21] Ibid., p. 232. It is noteworthy that the book of Reports and Memorials to this 1938 convention contains no memorials either advocating or opposing fellowship with the ALC. As late as May 31, 1938, the Lutheran Witness had informed the Synod's membership only that at the convention the Committee on Lutheran Union "submits its report on doctrines which have been in controversy in the United States and reports agreement with representatives of the American Lutheran Church. The same cannot be said of the meetings that were held with colloquents of the United Lutheran Church." Lutheran Witness, LVII (May 31, 1938), 187.

Apparently arguing against a charge that the convention had acted hastily, an editorial following the convention took pains to point out that the Reports and Memorials had been sent to all pastors and lay delegates, the convention "Reviewing Committee" had spent almost a week on this matter and its recommendation to the convention was unanimous, a mimeographed copy of the Reviewing Committee's recommendations had been given to every delegate, this matter had been discussed in three sessions of the convention [the Proceedings say four sessions: LCMA, Proceedings, 1938, p. 233], there had been no parliamentary limitation of time on those who had the floor, the proposal to defer action until the next convention had been rejected unanimously, the proposal to adopt had been unanimous, church fellowship has not yet been declared, further discussion is presumed, and Synodical Conference members will have opportunity to agree or disagree. G[raebner], "Doctrinal Basis for Union," Lutheran Witness, LVII (July 26, 1938), 252-253.

Missouri did, however, label as "doctrines," even though non-fundamental, the topics of anti-christ, conversion of the Jews, a possible physical resurrection of martyrs, and the fulfillment of Revelations 20. Accordingly, Missouri wanted "full agreement" established on these non-fundamental doctrines. In the case of the doctrine of the church, Missouri also wanted "uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching." In addition to these doctrinal matters, Missouri was also concerned about reaching agreement in practice, especially in regard to the lodge, fellowship, and unionism.[22] Moreover, the ALC also had to establish doctrinal agreement with those synods with which the ALC was already in fellowship.

With the possible exception of the statement that disagreement in the topics cited does not endanger the analogy of faith, all these point to a conception of doctrine such as implied in A Brief Statement,[23] which Missouri was using as its basic functioning fellowship document. The underlying assumption is that whenever Scripture speaks on a topic, which is the truth, on which everyone must agree. Accordingly, there must be total agreement, sometimes even in terminology. This full agreement must also show itself in practice, in

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[22] This latter point, unionism, came to be a key issue as Missouri attempted to justify its position to Wisconsin and and was also that point at which a different approach to doctrine surfaced within the Synod.

[23] For an analysis of Missouri's A Brief Statement, see infra, "Missouri's Controversy with Wisconsin," pp. 141-143.

that since it is the truth, it must be accepted by everyone else with whom one has fellowship, else one would be guilty of unionism. There is no mention here of Christ or responding to God in humility with one's fellow man. Instead the accent is on faith in the terms of intellectual acceptance of stated truths. The distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrine is similarly based on the relative importance of intellectually held truths. Matters that some within Missouri referred to as belonging in the realm of exegetical problems or open questions[24] and here spoken of as doctrine, that is, teachings based on Scripture where there can be only one true understanding. Implicitly, the Synod seems here to be most concerned about the authority of Scripture and a view of doctrine where interpretations of Scripture are either true or false, even in regard to matters of the Synod's theology that are admittedly non-fundamental.

The ALC's Fellowship Resolution

With this implicit understanding of doctrine, and apparently assuming the same of the ALC, Missouri proceeded toward fellowship. The ALC, meeting a few months later, also passed a fellowship resolution. As negotiations continued, however, the wording of this fellowship resolution of the ALC gave ammunition to those within Missouri who were

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[24]Viz., J. H. Gockel, "For a Re-Study of So-Called Non-Fundamentals," American Lutheran, XXV (June 1942), 6-8.

critical of the fellowship negotiations. As will be seen later in the chapter, Missouri became concerned about this resolution where the ALC stated that "it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines," that "the Brief Statement viewed in the light of our Declaration is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Thesis," and that the ALC flatly stated that it was not willing to give up membership in the American Lutheran Conference.

The text of the ALC resolution read:

1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached.

2. That we declare the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of our Commission, a sufficient doctrinal basis for Church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

3. That, according to our conviction and the resolution of the Synod of Missouri, passed at its convention in St. Louis, the aforementioned doctrinal agreement is the sufficient doctrinal basis for Church-fellowship, and that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines. Nevertheless, we are willing to continue the negotiations concerning the points termed in our Declaration as "not divisive of Church-fellowship," and recognized as such by the Missouri Synod's resolutions, and instruct our Commission on Fellowship accordingly.

4. That we understand why the Missouri Synod is for the time being not yet ready to draw the logical conclusion and immediately establish church-fellowship with our church. We, however, expect that henceforth by both sides the erection of opposition altars shall be carefully avoided and that just coordination of mission work shall earnestly be sought.

5. That we believe that the Brief Statement viewed in the light of our Declaration is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses which are the basis of our membership in the American Lutheran Conference. We are not willing to give up this membership. However, we are ready to submit the afore-mentioned doctrinal agreement to the other members of the American Lutheran Conference for their official approval and acceptance.

6. That until church-fellowship has been officially established, we encourage the pastors of both church bodies to meet in smaller groups in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the question of church practice. . . .[25]

Missouri Publications Support Fellowship

Following these 1938 fellowship resolutions of the Synod's St. Louis convention, there was much discussion within Missouri of their doctrinal basis. Two periodicals, The Crucible[26] and The Confessional Lutheran,[27] were launched to oppose implementation of Missouri's fellowship resolution with the ALC.

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[25]Official Minutes, Fifth Convention of the American Lutheran Church held in Sandusky, Ohio, October 14-20, 1938 (Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.), pp. 255-256.

[26]Edited by W. Oesch, printed in England, it began publication with the January-February, 1939 issue. This was apparently not the first time Oesch had been critical of Missouri. The "Table of Contents" of the 1938 LCMS, Reports and Memorials, under unprinted memorials, lists: "3. Criticism of doctrinal statements that appeared in print during last years (Pastor W. M. Oesch)."

[27]This began publication with the January 1940 issue under the editorship of Paul H. Burgdorf.

The Lutheran Witness, Missouri's most circulated official periodical, was generally favorable to the Synod's 1938 resolution. Although it promoted fellowship with the ALC, it was not hesitant to criticise the ALC when it thought it necessary, as it did the month following the ALC's Sandusky (1938) convention. In commenting on the action of that convention which expressed the view that the Minneapolis Theses, which were the basis of the American Lutheran Conference, were not in contradiction to A Brief Statement, the Lutheran Witness expressed the opinion that the Minneapolis Theses "are incomplete and do not cover every point in controversy. But they contain no error."[28]

Likewise the Lutheran Witness printed in full the Pittsburgh agreement between the ALC and the United Lutheran Church on inspiration and Scripture and commented that although the statement is correct, that is, it contains nothing that contradicts Scripture, it is inadequate because it must not necessarily be interpreted to mean that the United Lutheran Church now holds a doctrine of inspiration like the ALC. As they put it, the Pittsburgh Agreement does not contain an "explicit, unequivocal declaration of the verbal inspiration and of the inerrancy of Holy Scripture in all its parts which

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[28]Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Union," Lutheran Witness, LVII (November 29, 1938), 410.

the situation demands."[29] However, the Lutheran Witness also printed an article quoting from an Ohio District convention of the ALC showing that the ALC has a view of inspiration just like Missouri's and is therefore more conservative than the United Lutheran Church.[30]

A number of reports were carried by the Lutheran Witness during this triennium (1938-1941) of local free conferences involving mainly Missouri and ALC pastors. Many reports contained a comment that there was agreement on the subject discussed, which ranged from sola gratia, sola fide, inerrancy, unionism, and Scripture, to predestination.[31]

During 1940 the Lutheran Witness ran a series of eight articles on Lutheran union written by the editors which they summarized at its conclusion that they

> have not voiced agreement with every phrase of the 1938 resolutions (they have taken exception to some of the phrasing) and that they have not maintained that there is agreement in the public doctrine of the Missouri Synod and the A. L. C.; on the contrary, they have tried to establish the opposite. What they maintain is that the resolutions of June, 1938, were adequate as voted by Synod.[32]

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[29] Committee on Lutheran Union, "Concerning Lutheran Union," Lutheran Witness, LVIII (April 18, 1939), 139-140. Cf. "Editorial Opinion," Lutheran Witness, LVIII (April 18, 1939), 140.

[30] G[raebner], "Editorial: The Scriptures Inerrant," Lutheran Witness, LVIII (October 31, 1939), 371.

[31] Lutheran Witness, LVIII (April 4, 1939), 118; LIX (June 25, 1940), 218; LIX (January 9, 1940), 10; LIX (February 20, 1940), 63; LIX (October 29, 1940), 370; LX (February 4, 1941), 42-43.

[32] Lutheran Witness, LIX (December 10, 1940), 421.

Looking more closely at this significant series of articles, the first one, discussing what is meant by fellowship, wrote:

> By church-fellowship we mean an outward relationship, something visible, tangible, something we say and do in order to testify to an agreement in doctrine established between ourselves and others. . . . This is done because we recognize these bodies [members of the Synodical Conference] as in their public doctrine not only testifying to the truth but rejecting all false teachings.[33]

The article pointed out that Missouri does not consider it sufficient to agree only on the "great fundamental doctrines," and not require agreement on "other doctrines not directly connected with the way of salvation."

> We have testified from the beginning of our synodical life to the present day and hour that we are not permitted to distinguish between things in the Bible that are to be believed and others that need not be believed. We have always said and say today that any one who denies even a fact so remote from the doctrine of salvation as, let us say, the fact that David slew Goliath or that Ruth was a Moabitess cannot have fellowship with us, for the simple reason that such a person denies what is plainly stated as a fact in the Bible. . . . There must be no toleration of error, be it an important or in a less important teaching of the Bible.[34]

The article went on to say that church fellowship is not the same as doctrinal unity. Church-fellowship is based on doctrinal unity as its absolute condition. In Missouri's view, before fellowship two church bodies must "have the same

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[33] "Lutheran Union: A Discussion. I," Lutheran Witness, LIX (May 28, 1940), 186.

[34] Ibid.

public doctrine (and by this we mean what is stated in official church-papers, and other publications under official authority) . . ."[35]

The second article of the series traced doctrinal agreements between Missouri and the ALC from the Chicago Theses, through A Brief Statement and the ALC "Declaration," to conclude that it "is our conviction that the resolutions of 1938 recording a status of doctrinal agreement were both Scripturally grounded and in agreement with reality."[36] This was substantiated in some detail in the succeeding two articles of the series, quoting from ALC writings to demonstrate that Missouri and the ALC agree on open questions, chiliasm, election and conversion,[37] inspiration, justification, and predestination.[38]

The question of the ALC "Declaration" whether or not Missouri considered certain phraseology and exegetical interpretations divisive of fellowship and answered in the negative by Missouri's 1938 convention was discussed next in this series. Quoted was a 1939 essay of the Southern Nebraska

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[35] Ibid.

[36] "Lutheran Union: A Discussion. II," Lutheran Witness, LIX (June 11, 1940), 200.

[37] "Lutheran Union: A Discussion. III," Lutheran Witness, LIX (June 25, 1940), 223.

[38] "Lutheran Union: A Discussion. IV," Lutheran Witness, LIX (July 9, 1940), 239.

District which argued that ALC phraseology on the doctrine of the church is not divisive of church fellowship, because "the A. L. C. teaches as we do regarding the Church . . ."[39] This was followed by a quotation of 1 Timothy 6:4 and the comment: "This text surely applies to those who stubbornly insist on every one else's using their own terminology as a condition of fellowship and who think only the worst of those using any other."[40]

In regard to non-fundamentals, the next article of the series points out that "All parties to the union agreement definitely maintain that whether fundamental or non-fundamental, if a doctrine is set forth in the Bible, Christians are bound to accept it."[41] Actually, the Lutheran Witness argues, the question does not really concern non-fundamental doctrines, but is in the area of open questions or theological problems, in which there is freedom to agree or disagree, because the matter is not a doctrine clearly revealed in Scripture. The article significantly goes on to quote F. Pieper to demonstrate that "the clearness of Scripture is in no wise touched by accepting the existence of 'problems' in the field of theological exposition."[42]

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[39] "Lutheran Union: A Discussion. V," Lutheran Witness, LIX (July 23, 1940), 261.

[40] Ibid.

[41] "Lutheran Union: A Discussion. VI," Lutheran Witness, LIX (August 6, 1940), 275.

[42] Ibid.

After speaking of matters of practice especially regarding the lodge and unionism and other conditions that must be met before fellowship can be accomplished, such as approval of the American Lutheran Conference and the Synodical Conference,[43] the series concluded by expressing the view that actual fellowship with the ALC is still in the future. Left to be resolved is the question of prayer-fellowship (where the editors disagreed with the ALC position), concerns on the adequacy of the Pittsburgh Agreement regarding inspiration, the touchy situation of opposition altars which have been established over the years, and the question of the extent to which the official position adopted by the Missouri and ALC conventions are actually the public doctrine of the body. All this, the editors conclude, will take time and joint discussion.[44]

Other articles in the Lutheran Witness during this period gave a favorable report of the ALC's 1940 convention in Detroit,[45] condemned unionism in the American Lutheran

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[43]"Lutheran Union: A Discussion. VII," Lutheran Witness, LIX (August 20, 1940), 292.

[44]"Lutheran Union: A Discussion. VIII," Lutheran Witness, LIX (September 3, 1940), 306-307.

[45]W. Arndt, "The Detroit Convention of the American Lutheran Church," Lutheran Witness, LIX (October 29, 1940), 379.

Conference,[46] and reported that editors of church papers of the ALC and Missouri had met

> to see what can be done on a Scriptural basis so that the negotiations that have proceeded thus far under such auspicious blessing might be crowned with the consummation of church-fellowship between the two bodies.[47]

It was also reported that pastors of Missouri's Michigan District "have assumed the cost of sending our Theological Monthly for a year to every pastor of the American Lutheran Church in that State."[48]

During the same period (1938-1941), the Synod's most popular technical journal, the Concordia Theological Monthly, made available to its clergy a number of reports on the negotiations between the two synods as they became available. It printed the "Reply" of the ALC commissioners after the committees of the two synods had met in September 1939 to discuss written answers of the ALC commissioners to written questions of the Missouri committeemen regarding the ALC's Sandusky

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[46]G[raebner], "'Strategic Position' of the A. L. Conference," Lutheran Witness, LIX (November 26, 1940), 404-405.

[47]E. W. Schramm, "Editors of the A. L. C. and Missouri Synod Meet," Lutheran Witness, LVII (February 21, 1939), 57.

[48]G[raebner], "Intersynodical Discussion," Lutheran Witness, LX (January 7, 1941), 5.

(1938) resolutions.[49] The last several pages of Martin Graebner's essay at the Southern Nebraska District 1939 convention were reprinted where the author concluded that the 1938 Missouri union resolutions

> have steered clear of the Scylla of unionism on the one side and the Charybdis of separatism on the other side and that they constitute a sound and conservative basis for fellowship in the Lutheran Church.[50]

Prior to the ALC's Detroit convention (1940), the Concordia Theological Monthly reprinted the statement that Missouri's Doctrinal Unity Committee presented to the ALC as to what in their opinion still prevented fellowship.[51] Following the 1940 convention of the American Lutheran Conference, a negative reaction was printed, because apparently the ALC had made no effort to discuss doctrine and practice at that convention in order to bring the American Lutheran Conference to a position identical with that of Missouri and the ALC so that there could be fellowship.[52] Another article, however, quoted

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[49]F. H. Brunn, Secretary of Missouri's Committee on Lutheran Union, "The Present Status of the Discussions of the Missouri Synod with the American Lutheran Church," Concordia Theological Monthly, X (December 1939), 928-936. Hereafter this periodical will be referred to as CTM.

[50]Martin Graebner, "Need Not Be Divisive," CTM, XI (July 1940), 534.

[51]A[rndt], "A Formal Statement on Relations between the A. L. C. and the Missouri Synod," CTM, XI (December 1940), 928-931.

[52]A[rndt], "The American Lutheran Conference," CTM, XII (January 1941), 62-63.

two ALC authors upholding a view of inspiration like that of Missouri and applauded their efforts to witness to the American Lutheran Conference and the United Lutheran Church.[53]

What is Doctrine?

In Missouri periodicals, therefore, fellowship with the ALC was supported on the basis of that understanding of doctrine which was reflected in Missouri's 1938 resolution. When Missouri criticised the ALC, it did so because the latter's doctrinal statements did not adequately protect the truth of Scripture by what the statements did or did not say. When Missouri supported the union resolutions, it did so on the basis that Missouri and the ALC actually do agree, and Missouri periodicals endeavored to show that doctrinal agreement as Missouri understood it did in fact exist. Both the critics and supporters within the Synod were operating with the same implicit understanding of doctrine. They both understood doctrine to mean a series of biblical truths. Those within Missouri who opposed fellowship claimed that there was not this kind of doctrinal agreement, and those who supported fellowship endeavored to show the existence of this same kind of doctrinal agreement.

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[53]A[rndt], "A. L. C. Testimony with Respect to Verbal Inspiration," CTM, XII (April 1941), 304.

Missouri Balks at Proceedings into Fellowship

Although the official periodicals of the Synod were generally favorable towards the 1938 union resolutions and the on-going negotiations, by the time of the Synod's next convention (1941) the issues did not seem to be nearly as clear as they had seemed in 1938. The Committee on Lutheran Church Union officially reported a number of obstacles that had surfaced during the past three years in several major areas:

1. First of all, instead of having been able in the past three years to deal with the five points mentioned in the ALC "Declaration" about which there still was a divergence (visible side of the Church, Anti-christ, beginning of the millennium, resurrection of the martyrs, conversion of the Jews), discussion at the three meetings of the Missouri and the ALC committees during the triennium centered on the ALC's fellowship resolution adopted at Sandusky in October 1938. Missouri was concerned that the Sandusky resolution had stated that "it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines . . ."[54] Accordingly the ALC at its 1940 convention in Detroit offered an explanation:

> Recent events prove that in the interest of a correct understanding of the St. Louis Resolutions of 1938 it was necessary to include in our resolutions a statement like this: "We are firmly convinced

[54] LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, p. 277.

> that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines." We declare that by including this or a similar statement, we did not want to cast any doubt on the binding force of any biblical statement. We concur with our commissioners and say, "To be sure, everything that Scriptures teach is God's Word and therefore binding." However, for clarity's sake we add: Not every traditional explanation of a Scriptural statement is binding. The traditional explanation may not be the sense intended by the Holy Ghost and therefore may make further study under His guidance necessary; and since human shortsightedness and sin may preclude the finding or universal acceptance of the divinely intended sense, we thank God that it is not necessary for the establishment of church-fellowship to agree in every explanation of a Scriptural statement.[55]

Although the Missouri men stated that everything in this explanation of the ALC's Detroit convention is true,

> we regret that the convention felt it necessary to make an addition to its clear statement, "To be sure, everything that Scriptures teach is God's Word and therefore binding." The words added might create the impression as though a clear-cut statement acknowledging the binding force of all Scripture-passages were a dangerous statement to make and required some limiting, or restrictive, addition. We are all the more compelled to say this because the position that the traditional explanation of a Scripture-passage is not necessarily the right one has never been questioned in the Lutheran Church.[56]

Similarly, Missouri questioned the declaration in the Sandusky resolution that the ALC would not give up its membership in the American Lutheran Conference. Missouri had already said[57] that fellowship also depends on the ALC's

[55] As quoted in LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, pp. 280-281.

[56] Ibid., p. 280.

[57] LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 232.

achieving doctrinal unity with those synods with which both were in fellowship. The ALC replied that it was confident "that our sister synods in the American Lutheran Conference will occupy the same ground in these matters now occupied by us."[58] Missouri, however, was not as confident. For it noted that at the American Lutheran Conference's meeting in Minneapolis in 1940, "official reports of that meeting and statements made by individuals who attended, do not indicate that anything was done to bring about this occupying of the same ground."[59] The Missouri report went on to say:

> It seems now that many of the leaders of the American Lutheran Church do not share this position which opposes the making of compromises with error and insists on unbending loyalty whereever the principles of God's Word are concerned. If in one or the other minor point some members of the American Lutheran Church do not as yet fully share our docgrinal position, this situation does not necessarily make fellowship impossible; but we hold it to be indispensable that, if we are to have fellowship with each other, there must be in our church-bodies not only in theory the same attitude toward the authority of God's Word and the obedience which we owe it, but the same determination to achieve acceptance of what the Scriptures teach. In view of the reported silence of the American Lutheran Church representatives at Minneapolis, the question arises whether there is not a fundamental difference between the American Lutheran Church and our Synod on the meaning of confessional loyalty.[60]

Missouri men also questioned the phrase of the ALC's Sandusky resolution "in the light of" which occurred in the

[58] As quoted in LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, p. 282.

[59] Ibid., p. 284.

[60] Ibid., pp. 284-285.

sentence, "We believe that the Brief Statement viewed in the light of our Declaration is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses."[61] The ALC explained that this phrase "in the light of" really means three things: It means, first of all, that the ALC accepts Missouri's A Brief Statement treatment of the church, Anti-christ, conversion of the Jews, physical resurrection of martyrs, and the thousand years of Revelations 20 "only with the limitations set forth in our Declaration."[62] Secondly, it means that any other points mentioned in the ALC "Declaration" should be considered as supplemental or giving special emphasis to points of doctrine in A Brief Statement. For example,

> the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures has been supplemented in our Declaration with reference to the human factor, and in the doctrine of election and conversion those points have been emphasized which seemed essential to us.[63]

Thirdly, it means that the ALC agrees with the "points of doctrine" contained in A Brief Statement, but does not necessarily agree in matters of exegesis, argumentation, or terminology. For example, the ALC said that A Brief Statement's assertion that "Adam before the fall had a scientific knowledge" was not considered by them to be a "point of doctrine."[64] The fear of the Missouri committeemen in this

[61] Ibid., p. 277.

[62] Ibid., p. 281.

[63] Ibid., pp. 281-282.

[64] Ibid., p. 282.

regard was that "some may later abuse this statement so as to eliminate the Brief Statement as a part of the basis for doctrinal agreement."[65]

2. The second major area of concern that Missouri expressed officially was a statement in the ALC "Declaration" that God "purposes to justify those who have come to faith." The ALC explained that they were surprised that this statement "could be so wrongly construed." Rather than speaking of a time interval between "the creation of faith and the justifying act of God," the statement intended not only to affirm objective justification, but also include subjective justification, namely, "the declarative nature of the individual justification in the moment of faith of which the Scriptures speak so often."[66] The Missouri men responded that they were disappointed that the ALC did not content themselves with the definition of objective justification already found mutually acceptable and would even bring up the subject of subjective justification, which had never been a matter of controversy between the two groups.[67]

3. It also concerned the Missouri men that while they were discussing A Brief Statement with the ALC commissioners, that a number of other disagreements with that document on the part of the ALC were expressed. Rather than saying as

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., p. 280.

[67] Ibid.

does A Brief Statement that the Word of the Gospel and the Sacraments are the means of grace, the ALC commissioners had preferred the terminology that the Word and the Sacraments are the means of grace.[68] Regarding the effect of the Lord's Supper which A Brief Statement says "is not other than the communication and sealing of the forgiveness of sins," the ALC felt that "a possible physical effect of the Lord's Supper should not be denied."[69] It also concerned the Missouri men that the ALC commissioners did not feel that all of the passages quoted in A Brief Statement regarding unionism were applicable.[70] These points, the Missouri men said, "require further discussion."[71]

4. Missouri further questioned whether or not it really had doctrinal agreement with the ALC because the ALC in 1939 announced that it had come to an agreement with the United Lutheran Church on the doctrine of inspiration on the basis of the Pittsburgh Agreement. How, Missouri asked, could the ALC really share Missouri's understanding of inspiration and still come to an agreement with the United Lutheran Church? The United Lutheran Church "had definitely refused to endorse what our Brief Statement says on this subject," Missouri

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[68] Ibid., p. 278.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

reminded, when Missouri had met with them on precisely the same point. Although the ALC argued that the United Lutheran Church "had receded from its opposition to verbal inspiration as taught in the Brief Statement and had accepted the Biblical doctrine," the Missouri men "found the Pittsburgh Agreement not adequate because it contains loopholes for a denial of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures."[72]

5. Missouri also discovered, following its 1938 convention, that two of her sister synods in the Synodical Conference, the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods, did not think there existed an adequate basis for fellowship,[73] and they wanted the Missouri--ALC negotiations discontinued.[74]

6. Finally, Missouri was concerned about church practice within the ALC, specifically in regard to lodges and unionism. The ALC maintained that there was little difference in practice regarding lodges. In regard to the charge of unionism, the ALC argued that prayer-fellowship and church-fellowship are not the same. Not only did they feel prayer-fellowship to be wider than church fellowship, but they also felt this difference was not divisive. The Missouri men expressed the opinion that this difference would cause "no end of friction

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[72] Ibid., pp. 278-279; cf. p. 283.

[73] Ibid., p. 279.

[74] Ibid., p. 285.

and irritation" and said the Missouri position was "generally speaking, prayer-fellowship involves church-fellowship."[75]

Faced with this report from its Doctrinal Unity Committee[76] and with the request of the Synodical Conference to consider framing a single document of agreement, the 1941 convention of the Missouri Synod resolved that the Synod's Doctrinal Unity Committee should continue negotiations with the ALC and with them prepare one document "so clearly written that there can be no misunderstanding in reference to the meaning which the words are to convey."[77] At the same time, however, the Synod stated that it does

> not mean to dispense with any doctrinal statement made in our Brief Statement,--for we believe that it correctly expresses the doctrinal position of our Synod,--but we concede that, for the sake of clarification under the present circumstances, some statements may need to be more sharply defined or amplified . . .[78]

The resolution further explained that it should

> be understood that the term "non-fundamental doctrines" which has been used should not be made to convey the idea that anything clearly revealed in Scriptures, although not absolutely necessary for salvation, may be denied . . .[79]

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[75] Ibid., pp. 282-283.

[76] Following the convention an article in the Lutheran Witness reported: "The remarks made on the floor by representatives of our Union Committee were negative and, as for the future, definitely pessimistic." G[raebner], "The Larger Interests of Lutheranism," Lutheran Witness, LX (July 22, 1941), 248.

[77] LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, p. 302.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

The committee was instructed to "endeavor to establish full agreement" in all controversial doctrines, including "the teachings concerning Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, and the fulfilment of the thousand years . . ."[80] The other synods of the Synodical Conference were also asked to send representatives to these meetings.

What is Doctrine?

As was shown, Missouri continued to operate on the same basic assumption as before that doctrine is anything Scripture teaches, whether related to salvation or not. As the negotiations progressed, however, Missouri came to doubt that the ALC started with that same approach to doctrine. When pressed into a true-false situation, Missouri learned that the ALC did not necessarily consider every traditional Lutheran explanation of Scripture to be the right one. Moreover, Missouri was disturbed that in the ALC approach, fellowship was possible and desirable even without what Missouri considered full doctrinal agreement, again pointing to a different basic understanding of doctrine. From its presuppositions of what doctrine is, Missouri feared that the ALC approach could result in a crumbling away of doctrine and the authority of Scripture. Accordingly, Missouri stuck to its basic assumption of doctrine being anything Scripture teaches

[80] Ibid.

and resolved to arrive at an unequivocal joint statement with the ALC to demonstrate doctrinal agreement on that basis.

From that perspective, therefore, Missouri periodicals continued to support fellowship but ALC interest lagged, because it proceeded from a different premise.

Missouri Periodicals Continue to Support Fellowship

Discussion of the issues of fellowship continued during this triennium (1941-1944) in the Synod's periodicals. The Concordia Theological Monthly carried major articles on two points of the negotiations. An article on Romans 11:26, "All Israel Shall be Saved," concluded that

> We can confidently subscribe to the unequivocal position taken in our Synod's Brief Statement of 1932: "There will be no general conversion, a conversion en masse, of the Jewish nation."[81]

Another article dealt with the phrase in the ALC "Declaration": "God purposes to justify those that have come to faith." This article quotes from the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, Walther-Baier, and Stoeckhardt to demonstrate that this expression "is in keeping with that of our classical Lutheran literature." This expression does not speak of an interval of time, but of logical sequence.[82]

[81] V. Bartling, "'All Israel Shall be Saved,' Rom. 11:26," CTM, XII (September 1941), 641-652.

[82] W. Arndt, "'God Purposes to Justify Those That Have Come to Faith,'" CTM, XIV (November 1943), 787-791.

In the Lutheran Witness, reports of local intersynodical conferences occurred regularly.[83] One of the concerns during this period was the question of what is necessary for Lutheran union. A report of the National Lutheran Editor's Association meeting revealed differing attitudes among Lutheran groups as to what is necessary for union.[84] Similarly the Synod's Doctrinal Unity Committee reported that the chief difference between Missouri and the ALC at this point is disagreement about what is necessary for church fellowship.[85]

Especially sensitive was the question of prayer fellowship. According to a Lutheran Witness commentary on the Synod's resolutions at its 1941 convention, the question was asked if the resolution forbidding any implementation of pulpit-, altar-, or prayer-fellowship until officially declared prohibited opening prayer at intersynodical conferences. Opinion was divided and the convention did not answer the question.[86] Another article further pointed out that when Dr. Behnken, the Synod's president, attended a

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[83] A February issue reported that 120 local conferences were known to have met; CTM, LXIII (February 1, 1944), 42.

[84] G[raebner], "Editors Review Efforts for Closer Lutheran Unity," Lutheran Witness, LX (October 14, 1941), 356-357.

[85] Committee for Doctrinal Unity, "Report of Committee for Doctrinal Unity," Lutheran Witness, LXII (May 11, 1943), 162-163. Cf. G[raebner], "A Report of the Committee on Unity," Lutheran Witness, LXII (May 11, 1943), 156.

[86] "The 1941 Resolutions on Lutheran Union," Lutheran Witness, LXI (May 12, 1942), 169.

National Lutheran Council meeting in Columbus he arrived a half hour late and thus no embarrassment occurred regarding whether or not to begin the meeting with prayer. There was no indication whether the late arrival was intentional or not.[87] The same sensitivity towards anything unionistic appeared also in two articles citing examples of unionistic actions by pastors of other synods and asked for an end to such offenses which hurt the cause of Lutheran union more than the faithful work of hundreds of their pastors helps it.[88] Similarly a joint communion service between a Missouri and an ALC congregation in New York City was criticized.[89]

Soon after emphasizing that the Missouri Synod wants union with other Lutheran synods and "has emphatically taken a stand in favor of Lutheran union,"[90] the Lutheran Witness began a series of articles spelling out in non-technical language just what, in the opinion of the editors, were the remaining obstacles of Lutheran union. As the editors saw

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[87] G[raebner], "Editors Can Lose Perspective," Lutheran Witness, LXI (June 9, 1942), 199-200.

[88] G[raebner], "Things That Divide," Lutheran Witness, LXII (May 25, 1943), 176; G[raebner], "Can We Have an End of These Offenses?," Lutheran Witness, LXIII (May 9, 1944), 152-153.

[89] G[raebner], "Inter-Synodical Communion," Lutheran Witness, LXII (November 23, 1943), 384.

[90] "Does the Missouri Synod Want Union?," Lutheran Witness, LXII (May 25, 1943), 177.

it, current obstacles were: The American Lutheran Conference has not adopted A Brief Statement and "Declaration" as its own;[91] the fact, on the other hand, that Missouri's fellow synods of the Synodical Conference have not all approved of the negotiations;[92] and that union negotiations were slowed because other Lutherans misunderstand Missouri's insistence on complete doctrinal agreement and non-participation in unionistic worship, even opening joint prayer among Lutherans.[93]

Negotiations Lag

When the Synod next met in convention, its Doctrinal Unity Committee reported that only in recent months had the committees of the two synods begun work on the single document of agreement called for at the previous convention.[94] The delay had been caused by the ALC's 1942 convention which called for fellowship with either the Missouri Synod on the basis of the "Declaration" in connection with A Brief Statement, or with the United Lutheran Church on the basis of the Pittsburgh Agreement, either of which Missouri now felt was

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[91] "Obstacles of Lutheran Union," Lutheran Witness, LXII (July 6, 1943), 225-226.

[92] "Obstacles of Lutheran Union," Lutheran Witness, LXII (August 3, 1943), 259-260.

[93] "Obstacles of Lutheran Union," Lutheran Witness, LXII (August 17, 1943), 273-274.

[94] LCMS, Proceedings, 1944, p. 230.

inadequate.[95] The refusal of the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods to participate in meetings further complicated the matter.[96] Happily the committee was able to report that during the triennium more than a hundred inter-synodical meetings had been held on the local level in various parts of the country. Most of these reported favorable meetings, discussing such topics as the inerrancy of Scripture, purity of doctrine as a prerequisite for fellowship, and the need of Lutheran unity.[97] The Synod therefore, asked the Committee on Doctrinal Unity to distribute the one document of agreement to all pastors, teachers, and congregations of the Synod as soon as possible so that it could be studied in advance and be considered for final action at the Synod's next convention in 1947.[98]

This the Committee on Doctrinal Unity did when it mailed its Doctrinal Affirmation to all pastors and teachers of the Synod. In response to criticism from within the Synod and from the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods, the committee further submitted "Clarifications," both to the Synod and to the ALC. Reactions from the ALC were largely apathetic, some districts of which even rejected the document. An explanation of the

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[95] Ibid., p. 229.

[96] Ibid., p. 228.

[97] Ibid., p. 230.

[98] Ibid., p. 250.

ALC fellowship committee, published in Missouri's Lutheran Witness, indicated that the ALC wanted the Doctrinal Affirmation "abandoned and that the Brief Statement together with the Declaration should be declared sufficient for fellowship. The two documents should be permitted to stand side by side."[99] Although there are differences in doctrine, the ALC fellowship committee said, there is "full agreement in the great doctrines of Christianity . . . and sufficient doctrinal agreement existed between the two church bodies to warrant fellowship."[100]

At Missouri's "Centennial Convention" (1947) its Committee on Doctrinal Unity reported the ALC lack of interest in the Doctrinal Affirmation, including an ALC convention resolution of the previous year (1946), which said in part:

> After years of effort in this direction [that is, of endeavoring to produce a generally acceptable document such as the Doctrinal Affirmation], we despair of attaining Lutheran Unity by way of additional doctrinal formulations and reformulations; and
>
> Whereas, the adoption of the Minneapolis Theses, the Washington Declaration, the Brief Statement and Declaration, the Pittsburgh Agreement, and the Overture on Unity have demonstrated that the chief obstacles to Lutheran Unity are not matters of doctrine as much as differences of background, approach, spirit, attitude, which can be resolved in an atmosphere of candor, mutual understanding and love; therefore be it

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[99] The Committee on Doctrinal Unity, F. H. Brunn, Secretary, "The Doctrinal Affirmation to be Abandoned," Lutheran Witness, LXV (November 5, 1946), 378.

[100] Ibid.

> Resolved, That we reaffirm our sincere and earnest desire to achieve official church fellowship with all Lutheran bodies, and to that end continue our Committee on Fellowship, charging it to explore the measure of agreement we have with other Lutheran bodies and to further such agreement toward the goal of true unity.[101]

It was the opinion of Missouri's committee that three difficulties currently stood in the way of fellowship with the ALC: (1) Lack of doctrinal unity; (2) The difference of opinion as to the degree of doctrinal unity required for fellowship; and (3) The ALC's membership in the American Lutheran Conference.[102] "Our Synod," the committee reported, "has insisted and still insists that fellowship must be based on unity in all doctrines clearly revealed in Holy Writ."[103] Only because the ALC commission had again this spring shown an interest in continued negotiations,[104] was Missouri's committee able to recommend continued efforts

> in the hope of eventually achieving, by the grace of God, a single document that will give expression to a full and whole-hearted agreement between the American Lutheran Church and our Synod in all doctrines of the Holy Scriptures and in Scriptural practice.[105]

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[101] As quoted in LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, pp. 495-496.

[102] Ibid., p. 497.

[103] Ibid.

[104] The invitation from the ALC for a meeting was dated March 4, 1947. The meeting was held May 9, 1947. Ibid., p. 496.

[105] Ibid., p. 498.

Since the Doctrinal Affirmation was in effect eliminated by the ALC's most recent convention, Missouri need take no action on it, the committee advised. It is to be "regretted," Missouri's committee reported finally, that the "American Lutheran Church has adopted the principle of selective fellowship in the hope of promoting unity with our Synod and with the United Lutheran Church."[106]

The Synod, therefore, resolved to continue "doctrinal discussion" with the ALC,[107] instructing its committee "to make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document which is Scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal . . ."[108]

The Synod's admission in the same resolution that "All efforts to unite the contents of the Brief Statement and the Declaration by means of the Doctrinal Affirmation have admittedly not been satisfactory,"[109] was in place in view of the fact that an examination of the Doctrinal Affirmation and especially its "Clarifications" clearly support the ALC contention that the Doctrinal Affirmation

> gives preference everywhere to the Brief Statement . . . . it canceled the position for which the American Lutheran Church stood in the Declaration; the Declaration stood for a certain attitude given

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[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., p. 501.

[108] Ibid., p. 510.

[109] Ibid.

> freedom under God and His Word . . . important statements of the Declaration were omitted in framing the Affirmation which were regarded as safeguards . . .[110]

For example, whereas the ALC had asked that "a possible physical effect of the Lord's Supper should not be denied,"[111] the Doctrinal Affirmation as amended by Missouri flatly stated: "Likewise the object of the Lord's Supper . . . is none other than the purpose of the Gospel and Holy Baptism, viz., the communication and sealing of the forgiveness of sins . . ."[112] Similarly, the amended affirmation rejects the possibility of a general conversion of the Jews, insists on the identification of the papacy as the antichrist, denies any physical resurrection of martyrs prior to Christ's coming to judge, inserts A Brief Statement biblical support for the paragraph on unionism, and in three places inserts a paragraph from A Brief Statement verbatim.[113]

A New Effort--The Common Confession

In the span of time between Missouri's 1941 and 1947 conventions, voices began to be raised within the Synod which questioned the Synod's implicit operating definition of doctrine. Different emphases in regard to doctrine surfaced

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[110] Ibid., p. 495.

[111] LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, p. 278.

[112] LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, p. 499.

[113] Ibid., pp. 499-500.

during these years which were related to fellowship negotiations with the ALC and other matters. Some within Missouri specifically dealt with the question of what doctrine is. Others spoke out on issues that dealt implicitly with a definition of doctrine. During this time articles questioning the Synod's understanding of doctrine appeared in the American Lutheran, the "Statement" of the Forty-four was issued, the questions of prayer fellowship, Scouting, the military chaplaincy, and agreements with the National Lutheran Council were debated within the Synod and with Wisconsin. Although these matters are not part of the narrative of this chapter,[114] the implicit assumptions debated in these issues are also reflected in the next step of the Missouri--ALC fellowship negotiations.

Following the directive of the Synod, and in accordance with an ALC resolution of 1948, Missouri's Committee on Doctrainl Unity and the ALC Fellowship Commission drafted "a single statement of faith," which was adopted by the joint committees on December 6, 1949.[115] This document, known as the Common Confession, received qualified endorsement at Missouri's next convention (1950). Missouri resolved that the Common Confession be accepted "as a statement of these

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[114] See succeeding chapters dealing with the Missouri--Wisconsin controversy and internal doctrinal developments within Missouri.

[115] LCMS, Proceedings, 1950, pp. 566-567.

doctrines in harmony with Scriptures [sic]," and that "if the American Lutheran Church, in convention assembled, accepts it, the 'Common Confession' shall be recognized as a statement of agreement on these doctrines between us and the American Lutheran Church."[116] However, the Synod also resolved that since

> Not all phases of the doctrines of the Scriptures are treated in the "Common Confession" . . . . additional statements, originating in the same manner as the present "Common Confession," may be submitted to future conventions of our Synod and the American Lutheran Church for adoption.[117]

At this point, the Common Confession covered twelve topics: God, Man, Redemption, Election, Means of Grace, Justification, Conversion, Sanctification, The Church, The Ministry, The Lutheran Confessions, and The Last Things. An examination of its contents reveals that the Common Confession is written more positively than A Brief Statement, that is, it states what "we believe and teach" positively without antitheses,[118] does not quote from A Brief Statement, omits some items that A Brief Statement includes in its discussion of the same topic, does not always refer to the same or include

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[116] Ibid., p. 585.

[117] Ibid., pp. 585-586. It should be noted here that Missouri's Committee on Doctrinal Unity had invited the union committees of the other Synodical Conference bodies to a meeting which was held in January, 1948, to formulate an agreeable policy for negotiations between Missouri and the ALC. The LCMS, Proceedings, 1950, p. 566, tersely report: "No policy was adopted."

all the Bible passages used in A Brief Statement, and generally does not explain a topic in such a way that it is obvious that points of contention in previous discussions are here stated in such a way as to favor Missouri's historic position and definitely exclude the ALC's historic position.[119]

It will be remembered that Missouri had expressed dissatisfaction with the ALC position on a number of items: Anti-christ; conversion of the Jews; physical resurrection of the martyrs; fulfillment of the thousand years of Revelations 20; terminology regarding the doctrine of the church; agreement in practise regarding the lodge, fellowship, and unionism; the extent to which agreement in non-fundamental doctrine is necessary or possible; terminology regarding objective justification; the lack of A Brief Statement terminology on the topics of the means of grace and the effect of the Lord's Supper; whether all passages of A Brief Statement on unionism are applicable; inspiration (in light of the ALC--United Lutheran Church Pittsburgh Agreement); and whether prayer fellowship is wider than church fellowship. It was specifically these concerns that motivated Missouri

[118]Except in one article, "The Last Things."

[119]The Common Confession is printed in LCMS, Proceedings, 1950, pp. 567-572. Cf. pp. 575-585 where critics of the Common Confession had memorialized the Synod to reject it for precisely some of these same reasons.

to resolve that there needs to be a single document of agreement, not denying A Brief Statement, but "more sharply defined or amplified."

Viewed from the perspective of these concerns, the following can be noted about the Common Confession. The Common Confession covers the anti-christ, doctrine of the church, fellowship and unionism, objective justification, means of grace, and inspiration with positive treatments. However, there are no antitheses in the treatment of these topics, the two positions of Missouri and the ALC are not presented or contrasted, and critics claimed that both sides could find their position in the document. Only the topics of the conversion of the Jews, a physical resurrection of the martyrs, and a millennial fulfillment of the thousand years of Revelations 20 are specifically called "an error . . . not promised or foretold in the Holy Scriptures . . ."[120] In regard to Bible passages applicable to a treatment of unionism, the Common Confession refers only to 2 John 9-10, omitting Romans 16:17, 2 Timothy 2:17-21, and Matthew 7:15, all of which are used in A Brief Statement. Not covered in the Common Confession were the questions of the extent to which agreement in non-fundamental doctrine is necessary or possible,[121] a possible physical effect of the Lord's Supper,

[120]LCMS, Proceedings, 1953, p. 506.

[121]Unless the following paragraph from the Common Confession's treatment of the "Means of Grace" was intended to respond to that concern: "We therefore recognize the Holy

prayer fellowship in relation to church fellowship, and the necessary agreement in practice concerning the lodge.

Reporting to the next (1953) convention of the Synod, Missouri's committee submitted a supplement (known as "Part II") to the Common Confession adopted at the Synod's previous convention (known now as "Part I"), in order "to bring clarification where misunderstanding of Part I was encountered, as well as adding some doctrines which were omitted in Part I."[122] The ten general topics covered in "Part II" reveal its different approach: The Church's Mission, The Church's Resources, The Church and Its Ministrations, The Church and the Home, The Church and Vocation, The Church and Education, The Church and Government, The Church and Church Fellowship (the longest single section of "Part II"), The Church and Anti-Christian Organizations, and The Church and the World to Come.

In regard to the areas of disagreement leading to the formulation of the Common Confession, this Part II again covered in a general way the topics of the doctrine of the church, fellowship and unionism, the means of grace, and inspiration. Also covered implicitly was the question of the lodge. The question of the extent to which agreement

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Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, and this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith (cf. Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II). We pledge ourselves to teach all things taught in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing but that which is taught us by God in the Holy Scriptures." Ibid., p. 503.

[122] LCMS, Proceedings, 1953, p. 507. "Part II" is printed on pp. 508-521, with an index following.

in non-fundamental doctrine is necessary or possible was perhaps one of the factors in mind in the following paragraph:

> teaching otherwise than the Word of God teaches, setting up dogma contrary to, or without warrant from, the Word of God, as well as neglecting or omitting any part of the Word of God, creates divisions in the Church and disrupts its unity. To overlook divergences from the Word of God in the teaching and life of other Christians, to tolerate false teaching and practice contrary to Scripture, andto be silent in the face of denials of the Word of God likewise contribute to the disruption of the unity of the Church.[123]

Equally significant with what is or is not covered, is the tone of the Common Confession. A Brief Statement spelled out a precise point of view, specifically listed errors and false doctrine to be rejected, and urged Christians to separate from adherents of false doctrine. The Common Confession, on the other hand, covered points of contention leading to its formulation only implicitly or in a general way by treating such topics with a positive statement of faith, avoiding historic controversial terminology and antitheses. Instead of an emphasis on the necessity of accepting certain truths, the Common Confession is a witness to "common insights and emphases in our understanding and formulation of many Christian doctrines as held and taught in our churches."[124] The Common Confession stresses Christ and inclusion of fellow Christians in love, rather than exclusion of those who differ.

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[123] Ibid., p. 516.

[124] Foreword to Part II, ibid., p. 507.

Most important of all, the frame of reference in the Common Confession is the Gospel, more so than the authority of Scripture.

Almost every article of the Common Confession refers to the Gospel. The article on the Means of Grace says that "The Holy Scripture constitute His Word to men, centering in the revelation of Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation." Again, "the chief content of the Holy Scriptures is the Gospel."[125] The article on the Church and Church Fellowship confesses that "union with Christ as the Head also brings about the union of believers with one another. The uniting power of the Gospel becomes manifest both in local congregations and groups of congregations throughout Christendom."[126] This same article of the Common Confession contains a paragraph sub-titled "Primacy of the Gospel":

> Confessional loyalty [that is, the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions] is of particular importance with reference to the witness of the Confessions to the central theme of the Scriptures, the Gospel. Agreement in the Gospel is fundamental to church fellowship, for the Gospel constitutes the center from which all teachings of the Scriptures are to be viewed. Ultimately all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures have an organic connection with the central theme of the Scriptures, which is the Gospel. A denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, and departure from, the complete

[125] Ibid., p. 503.

[126] Ibid., p. 515.

> Gospel, and it is for this reason that a full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures is an indispensable requisite for church fellowship. It is impossible to recognize as equally valid such confessions as are mutually contradictory. The validity of a confession is established not by the mere claim that it is in harmony with the Scriptures, but by the fact that it is in actual agreement with them and is a faithful restatement of the Gospel as the central theme of the Scriptures.[127]

The Situation Changes

Since this "Part II" of the Common Confession was not available to the Synod for study until only a few months before the convention, it was resolved to postpone action on it.[128] By the time Missouri next met in convention (1956), however, the question of the adequacy of the Common Confession, Parts I and II, was no longer relevant due to the fact that the ALC appeared likely to unite with other members of the American Lutheran Conference in a new church body, and therefore could not serve as a functioning union document. Accordingly, although the Synod resolved that the Common Confession "be recognized as a statement in harmony with the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions," it hereafter should not be regarded "as a functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies . . ."[129]

[127] Ibid., pp. 516-517.

[128] Ibid., p. 528.

[129] LCMS, Proceedings, 1956, pp. 504-505; cf. pp. 491-492.

Conclusion

In an effort to determine what Missouri understood by doctrine in view of the fact that it obviously included more than Missouri said in its constitutional statement of doctrinal position, this chapter surveyed one aspect of one of the significant era's of Missouri's history. By taking special note of the doctrinal requirements Missouri made of the ALC during these negotiations, several conclusions about Missouri's public doctrine, the actual basis on which Missouri operated, were suggested.

At the start of the era and during most of the negotiations, Missouri operated with an implicit understanding of doctrine whereby doctrine was viewed as a summary of Scriptural teachings arranged in topical or logical order. For each such doctrine there is only one correct, truly biblical understanding. Obedience to the authority of Scripture demands complete agreement on all such doctrines as a necessary prerequisite to fellowship. Several attempts were made to establish fellowship on that basis.

As the negotiations continued, Missouri's position shifted. Although a checklist of doctrines accepted by Missouri at the beginning and end of the era would no doubt be identical, there were different priorities. The Common Confession, although adopted too late to be a functioning document, represents a different approach to doctrine. The Common Confession relates doctrine primarily to the Gospel,

more so than to the authority of Scripture. Rather than attempting to achieve doctrinal unity by means of intrically worded statements and antitheses dealing with past controversies, the Common Confession witnesses positively to the Gospel without implying that it is setting forth the only acceptable Scriptural teaching on the article of faith being covered.

CHAPTER V

MISSOURI'S CONTROVERSY WITH WISCONSIN

Introduction

Previous chapters have investigated Missouri's de facto doctrinal position as it was evidenced in internal doctrinal controversy, controversy with other synods, and negotiations aiming for fellowship with another Lutheran synod (American Lutheran Church) that ultimately failed. These investigations concluded that Missouri's constitutionally stated doctrinal position, acceptance of Scripture as the written Word of God, the three ecumenical creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions, have not alone determined Missouri's relationship with other church bodies, who is admitted into the Synod, and the Synod's internal discipline. Missouri has operated de facto on the basis of a public doctrine more inclusive than its constitutionally stated doctrinal position.

Although Missouri has only rarely attempted an official definition of doctrine or public doctrine, through the course of her history one can at times infer what was the apparent dominant understanding of the concept of doctrine within Missouri. And although it cannot likely be said at any one time that any such inferred definition of doctrine was accepted by the entire Synod, there are times when the Synod seemed more uniformly agreed on doctrine than at other periods of her

history. Sometimes one can infer that a shift in the Synod's understanding of doctrine has taken place.

One way of getting an insight into Missouri's apparent operating definition of doctrine is by looking at her church to church relationships during times of negotiations or controversy. The reasons Missouri gives for her position at such times are indicative of an implicit understanding of doctrine. One such formative episode in the history of the Synod was the controversy between Missouri and the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods.[1] Missouri's apparent understanding of what is meant by doctrine shifted during this controversy. Although a check-list of articles of faith accepted and taught by the Synod at the beginning and end of the era would no doubt be identical, there were shifts in priorities and applications. Some articles of faith received increasing attention and priority, while others were submerged. At the outset (about 1935) one observes a concept of doctrine as is implied in the Synod's A Brief Statement. By the time Wisconsin declared doctrinal discussions with Missouri to be at an impasse (1960), one observes the surfacing of a more Gospel-centered approach to doctrine. This shift was accompanied by controversy.

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[1] Although both the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods opposed the changes they observed within Missouri, most of Missouri's literature of the controversy has a Missouri versus Wisconsin tone, and both the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods raised the same charges against Missouri. This chapter, therefore, centers on the Missouri-Wisconsin literature.

This chapter, therefore, investigates this controversy between Missouri and Wisconsin with an eye on Missouri's implicit understanding of doctrine as indicated by the documents developed because of the controversy and related Synodical literature, emphasizing the reasons Missouri gave when explaining and justifying her position.

Missouri and Wisconsin Position at the Beginning of the Controversy

Once the Wisconsin and Missouri Synod delegates met together at Wisconsin's request to talk theology in the 19th century, they quickly discovered a unity of faith that belied previous published attacks on each other.[2] Only one two-day

[2]Cf. Northern District, 1867, p. 52, that refers to "Die lutherisch sich nennende" Wisconsin Synod and complains that although they outwardly subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions, their practice contradicts their confession. The Northern District, 1868, pp. 28-29, indicates that the Wisconsin Synod was thought of as unionistic. Cf. J. P. Meyer, "Steps Taken in 1867 to Compose the Differences between Wisconsin and Missouri," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (June, August, September 1948), 448-453, 625-628, 678-684. There were also cases of bad past relations when, for example, the question of private or general confession split a Missouri Synod congregation, part of which subsequently joined the Wisconsin Synod. Northern District, 1858, pp. 22-24. Cf. also Carl S. Meyer, editor, Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 264-265. Titles of the official minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all references to district proceedings will be cited as in this footnote. References to the proceedings of the general synod will be cited: LCMS, Proceedings, followed by the date and page number. References to the proceedings of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and the Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other states will be cited similarly. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

meeting (October 21-22, 1868) was necessary for delegates to discover "complete agreement" in all the doctrines discussed and adopt a resolution declaring pulpit and altar fellowship. This was followed a few months later (May 19, 1869) with an agreement regarding joint use of educational institutions,[3] and just a few years later (1872) by the formation of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America of which both Wisconsin and Missouri became members in close fellowship.[4]

Although there were occasional theological differences between the two synods between the time of their mutual declaration of fellowship and the beginning of this controversy,[5] the doctrinal position of the two synods was well represented by the 1932 A Brief Statement written by Missouri and pointed to by Wisconsin as a model of clarity and decisiveness.[6]

[3]LCMS, Proceedings, 1869, pp. 28-29, 87-92. Cf. Der Lutheraner, XXV (August 1, 1869), 181; and Lehre und Wehre, XIV (October 1868), 318-319. An English translation of the theses from Lehre und Wehre appear in Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1959, pp. 208-209. Doctrines discussed at the 1868 meeting included church and ministry, ordination, inspiration, confessional subscription, millenium, and antichrist.

[4]Cf. Carl S. Meyer, "The Synodical Conference--The Voice of Lutheran Confessionalism," Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1956, pp. 14-71.

[5]For example, a difference on church and ministry resulted in a joint statement of the theological faculties of the two synods in 1932, the "Thiensville Theses." Cf. infra, pp. 253-254.

[6]Cf. Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1951, pp. 128-139, 146-147; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1952, p. 157.

This "A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod" is divided into nineteen topics covering major articles of faith and articles about which there had been controversy in Missouri history.[7] Scriptural citations occur in almost every paragraph,[8] and it is often specifically stated that the point made is the Scriptural teaching or doctrine.[9] Sometimes the topic covered is called a "doctrine,"[10] sometimes an "article of faith."[11] False points of view are also called doctrines,[12] and rejection of specific unacceptable points of view occur in the discussion of most topics.[13] The word doctrine occurs occasionally in the singular[14] and sometimes in the plural[15] referring to the total body of Christian

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[7] Topics treated are, in order: Of the Holy Scriptures, God, Creation, Man and of Sin, Redemption, Faith in Christ, Conversion, Justification, Good Works, the Means of Grace, the Church, the Public Ministry, Church and State, the Election of Grace, Sunday, the Millennium, the Antichrist, Open Questions, the Symbols of the Lutheran Church.

[8] Only the treatment of one topic does not contain Scriptural citations, that of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church.

[9] A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: CPH, n.d.), Paragraphs 1, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 21, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42.

[10] Ibid., paragraphs 4, 18, 35.

[11] Ibid., paragraphs 4, 15, 19.

[12] Ibid., paragraphs 3, 5, 12, 13, 18, 19, 23, 28, 30, 36, 43.

[13] Ibid., paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 23, 30, 34, 36, 42, 44.

[14] Ibid., paragraphs 29, 46, 47.

[15] Ibid., paragraphs 2, 48.

doctrine. Usually it is used in reference to a specific Scriptural teaching or a false teaching that is rejected.[16]

The net result of this A Brief Statement is a presentation of doctrine that conveys a precise point of view as to what is acceptable Scriptural teaching and what is not. Although admittedly much of Christian doctrine is not covered, and what is, is summarized, still the impression of a specific, precise, only-one-is-correct point of view persists.[17] Missouri knew what she taught and had a definite position which she considered doctrine. Members were warned to accept that position only

> without the admixture of human doctrine . . . to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7, 15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16,17.[18]

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[16] Cf. notes 9 and 11 above.

[17] Cf. A Brief Statement, paragraph 46: "Since the Christian Church cannot make doctrines, but can and should simply profess the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture, the doctrinal decisions of the symbols are binding upon the conscience not because our Church has made them nor because they are the outcome of doctrinal controversies, but only because they are the doctrinal decisions of Holy Scripture itself."

[18] Ibid., paragraph 28.

It is from this kind of context that one can understand the attitude of other Lutherans toward the Synodical Conference,[19] the constant attacks in Missouri literature against doctrinal deviation in other Lutheran bodies and publications, and Missouri's requirements of the ALC before fellowship.

As this controversy between Missouri and Wisconsin began, therefore, Missouri's implicit operating definition of doctrine seemed to be that doctrine is a restatement of what Scripture says, or a conclusion based on Scripture. Since these restatements are simply what Scripture says arranged in a logical or topical order, it is now and forever true and there can be no legitimate disagreement or dissent on that point. Because of the concept of the clarity of Scripture, all should agree on precisely what Scripture says. Accordingly, any deviation in doctrine at any point threatens the authority of Scripture, and involves "the constant danger of losing the

[19] Cf., viz., the remarks of President Hein of the ALC in his 1934 presidential address suggesting moves toward fellowship among Lutherans not then in fellowship with the ALC. Two pertinent paragraphs are quoted in the chapter regarding negotiations with the ALC, supra, pp. 89-90. The "Theological Observer" section of Missouri's Concordia Theological Monthly printed a number of direct attacks against Missouri during 1940-1942 published chiefly in ULCA, Augustana, and Lutheran Free Church journals (the latter two being members of the A. L. Conference). All three attacked Missouri's (exclusive) view of fellowship, and the ULCA also attacked Missouri's view of verbal inspiration. All resented the idea that they must come to Missouri's terms or there could be no fellowship. Missouri constantly replied that the terms were not hers, but Scripture's.

Word of God entirely . . ."[20] Doctrine, therefore, is like a chain of biblical teachings, not a single link of which dare be broken.

The Controversy Begins

In retrospect, one can see that the controversy which eventually separated Wisconsin and Missouri began in the mid 1930's when both synods were invited by the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the United Lutheran Church (ULC) to work with them towards cooperation and fellowship. Missouri accepted the invitation of both and voted to continue meetings with the ULC even after preliminary meetings showed lack of agreement "on the fundamental doctrine of inspiration." Missouri defended its action by saying:

> According to the Scriptural injunction I Pet. 3:15 ("Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you") and in the interest of Christian union with all those who are agreed in the doctrines of our Lutheran faith, Synod declare itself willing and ready to continue such conferences through its committee and on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. . . .[21]

Wisconsin, however, responded that the inviting body must remove obstacles of doctrine and practice within itself before the invitation can be accepted.[22] While Missouri either

[20] A Brief Statement, paragraph 28.

[21] LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 233.

[22] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1935, pp. 107-109.

understood the invitation to be one to confer concerning doctrine in order to attain unity of faith, or at least acted as if she understood it that way, Wisconsin apparently considered it an invitation to confer only regarding union and cooperation without concern for agreement in doctrine.[23]

When Missouri had reached an agreement with the ALC on the basis of A Brief Statement and the ALC's "Declaration," Wisconsin found the latter to be inadequate because it did not state the truth clearly nor exclude error in controverted doctrines.[24] After the ALC's action in the Sandusky resolution regarding its agreement with Missouri and the Pittsburgh Agreement with the ULC, Wisconsin was convinced that a doctrinal basis for fellowship between Missouri and the ALC did not exist and that

> under existing conditions further negotiations for establishing church fellowship would involve a denial of the truth and would cause confusion and disturbance in the Church and ought therefore to be suspended for the time being . . .[25]

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[23] Cf. A., "Theological Observer: An Article in the 'Lutheran Sentinel' on 'An Invitation for Cooperation and Union,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, VII (August 1936), 606-607. Similarly several years later Wisconsin declined the invitation of the American Lutheran Conference to send a representative to committee meetings on a common service, because "We consider uniformity in liturgical matters of minor importance when compared with uniformity in doctrine and practice." Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1939, p. 82.

[24] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1939, p. 59. Cf. Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1940, pp. 91-92.

[25] Ibid., p. 61.

Wisconsin's Position Regarding Missouri-ALC Negotiations Hardens

Missouri, however, continued negotiations with the ALC in spite of Wisconsin's protest and attempts by Wisconsin at several joint committee meetings to convince Missouri "of the correctness of our [Wisconsin Synod's] Watertown position."[26] Wisconsin's Committee on Union Matters reported to its synod that it found no reason for Wisconsin to change its 1939 position, which it felt was vindicated by ALC actions since then. The Wisconsin committee argued that Wisconsin's position was more in line with Scripture than was Missouri's, because 1 Peter 3:15, used by Missouri, does not refer to doctrinal discussions but to "the proper attitude of Christians in times of persecutions," and that in this case Titus 3:10 and Romans 16:17 were more applicable. Accordingly Wisconsin warned Missouri that continued negotiations with the ALC "will create the impression of 'dickering' in confessional matters," responded to Missouri's invitation that Wisconsin cannot participate with Missouri in such meetings with the ALC, and warned that the "unity of the Synodical Conference seems endangered by the action of Missouri." Wisconsin was also displeased that Missouri had "agreed to a 'co-ordination' [sic] in relief work for orphaned foreign missions and in the welfare

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[26] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1941, p. 74.

work among service men," and that periodicals in other Lutheran synods had lauded an apparent change in Missouri attitude.[27]

The Wisconsin position remained firmly opposed to Missouri negotiations with the ALC although three meetings of representatives of all synods of the Synodical Conference showed substantial agreement on proof passages pertaining to church fellowship, the doctrinal questions involved if Missouri and the ALC were to write a single document of agreement, and on the difference between doctrinal questions and ones of a purely exegetical nature. Only on the question of prayer fellowship at intersynodical conferences did Wisconsin report differences.[28]

Since Wisconsin had argued that fellowship should be based on a single document of agreement on which there could be no doubt as to its interpretation, the Missouri and ALC representatives framed the "Doctrinal Affirmation." When presented with this single document, Wisconsin objected that it was being confronted with "an accomplished fact" which had been drafted without the close cooperation of the Wisconsin Synod. The same report to the Synodical Conference containing this complaint, however, also said that Wisconsin delegates had "declined the invitation to take part in the

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[27] Ibid., pp. 75-78.

[28] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1943, pp. 64-65.

discussions with the representatives of the American Lutheran Church for the framing of a single document . . ."[29]

In addition to its opposition to Missouri-ALC negotiations, Wisconsin also began complaints that within Missouri there had been "numerous instances" of unionism, such as cooperation with the National Lutheran Council regarding prisoners of war, participation in dedications of service centers, Scouting, a Missouri pastor serving as guest essayist at an ALC district convention, and Missouri's position on prayer at intersynodical meetings.[30] The military chaplaincy and Missouri's communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council also became areas of disagreement between Wisconsin and Missouri. According to Wisconsin, these other areas of differences stemmed from Missouri's unionistic spirit exemplified especially by its willingness to negotiate with the ALC.[31]

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[29] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1944, p. 102.

[30] Ibid.

[31] E. E. Kowalke, "Unionism, the Communion Agreement, Negotiating with Lodges, and Joint Prayer," Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 102-11.

Missouri's Analysis of Wisconsin's Charges and Her Replies.

Negotiations with the ALC--the "Doctrinal Affirmation"

One of the reasons Missouri directed its Committee on Church Union to work out with its counterpart ALC committee a single document of agreement, was that Wisconsin had argued that there should be no doubt as to the meaning of the basis of fellowship between Missouri and the ALC. The result of this endeavor was the "Doctrinal Affirmation." When this document also fell short of Wisconsin expectations, Missouri committeemen met with committees of the other synods of the Synodical Conference and agreed on changes in the "Doctrinal Affirmation" which would "remove cause for the objections presented."[32] In effect these proposed changes ruled out most of the ALC contribution as seen by a comparison with their "Declaration," and substituted A Brief Statement language and terminology, often verbatim.[33] This return to the theology and outlook of A Brief Statement pleased Wisconsin, although Wisconsin still objected to Missouri's growing position that not all joint prayer is prayer-fellowship, increased incidents within Missouri of what Wisconsin viewed as acts of unionism, and the question of scouting.[34]

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[32] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1946, pp. 66-69.

[33] Cf. comment on this revision, supra, pp. 126-127.

[34] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1946, pp. 57-62.

Through this point, Missouri and Wisconsin seem to have operated with essentially the same understanding of doctrine. The major difference that now appears is the attitude that each synod had toward other Lutheran bodies. Both were convinced that they had the pure doctrine, but what about non-Synodical Conference Lutherans? Should a synod with the pure doctrine merely be an unmoving bastion of truth and purity holding its banner high for others to come to her if they were really interested in God's unadulterated truth? Or could a synod with the true doctrine negotiate with others, explain her position and listen to the explanation of others, without endangering her pure biblical stance? How do the biblical concepts of love, unity in Christ, and the centrality of the Gospel relate to pure doctrine?

The very fact that controversy between Missouri and Wisconsin began because Missouri was willing to negotiate with the ALC is testimony to Missouri's attitude on that point. At the same time, voices were being raised within Missouri about what doctrine is and means. Forty-four signers of "A Statement" in 1945 publicly affirmed the centrality of the Gospel, the application of "the law of love" to Missouri's relationships with other Lutheran bodies, and their conviction that "church fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been

considered divisive in the Lutheran Church."[35] They also deplored legalism, man-made barriers, a loveless attitude, the application of Romans 16:17,18 to American Lutheranism, the Gospel understood as intellectual propositions, and the tendency to apply the label "unionism" "to any and every contact between Christians of different denominations." Missouri's inherited understanding of doctrine was being questioned from within and pressure to maintain it was being applied from without by Wisconsin.[36]

At any rate, the ALC was largely apathetic to the "Doctrinal Affirmation" and its suggested revisions, and Missouri--ALC negotiations lagged. However, when these negotiations were resumed and resulted in a new document of agreement, the Common Confession, Wisconsin objected strenuously.

Negotiations with the ALC--the Common Confession

Starting from that point of view of doctrine where A Brief Statement is an exemplary statement of theological position and outlook, one can readily understand why the Common Confession was disappointing. Although the Common Confession abounds with Scriptural references as does A Brief Statement

[35]"A Statement," reprinted in Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII (November 1970), 150-152.

[36]An examination of pressures within Missouri regarding the Synod's understanding of doctrine is covered in Chapter VIII, infra, pp. 221-224.

it conveys the impression of a different approach to doctrine. Only one article in the Common Confession, Part I, contains an antithesis.[37] The word "doctrine" is used only once.[38] There is a complete lack of any statement or implication that one must believe what is said in the Common Confession to really be a true Christian. Although traditional definitions are sometimes used, the end effect of this treatment of doctrine is that one is here reading a positive witness to faith, not an absolute, either-or statement of what one must believe to be true to the Scriptures.[39] Articles of faith covered in

[37]Only in Article XII, "The Last Things," is there an antithesis, where a mass conversion of the Jews, a preliminary resurrection of martyrs, and a millennial reign are rejected as "error." All references to the Common Confession are from LCMS, Proceedings, 1953, pp. 500-525. The twelve articles of the Common Confession, Part I, are: God, Man, Redemption, Election, Means of Grace, Justification, Conversion, Sanctification, The Church, The Ministry, The Lutheran Confessions, The Last Things.

[38]Article XI, "The Lutheran Confessions," states that every pastor and congregation in the Lutheran Church is required to "subscribe to and uphold the doctrines taught in these Confessions without any omission, deviation, or reservation." Ibid., p. 506.

[39]Viz., the article on God uses a rather traditional definition, but with a positive emphasis. It does not condemn. It is a witness to faith without a threat. The article on Redemption is similar to that of A Brief Statement, except that it puts more emphasis on what Jesus did for us rather than on the theological-philosophical definition of what Jesus was. The Common Confession treatment of Election is also a concise, positive statement, twice using the word "assure." Instead of a sterile 3rd person definition, this article is written from a 1st person point of view as people chosen by God to be his heirs. So also the Common Confession's article on Sanctification replaces "Of Good Works" in A Brief Statement, where there is a personal witness to the motivation for the Christian life without antithesis or argument. Cf. also the Common Confession's treatment of the "Means of Grace."

several pages of A Brief Statement are here witnessed to in several lines.[40] On the key point of fellowship, a positive emphasis is given to a topic treated only negatively in A Brief Statement.[41]

In response to criticism that the Common Confession needed clarification and treatment of other doctrines and issues, a second supplementary document was written by the Missouri-ALC union committees. These two statements were designated Common Confession, Parts I and II, and were intended to form one doctrinal statement.[42]

Significant for this survey of what was understood by doctrine, is the following paragraph from the "Foreword to Part II":

> The entire Common Confession does not claim to be a complete review of the Christian faith and life,

[40] The topic of "Election" is covered in nine lines in the Common Confession, where A Brief Statement has three and a half pages. "Conversion" is covered in seven lines as compared to two and a half pages. The article on "Justification" is only half as long.

[41] The Common Confession allows for cooperation with other, implicitly condemns only those who refuse to be corrected by God's Word, and speaks of moves toward fellowship as being the activity of God, when it says: "Therefore we dare not condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural co-operation with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word. We must also be alert and susceptible to the Lord's leading to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom He has made one with us in the faith and to seek to win the erring and wayward for unity in the true faith. We are mindful of our Lord's intercessory prayer that we, who are His brethren, may be one, even as He and the Father are one." Ibid., pp. 505-506.

[42] Ibid., p. 507.

> but it manifests common insights and emphases in our understanding and formulation of many Christian doctrines as held and taught in our churches. It constitutes a common and united devotion to the Word of God as the teaching of our churches in our times.[43]

Here there is a moving away from an attitude that doctrine should be clearly and unequivocally defined and an exact statement of the Scriptural teaching reduced to writing which all true followers of the biblical message must accept. We read instead, that this document witnesses to "common insights and emphases in our understanding and formulation. . . ." There is here no exclusive claim, no statement of objective truth, but a witness to personal faith.

In this light, Common Confession, Part II, consists of statements "indicative of and normative for, Christian life in our congregations and Synods."[44] It covers both doctrinal and practical concerns.

In contrast to A Brief Statement, the Common Confession, Part II, is very much Gospel-oriented in several ways: The "Gospel" occurs repeatedly whereas it is seldom used in A

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., p. 508. Part II consists of the following articles under the general heading "The Church in the World": (i) The Church's Mission; (ii) The Church's Resources; (iii) The Church and Its Ministrations; (iv) The Church and the Home; (v) The Church and Vocation; (vi) The Church and Education; (vii) The Church and Government; (viii) The Church and Church Fellowship; (ix) The Church and Anti-Christian Organizations; (x) The Church and the World To Come.

Brief Statement. The treatment of the topics covered is explicitly Christocentric. Agreement in the Gospel becomes the norm for church fellowship.[45] The Gospel is explicitly viewed as "the center from which all teachings of the Scriptures are to be viewed."[46] Full obedience to the Scriptures is "an indispensable requisite for church fellowship," because "denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, and departure from, the complete Gospel . . ."[47] The test of the validity of a confession is not merely whether or not it is in harmony with the Scriptures, but if it is "a faithful restatement of the Gospel as the central theme of the Scriptures."[48] There is a recurring emphasis on love and inclusion in the fellowship in Christ, rather than an emphasis on accepting every detail of the truth and exclusion of all others.[49]

In view of Wisconsin, the Common Confession was a compromise of the Scriptural and historical doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference. Wisconsin wanted Missouri to repeal the Common Confession and return to the "clarity and decisiveness" of A Brief Statement.[50]

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[45] Ibid., pp. 516-517.

[46] Ibid., p. 516.

[47] Ibid., p. 517.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Viz., Ibid., pp. 511, 515, 517-519.

[50] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1951, pp. 128-135, 146;

Wisconsin listed seven major inadequacies of the Common Confession to which Missouri responded in writing: Justification, Conversion, Election, Means of Grace (Inspiration) the Church, Church Fellowship, and the Antichrist. Wisconsin considered the Common Confession's treatment of these areas

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Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1952, pp. 157-158. The Synodical Conference convention of 1952 spent almost all of an evening session on the Common Confession and then postponed action until Part II had been completed and presented. Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1952, pp. 157-158. The Wisconsin Synod, however, declared the Common Confession to be inadequate in a number of points and issued a series of tracts attacking it and other points of contention between Missouri and Wisconsin. Entitled "Continuing In His Word," these tracts were issued by the Wisconsin Synod through its Conference of Presidents and sent to all pastors of the Missouri Synod with the consent of its president.

Missouri responded to Wisconsin's original condemnation of the Common Confession in its August 1953 convention with a booklet to make clear Missouri's position prior to a special session of the Wisconsin Synod called for October of the same year (1953) to consider matters pertaining to the Wisconsin Synod's relations with Missouri: A Fraternal Word (Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, August 31, 1953), written by H. Harms, A. H. Grumm, M. Franzmann, A. von Rohr Sauer, and Paul Koehneke.

Missouri also published the nine essays presented by Missouri at two meetings with Wisconsin representatives in January and May, 1954: Another Fraternal Endeavor (Issued by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d. [1954]), written by Theo. F. Nickel, O. E. Sohn, Martin Graebner [several essays are unsigned].

Missouri also published an answer to Wisconsin's series of tracts in a booklet designed to bring a number of inaccuracies in the Wisconsin tracts "to the attention of our brethren." A Fraternal Reply (Prepared upon the request of Synod's Praesidium and the District Presidents, 1954), written by Theodore F. Nickel, Arnold H. Grumm.

The issues between Missouri and Wisconsin also received public and printed treatment in the following convention of the Synodical Conference (1954), where essayists from both synods dealt with points of contention.

inadequate because certain specific terms were not used or certain arguments of past controversies were not specifically condemned. Missouri responded over and over that although certain terms were not used, the language employed in the Common Confession means the same thing, and that it is not necessary specifically to list all the errors condemned.[51] Only in the area of church fellowship did Missouri disagree with Wisconsin's doctrine.

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[51] In view of past controversies, Wisconsin argued that in regard to objective justification, a clear statement is needed that God has already declared every sinner righteous in his sight, and room should not be left for the idea that the justification of a sinner is not complete until personal (subjective) faith is supplied. Missouri responded by quoting the Common Confession to show that that concern has been covered and referred to classic Lutheran literature to show that the term used, forgiveness of sins, is an exact synonym. A Fraternal Word, p. 4; Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 9-10; A Fraternal Reply, pp. 4-7; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 24-25, 41-42.

Similarly Wisconsin said that a correct presentation of conversion must reject the distinction between a natural and willful resistance of man, and that the Common Confession does not exclude the idea of man preparing himself for conversion by refraining from willful resistance, does not refer to the total spiritual disability of natural man, and does not maintain the purely receptive function of faith. Again Missouri responded by quoting the Common Confession and by underlining the use of exclusive particles such as "without," "any," and "whatsoever" in its positive statements that exclude Wisconsin's concern. A Fraternal Word, p. 4; Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 12-14; A Fraternal Reply, pp. 7-10; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 25-28, 49-50.

For the same reason, Wisconsin argued that a correct presentation of election must include that election is unto faith, a cause of salvation, and is certain. Missouri again responded that these concerns are already covered in the Common Confession, although different terminology is used. A Fraternal Word, pp. 5-6; Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 14-18; A Fraternal Reply, pp. 16-19; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 50-51.

Although inspiration has not been an area of conflict between the ALC and the Synodical Conference, in view of the

What is Doctrine?

At this point, several observations can be made about Missouri's understanding of doctrine as reflected in her reaction to Wisconsin's charges. Missouri essentially viewed doctrine as a summary of teachings of the Scriptures on a number of topics. Although there appears in the Common Confession,

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Pittsburgh Agreement's interpretation by some individuals, Wisconsin argued that for our times a confession should not yield the term "verbal inspiration" and must clearly state that all Scripture is given by the Holy Ghost and that inerrancy is claimed for each particular statement of Scripture. Missouri replied that although the Common Confession at times reflects ALC terminology, Wisconsin's concerns are covered by what is said. However, the term "verbal inspiration" has been added to Part II of the confession, thus demonstrating the meaning and good faith of the ALC in the wording of Part I. Missouri added, though, that a church body is not obligated to disavow every statement of individuals in her midst. A Fraternal Word, pp. 6-7; Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 18-22; A Fraternal Reply, pp. 11-15; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 31-33, 50.

To Wisconsin's criticism of the doctrine of the church that the concept of church was "externalized" because it was said that the commission to preach the Gospel is a "duty," Missouri quoted St. Paul's words that he was "commanded" to preach and similar expressions from Luther. Missouri also rejected Wisconsin's charge of a defect in that it is not stated that the use of the means of grace constitutes the marks of the church. A Fraternal Word, pp. 7-8; Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 22-26.

Regarding the Antichrist, Wisconsin objected that room was left in the Common Confession for a different future identification of the antichrist rather than the papacy and therefore this was an historical judgment rather than a doctrine. Missouri responded that it looked for no other fulfillment of the antichrist as climactic as the papacy and that the Common Confession does not treat this as simply an historical judgment, but as one based on Scripture. A Fraternal Word, pp. 9-10; Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 26-27; A Fraternal Reply, p. 19; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 33-34.

a move toward applying the concept of the centrality of the Gospel also to the Synod's operating understanding of doctrine, Missouri's arguments in reaction to Wisconsin's charges generally lack any kind of application of the Gospel to the article of faith being discussed. At the same time, it is also noteworthy that Missouri's operating understanding of doctrine is undergoing modification. Whereas Missouri had previously requested exact agreement with the ALC in areas of admitted "non-fundamental" doctrines and in one case asked for agreement even in terminology, Missouri now argued against Wisconsin's insistence that agreement in doctrine be demonstrated by the use of certain terminology and specified antitheses. Couple that shift in Missouri approach to doctrine with the more Gospel-centered approach of the Common Confession, along with the end result of Missouri's disagreement with Wisconsin on the issue of church fellowship, and a different implicit understanding of doctrine begins to surface. However, it appears slowly. Missouri at first discussed fellowship with Wisconsin almost exclusively on the level of logical deduction from accepted Scriptural premises with few references to the Gospel.[52]

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[52]This is also true of other issues in controversy between Missouri and Wisconsin, such as the military chaplaincy, scouting, negotiations with lodges, and the Missouri--NLC communion agreement. The discussion of these issues is almost completely devoid of any reference to the Gospel. So as not to break the continuity of this chapter more than necessary, the account of these topics appears in a supplement to this chapter, following Chapter VII.

The issue of church fellowship: basic principles

Church fellowship, according to Missouri literature directed in answer to Wisconsin charges, is the manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in word and deed, in doctrine and practice. Church fellowship does not refer to the one holy Christian church, nor to that invisible bond of faith that joins us to Christ as the Head of the Church and to one another as members of that body. Church fellowship is established by a common profession, not the state of one's heart.[53]

In this confession of "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, and one God and Father of all," Christians are to be united in perfect agreement with and obedience to the directives which Christ has issued to the members of His body. Anyone who disturbs this peace of the church by a teaching or practice not in agreement with the Word and will of Christ should be admonished in a spirit of meekness. If someone refuses to be corrected by God's Word, Christians are to withdraw from him and to renounce religious fellowship with him. Not to do so would be unionism, that is, church fellowship without doctrinal unity.[54]

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[53]Another Fraternal Endeavor, pp. 30-31.

[54]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

These fellowship principles apply to individuals, congregations, and church bodies.[55] Error cannot be tolerated or condoned, one cannot take part in it, one cannot bargain as to the amount of error that one could possibly stand for.

> Every clearly revealed doctrine is God's doctrine and must be accepted by us. . . . No one is permitted to make a distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental doctrines; no one is to be a fundamentalist. Every departure from any clearly revealed doctrine of Scripture must be reproved even to the point of breaking off church fellowship.[56]

With such as disturb the peace of the church by adhering to false doctrine one cannot unite in worship and religious work or make "common religious cause with."[57] However, Romans 16:17 does not refer to errorists who are willing to submit to Scripture, nor to such who have been branded such undeservedly or through misunderstanding. "It does not, therefore, bear on such actions as our negotiations with the ALC or our Bad Boll Conferences."[58]

The issue of church fellowship: joint prayer

Applying these basic principles of church fellowship specifically to the critical issue between Missouri and

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[55] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[56] Ibid., p. 34.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Wisconsin of prayer fellowship and joint prayer, Missouri noted that according to Acts 2:42 "prayer fellowship is indeed a part of church fellowship."[59] However, while pulpit and altar fellowship are always church fellowship, fellowship in prayer is not always an exercise of church fellowship.[60] The reason altar fellowship is always an act of church fellowship is because the Lord's Supper is always an exercise of the public administration of the Office of the Keys given to the local congregation. Communion is always a congregational activity, never the private affair of an individual Christian or private Christian gatherings. Since communion includes a testimony to a unity of faith, divisions and heresies must be removed for a God-pleasing celebration of the sacrament.[61]

The same is true of pulpit fellowship, the essence of which is the mutual exchange of pulpits as an expression of unity, of fellowship in doctrine, teaching and practice. Whereas a pastor may occasionally preach in a heterodox church, that cannot be reciprocated and permit the heterodox to occupy my pulpit. It cannot be a mutual exchange of pulpits, for pulpit fellowship is always an expression of church fellowship.[62]

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[59] Wisconsin agreed with Missouri's principles of fellowship as presented in the Common Confession except for the lack of definition of "unscriptural cooperation" and absence of any reference to the question of prayer fellowship. Ibid., p. 39.

[60] Ibid., p. 39.

[61] Ibid., p. 40.

[62] Ibid., p. 41.

Prayer, however, is not always a function of the public administration of the Office of the Keys given to all local congregations. It is also the private activity of individual Christians. Synod therefore refers to the latter as "joint prayer" to refer to fellowship in prayer outside the bonds of church fellowship. Such prayer of private individual Christians with others involves no confession of denominational tenets and "bears purely and simply and only a devotional character."

> We are dealing with them as individual Christians, of whom we may assume (and this point is important) [sic] that membership in a heterodox church is held by them not wilfully and stubbornly (thereby they would reveal themselves as unchristians), but rather from lack of Christian knowledge and understanding. They share with us and we with them the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism, the same God and Father of all and their membership in a heterodox church, because of a lack of knowledge on their part, is an act of a happy or unhappy inconsistency.[63]

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[63] Ibid., p. 42. This position of the Synod apparently was developing as early as 1935 when the Synod resolved in a settlement of the Brux case "that the pastoral conferences throughout Synod earnestly and diligently study the Scripture passages pertinent to the question of prayer fellowship." LCMS, Proceedings, 1935, p. 293.

In 1941 the St. Louis seminary faculty issued a statement distinguishing between joint prayer and prayer fellowship. This was elaborated on by the faculty in 1944, which argued that although prayer fellowship with heterodox is forbidden by Scripture, not all joint prayer is prayer fellowship, because not all joint prayer of individuals is necessarily of a confessional nature. Not all joint prayer commits a person "either for or against any particular or specific doctrine concerning which differences have arisen in the Christian Church." Prayer at intersynodical conferences, in the opinion of the seminary faculty, belong in the area of casuistry. Opinions by the Concordia Seminary Faculty, Church Fellowship (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.) (mimeographed).

Compare also a booklet by Theodore Graebner published at the request of the Visitors and Circuit Representatives of the

When this issue was discussed at the 1954 convention of the Synodical Conference, Wisconsin condemned joint prayer with people with which one admittedly does not have church fellowship. Included by Wisconsin under this category was voluntary participation in mixed religious meetings, baccalaureate services, union Reformation services, prayer and benedictions at meetings of officers at denominational colleges and various group conferences. Although one may sometimes be unable to avoid unionistic joint prayer, such as a

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Western District, September 25, 1945. This booklet analyzed passages usually quoted against joint prayer, the difference between prayer fellowship and joint prayer, quotations from Walther, a reference to the Brux case, and references to specific cases to conclude that the distinction between joint prayer and prayer fellowship must be upheld. Graebner also stated that "In the practice of the Missouri Synod the absolute prohibition of prayer with anyone not sharing our orthodox views in every respect is an innovation and has no parallels either in the practice of our Church during its formative years nor in the theology of Dr. Walther, Dr. Pieper, the older dogmaticians, the Lutheran Confessions, and Martin Luther." Theodore Graebner, Prayer Fellowship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d. [1945]), p. 31.

The same conference that heard and asked for publication of Graebner's essay also concurred with the St. Louis Conference in approving of the participation of Dr. Caemmerer in a civic V-E Day program which also included Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Jewish clergymen (Ibid., pp. 29, 31).

A study requested by the Synod's 1956 convention on the theology of fellowship by the joint faculties and adopted by them in 1958 and 1960 also distinguished between joint prayer and prayer fellowship. Each case of joint prayer, this study advocated, must be evaluated according to "the situation in which such prayer is offered, the character of the prayer itself, its purpose, and its probable effect on those who unite in the prayer." This study also said that public prayer at civic functions can be justifiable. Four Statements on Fellowship presented by the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference for study and discussion (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 45-46.

member of congress, it is unionism Wisconsin maintained if one has a choice or even if one has complete control of the devotion. Because prayer is a confession, there cannot be joint prayer if the impression is given that a difference of faith and teaching does not matter very much. Joint prayer suggests unity. Prayer at meetings where two bodies not in fellowship discuss doctrine is not consistent with the confessional principle and Romans 16:17.[64]

Missouri responded by defining religious unionism as "church fellowship without doctrinal unity," a definition it was argued that is in line with both A Brief Statement and the Common Confession. The biblical directions to withdraw from and avoid others refers to ongoing "causers of divisions and offenses," people who refuse the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not apply to those willing to submit to Scripture and strive for unity in doctrine on the basis of God's Word. Only when one "refuses to accept the Word of God for correction and becomes a stubborn adherent of false doctrine . . . must we withdraw from church fellowship with such an erring one."[65]

According to this principle of fellowship, Missouri concluded, not all prayer at intersynodical conferences can be condemned. There are conferences

[64] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 109-111.

[65] Ibid., pp. 88-90.

> where people who trust solely in the merits of Jesus Christ and want to be guided by His Word alone come together for joint study of God's Word, that by the means of this study the Holy Ghost may lead them into all truth and help them remove the differences that as a man-made barrier separate them from the practice of unrestricted church fellowship. By what stretch of imagination can such prayer for the Spirit's help to achieve these ends (removal of error so we can have real church fellowship) be called a practice of church fellowship?[66]

Instead of condoning error, such error is being dealt with as God wants it dealt with. Such joint prayer is not religious unionism. "A prayer for help at this kind of conference is to the glory of God all the way."[67] It is in this light that joint prayer between us and the ALC at intersynodical meetings is to be understood, Missouri contended. Neither 1 Corinthians 1:10 nor Matthew 18:19 apply as used by Wisconsin.[68]

The issue of church fellowship: cooperation in externals

Also flowing from the basic principles of church fellowship, was the position of each synod on the issue that came to be known as "cooperation in externals." Whereas Wisconsin argued that there could be no churchly cooperation in any way between two bodies unless they were agreed in doctrine and therefore in fellowship, popular presentations in Missouri

[66] Ibid., p. 92.

[67] Ibid., p. 93.

[68] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

argued for cooperation in externals already in the early 1940's, necessitated by the course of world affairs.[69] Citing an "official pronouncement" of the Missouri Synod in a quotation from the essay of the 1936 South Nebraska District,[70] the author of a series of articles on the subject agreed that there may be situations under which cooperation with church bodies with which we are not in fellowship would be permissible. However, these activities must have no implication of unity of doctrine. "Externals are all those matters which have not been specifically assigned to the church as her definite mission."[71] Not only may Missouri cooperate with other religious bodies in joint action to defend her right of free worship and the maintenance of churches and schools, for example, without acknowledging the doctrines of the other denominations as

[69]Missouri representatives met with the NLC in two meetings in 1941 to arrange for extending aid to the workers of European Lutheran missions in heathen countries cut off from their home churches in Germany and Scandinavia and for the building and maintenance of Lutheran Service Centers in camp cities of the U. S. Wisconsin condemned these arrangements in its 1941 convention. Theodore Graebner, "Cooperation in Externals," American Lutheran, XXV (January 1942), 7.

[70]The author explained that "this statement has an official character because it was accepted and published by one of our Synodical districts, having passed the censorship of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. It also passed the censorship of the Synodical Conference, which met in subsequent years." Ibid.

[71]Ibid., XXV, 8.

not being seriously different from her own,[72] the author contended that Missouri may certainly participate also in relief work and social welfare with no implications of fellowship.[73]

This same careful distinction between coordination of efforts in the area of externals and freely working with those in fellowship is reflected in a statement of the Synod's president to the National Lutheran Council in 1942.[74] Dr. Behnken urged a thorough study of doctrine and practice in order to arrive at agreement, making a point that one-third of American Lutheranism is not in fellowship with the National Lutheran Council. Although Dr. Behnken said that there can legitimately be cooperation in externals, these must surely be externals. Even so, he went on to say,

> We are growing skeptical about "co-operation in externals," because too many either confuse this with the idea of union or else interpret the establishment of co-ordinated efforts as heralds of Lutheran union. . . . We regret very much that . . . people are led to believe that, after all, loyalty to principles of God's Word is a mere fetish, which may be disregarded when any emergency

[72]Ibid.

[73]Theodore Graebner, "Cooperation in Externals," American Lutheran, XXV (February 1942), 7.

[74]The article containing the full text of Dr. John W. Behnken's remarks was careful to note that he attended in response to an invitation from the NLC. John W. Behnken, "Statement Re Organization for 'Cooperation in Externals,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XIV (April 1943), 288-291.

> arises. With us differentiation between co-operation in externals and union based on agreement in doctrine and practice is a conscientious matter.[75]

What is Doctrine?

As can be seen from this summary of the arguments on the issue of fellowship, Missouri justified its position in print along the lines of its traditional understanding of doctrine. In practice this view of doctrine as an organization of biblical teachings on selected topics tended to be discussed quite apart from the Gospel. The central issue seemed implicitly to be primarily a question of submission to biblical authority. Both Wisconsin and Missouri were endeavoring to demonstrate that they were being consistently true to all the Bible. For if someone did not agree with every aspect of biblical teaching, there was disagreement in doctrine and disloyalty to God's Word. With such there could not be fellowship. It is as if both Missouri and Wisconsin felt that the Gospel needed to be protected by a true intellectual understanding of it, which understanding necessarily included on an almost equal level every aspect and point of biblical teaching as traditionally understood.

At the same time, however, the fact that the issue of fellowship emerged as the point of controversy, and that

[75] Ibid., XIV, 289-290.

specifically the debate ranged around the subtopics of praying and working with Christians of other denomination, points to a growing Gospel-centered concern and understanding of doctrine, especially in light of such expressions in the Common Confession and later in a special synodically adopted position on fellowship. From this point of view, it will be seen, the Gospel is viewed more as the dynamic of Christianity which calls man to be in a faith relationship with God and therefore in a special relationship with every other Christian who has responded in obedience and humility to the call of the Gospel. The emphasis shifts to the dynamic, gracious call of God in Christ which unites believers, rather than on acceptance of logical deductions from the Bible and separation from all who differ.

New Missouri Document: "Theology of Fellowship"

In response to a number of memorials directed to the Synod's 1956 convention in regard to fellowship, prayer fellowship, and unionism, the Synod resolved that the joint theological faculties of the Synod should furnish comprehensive studies on these matters and make them available at least one year prior to its next convention.[76] Although this study of the "Theology of Fellowship" was not completed in time for action when the Synod next met in convention (1959),

[76] LCMS, Proceedings, 1956, p. 550.

it was presented to the Synod prior to its 1962 convention. Responding to reaction from within the Synod and especially from the Synodical Conference, this convention assigned the "Theology of Fellowship" to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for restudy to be revised or to undertake a new study "along the lines recommended by the resolution of the Synodical Conference."[77] Accordingly, a revised "Theology of Fellowship" was presented to the Synod's next (1965) convention, which was "received for study and guidance" and commended to the Synod for adoption at its following convention.[78]

As thus adopted by the Synod, this document leaves untouched the faculty's original study of the Scriptural passages which have a bearing on fellowship. This Part I of the "Theology of Fellowship" arranges numerous passages according to the following outline:

I. God created the fellowship
   - A. God created man for fellowship
     1. with God
     2. with man
   - B. Man destroys the fellowship
     1. the fall into sin
        a. with God
        b. with man
     2. fallen man continually negates the fellowship
   - C. God has restored the fellowship in Christ
     1. as promised under the old covenant
     2. as fulfilled in the new covenant

[77] LCMS, Proceedings, 1962, pp. 110-111.

[78] LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 98.

II. God in creating faith bestows the blessing of fellowship
   - A. Fellowship with God in Christ
   - B. Fellowship with all believers in Christ

III. In bestowing this fellowship God claims for it the whole life of man
   - A. In the exercising of this fellowship
   - B. In extending this fellowship
   - C. In guarding this fellowship
     1. by remaining steadfastly under the power of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament
     2. by applying the corrective measures of the Law and the healing powers of the Gospel
     3. by resolutely confronting, exposing, and excluding all that threatens to vitiate and destroy the fellowship[79]

Each point of the above outline contains a short introductory paragraph(s) showing the continuity of the passages cited. The bulk of this Part I is the citation of Scriptural passages. What is especially significant from the point of view of this study, is the arrangement of the passages into the topics given in the above outline. The arrangement is totally

[79] "Theology of Fellowship" has been printed in connection with the Synod's Convention Workbook several times. Page numbers in this study refer to the supplement to the Convention Workbook, 1965, pp. 3-12. For a similar soteriological approach to the fellowship question avoiding the usual earlier dogmatic terminology prior to this study of the faculties requested by the Synod, see Martin H. Franzmann, "Three Aspects of the Way of Christ and the Church," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIII (October 1952), 705-720; "Fellowship in the New Testament," Michigan District, Proceedings, 1952, pp. 16-50. Cf. also F. E. Mayer, "The New Testament Concept of Fellowship," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIII (September 1952), 632-644.

Gospel-centered and says nothing about the traditional understanding of doctrine and the necessary submission to its every detail or be in opposition to the Bible. In fact, the criterion of the authority of the Bible is superceded by the Gospel. Fellowship in Christ "transcends every barrier created by God or set up by man and brings about the highest unity possible among men, the unity in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28)."[80]

Other quotations from this part of the document similarly show its Gospel-centered approach:

> A Christian's fellowship with God in Christ as well as his fellowship with other Christians is an exceedingly great and precious possession (I John 3:13; Eph. 4:1-6). For this reason Satan constantly strives to disrupt this fellowship by every means at his disposal. Therefore it is necessary for the church to safeguard this fellowship in every way.[81]
>
> This the church does--
>
> 1. By remaining steadfastly [sic] under the power of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament . . . since Christian fellowship can be nourished and sustained only by the Gospel, which created it. . . .[82]
> . . . . . .
> 2. By applying the corrective measures [sic] of the Law and the healing powers of the Gospel whenever the church is invaded by errors in teaching and preaching . . . by corruption of morals . . . and by schismatic and separatistic tendencies . . . which impede Christian fellowship.[83]

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[80] Supplement to Convention Workbook, 1965, p. 7.

[81] Ibid., p. 10.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., p. 11.

> . . . . . .
> 3. By resolutely confronting [sic], exposing, and excluding all that threatens to vitiate and destroy the fellowship . . . whether it be a satanic intrusion from outside the church or a satanic perversion from within. . . .[84]

The implicit operating definition of doctrine here is similar to one expressed in another synodically adopted statement about the same time, where doctrine is directly related to the Gospel:

> Denominational fellowship calls for unity in understanding the Gospel, or mutual agreement in the doctrine and all its articles. All articles of faith are integrally related to the Gospel and articulate the Gospel from different perspectives.[85]

Following this treatment of the biblical data, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations replaced the original Part II with a section that dealt with the concept and practice of church fellowship as disclosed by church history. This section concluded that the Synodical Conference split on the issue of church fellowship because it became increasingly impossible for all to agree on "the precise churchly practice which would in a given situation conform to the confession."[86]

The third part of the "Theology of Fellowship" as adopted by the Synod is an extensive re-working of the original

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[84] Ibid.

[85] LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "A Review of the Question, 'What Is A Doctrine?,'" Convention Workbook, 1969, p. 501.

[86] Supplement to Convention Workbook, 1965, p. 21.

second part of the seminary faculties. It deals specifically with the questions of unionism, separatism, joint prayer, and cooperation with other denominations. An examination of the Scriptural passages commanding separation and a discussion of the twin dangers of unionism and separatism reaches those conclusions that the Synod had been defending against attacks from Wisconsin. For example, where faith and confession are not compromised, various denominations should cooperate in necessary work. Likewise joint prayer may often be very proper.[87]

Conclusion

Without endeavoring to determine a cause and effect relationship, the survey of the historical data of this chapter has shown the following. Missouri began this era with an implicit operating definition of doctrine as implied in A Brief Statement, where doctrine is viewed as a summary of biblical teachings, none of which dare be contradicted without violating the authority of Scripture. This understanding of doctrine was not denied during the controversy with Wisconsin, and in fact, throughout most of the controversy it seems to have been the primary, implicit understanding that gave form to the arguments of the controversy from both synods. At the same time, however, a different point of view of the structure of

[87] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

doctrine surfaced within Missouri. Although one can find expressions pointing to this understanding of doctrine throughout the history of Lutheranism and of the Missouri Synod, the actual use of this different emphasis on the nature of doctrine emerged slowly as Missouri and Wisconsin debated, especially on the subject of fellowship. In this view, the Gospel is central and becomes the explicit focus from which articles of faith should be structured. The result of failure to teach the Gospel properly in this view is not primarily the loss of the authority of Scripture, but loss of the Gospel itself.

CHAPTER VI

MISSOURI ESTABLISHES FELLOWSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Introduction

Previous chapters have concluded that the Missouri Synod has not always operated in such a way that the doctrinal basis of its constitution (Article II) adequately delineates the Synod's de facto position. At times the Synod's words and actions in relationship with other church bodies and its internal discipline, for example, have indicated a view of doctrine that is different and more inclusive than the Synod's formal subscription to the Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions.

Nor has this actual operating position of the Synod, its public doctrine, always been the same. The Synod has at various times implicitly modified its position.

One such example of a modification is illustrated in Missouri's negotiations with The American Lutheran Church (TALC). Missouri had previously been engaged in fellowship negotiations with the old ALC, which was one of the synods in the merger that formed the new TALC. These negotiations with the old ALC did not result in fellowship. As was seen previously, in its negotiations with the ALC Missouri had operated with a view of doctrine as a series of biblical

teachings regarding which there must be complete agreement. Disagreement at any point was viewed as jeopardizing the authority of Scripture and indicating doctrinal disagreement. Where there was doctrinal disagreement, there could not be fellowship.

As the Missouri--ALC negotiations continued along those lines, attempting to achieve that kind of doctrinal unity, questioning voices were raised within Missouri about the validity of that implicit understanding of doctrine. At the same time, Missouri was forced to rethink its position in response to criticism from two synods with whom Missouri was already in fellowship, who charged that Missouri was leaving its former doctrinal position and becoming unionistic. Ultimately the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods terminated their fellowship with Missouri, and negotiations with the ALC failed to result in fellowship.

During the course of this era, a different implicit view of doctrine surfaced. As evidenced in the Common Confession, adopted (1956) too late to be a functioning document for Missouri--ALC fellowship, doctrine came to be related to the Gospel more so than the authority of Scripture. The Common Confession witnessed to agreement in the Gospel and did not attempt to resolve previous disagreements on a number of matters of biblical interpretation, whereas Missouri had previously attempted to settle past disagreements with precisely worded statements which both sides must accept as the biblical teaching.

It was this Gospel-centered point of view of doctrine that became dominant in Missouri's negotiations with the new TALC. Aside from cultural and sociological factors not a part of this study, the surfacing of this different emphasis on the nature of doctrine is a major factor in the success of these Missouri-TALC fellowship negotiations. These negotiations centered on the Gospel and the confessional principle of what makes a person Lutheran, namely, agreement on the Gospel. Being Gospel-centered and finding agreement there, it was not necessary with this emphasis to arrive at absolute uniformity in all points of theology as Missouri had at times insisted and some within the Synod continued to insist.

This chapter, then, investigates what Missouri implicitly meant by doctrine in its fellowship negotiations with TALC, negotiations in which a Gospel-centered approach to doctrine was dominant.

Historical Sketch of the Negotiations

At the first convention of the Synod (1959) after it became clear that the American Lutheran Church would merge with the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Missouri resolved that the initial convention of the new The American Lutheran Church (TALC) be extended the invitation "to meet for the purpose of seeking a God-pleasing unity and fellowship . . ."[1] Only one joint meeting of the

[1]LCMS, Proceedings, 1959, pp. 196-197. Titles of the

committees of the two synods was held prior to Missouri's next convention, which had been a "brief exploratory meeting" where "no definite plans or dates for future meetings were established."[2] The Synod's doctrinal unity committee made no recommendations to the convention on this matter and the convention proceedings do not mention TALC.

Reporting to the Synod's 1965 Detroit convention, the Synod's new Commission on Theology and Church Relations reported that two meetings had been held with representatives of TALC which discussed the topics: "Total Commitment to the Sola Gratia in the Lutheran Confessions," and "Sola Scripture in the Lutheran Confessions."[3] Future meetings are to consider

official minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all references to the proceedings of the general synod will be cited as in this footnote. References to district proceedings will supply the name of the district, the year, and page number. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

[2]LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1962, p. 146.

[3]The Missouri and TALC representatives had met regarding the question of fellowship as early as January 17, 1963, but decided not to have fellowship talks at that time in view of current discussions about a new association of Lutherans to succeed the National Lutheran Council, which would make provision for theological study and cooperation. "No Missouri--ALC Talks for Present," Lutheran Witness, LXXXII (February 5, 1963), 19. Cf. "Synodalgram," Lutheran Witness, LXXXII, 21. It was at the January 20, 1964 meeting of representatives of the two bodies that it was decided "to take steps toward developing a basis for pulpit and altar fellowship. . . ." James G. Manz, "Missouri--ALC Talks Seen as Vital to Preserving, Proclaiming Gospel," Lutheran Witness, LXXXIII (February 18, 1964), 17.

the "implications for practice and for the extension of fellowship resulting from commitment to the Lutheran Confessions."[4] Perhaps somewhat surprising in view of the Synod's recent history of very extensive negotiations that failed to produce the desired results, the commission went on to recommend "That meetings with the representatives of The American Lutheran Church be continued and if possible brought to a successful conclusion."[5] Accordingly, the Synod resolved that meetings with TALC continue, praying that "they may be brought to a successful conclusion," and encouraged local inter-synodical discussions "for the purpose of fostering unity in doctrine and practice."[6]

The Synod's commission reported to the next convention (New York, 1967) that four meetings had been held with representatives of TALC since the Synod last met, which "thoroughly discussed and unanimously accepted as expressing the understanding of these doctrines that is set forth in the Lutheran Confession" papers on the grace of God, Scripture and the

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[4]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1965, p. 34. A document distributed within Missouri during 1967-1968 with an introduction by President Harms explained the choice of topics this way: "they undertook a common study first of the material principle of our Christian and Lutheran faith, namely, grace alone; then a study of the formal principle, Scripture alone; and finally, since the objective was church fellowship, they studied the doctrine of the church as this is confessed in the Book of Concord." LCMS, Toward Fellowship (n.p., [1967-1968]), p. 7.

[5]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1965, p. 37.

[6]LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, pp. 105-106.

church. The fourth meeting examined "the practical implications of our doctrinal consensus" and drafted "a joint declaration calling on the several churches to consider the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship."[7] Faced with this joint declaration of doctrinal consensus, the convention floor committee presented a resolution asking the Synod's president to declare fellowship with TALC after TALC acted favorably on the joint declaration. After "considerable discussion," the resolution was recommitted. After further defeating an amendment from the floor that there be "further study of issues not yet resolved," the Synod adopted the committee's revised resolution:

> That the Synod recognize that the Scriptural and confessional basis for altar and pulpit fellowship between The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and The American Lutheran Church exists, that the Synod proceed to take the necessary steps toward full realization of altar and pulpit fellowship with The American Lutheran Church . . . and be it further
>
> Resolved, That the Synod urge all its representatives and officials to work earnestly and sincerely toward a unified evangelical position and practice in areas of church life where disturbing diversities still exist, particularly in reference to unchristian and anti-Christian societies . . . and be it further
>
> Resolved, That the Synod direct its officials to make arrangements for promoting the widest possible mutual recognition of the doctrinal consensus and its implications for church fellowship among the entire membership of the Synod . . . and be it further

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[7]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, p. 46. The studies of the first three meetings were published and distributed in the synods and are printed in ibid., pp. 405-420. The "Joint Statement and Declaration" is likewise printed in ibid., pp. 421-422.

> Resolved, That the President of the Synod in conjunction with the Council of Presidents make the appropriate recommendations to the 1969 convention.[8]

Since the Synod thus specifically charged its president in conjunction with the Council of Presidents to make recommendations to its 1969 convention regarding fellowship with TALC, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations reported only to the Synod in 1969 that it had provided some materials, had been resource people for local and district discussions of the question, both synodical and inter-synodical, and had played an advisory role "in an effort to clarify the nature and and significance of recognized diversities and to establish procedures for dealing with them in an evangelical manner."[9]

The recommendation of the Synod's President, Oliver R. Harms, and the Council of Presidents proceeded from the basis that

> Our prolonged study and discussion has produced the conviction that we agree in the preaching of the Gospel "in conformity with the pure understanding of it" and in the administration of the sacraments "according to the divine Word." Our discussions have led us to the conviction that we are in the tradition of true Lutherans who are committed to the Holy Scriptures and who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions.[10]

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[8] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 103.

[9] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, p. 61.

[10] Ibid., p. 94.

Believing that "the Lord of the church in His grace has brought us to the time when we should give official and public recognition to the unity which exists," the President and Council of Presidents recommended that "the Synod herewith formally declare itself to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with The American Lutheran Church . . ."[11] This the Synod did. Basing its resolution on Article VII of the Augsburg Confession that

> It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word;[12]

the Synod resolved

> with joy and praise to God the Synod herewith formally declare itself to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with The American Lutheran Church . . .[13]

Analysis of the Basis of Negotiations

The basis of negotiations with The American Lutheran Church (TALC) was radically different from the negotiations with the American Lutheran Church (ALC) formerly. This factor helps to account not only for the rapid culmination of the negotiations in comparison to previous dealings with the ALC, but also accounts for the fact that negotiations quickly ended in fellowship.

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[11] Ibid.

[12] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 97.

[13] Ibid., p. 98.

The reader will recall from a previous chapter that in dealing with the old ALC, Missouri had endeavored to achieve complete uniformity, not only in everything Missouri considered doctrine, but also in some matters of theological opinion, certain exegetical interpretations, and even on some terminology. References to the Gospel or justification were rare.

Radically different from this was the approach used in negotiations with TALC. Instead of assuming that one must begin with the status of controversy of all previous unsettled differences between the two synods and their historical ancestors, the negotiations officially centered on and confined themselves to that one thing which makes both "Lutheran"--subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. As the commissioners of TALC and Missouri put it in the preface to their first two study documents,

> The representatives of these church bodies were agreed that the necessary consensus in Lutheran teaching and practice should find expression in a series of study documents on central themes of Lutheran theology. The aim of these documents is to explicate the content of the Lutheran Confessions themselves; they are not to be understood as new or supplementary confessions.[14]

Since the Lutheran Reformation was a rediscovery of the Gospel, the first document, "What Commitment to the 'Sola Gratia' of the Lutheran Confessions Involves," gives witness to the

[14] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, p. 405.

"meaning of the grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ and proclaimed by the apostles in the power of the Holy Spirit."[15] Likewise, the second document, "The Lutheran Confessions and 'Sola Scriptura,'" operates from the perspective that the Lutheran Church not only confesses Sola Gratia "as the 'chief article,' but she also views all of Christian theology from this perspective." This also includes the Lutheran view of Scripture: "Only from the perspective of Sola Gratia can one properly speak of Sola Scriptura in the sense of the Lutheran Symbols."[16]

Since "the very first specifically Lutheran confession, the Augsburg Confession, sought to effect a reconciliation" between Luther and Rome, the joint commissioners felt that "the Augsburg Confession . . . sets forth the principles that are to guide us in reestablishing and maintaining the unity of the church."[17] Accordingly, the third document, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Lutheran Confessions," operated from the perspective of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, and concluded that

> Where Lutheran bodies have discovered or have been genuine consensus in the preaching of the Gospel "in conformity with a pure understanding of it" and in the administration of the sacraments "in accordance with the divine Word," they not only may but should enter into pulpit and altar fellowship.[18]

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 409.

[17] Ibid., p. 415.

[18] Ibid., p. 419.

This point, the representatives of the synods felt, had now been reached, and they issued a "Joint Statement and Declaration" expressing that they "believe that the Holy Spirit has led us to recognize this consensus in the Gospel . . ."[19] Going one step further than the third joint document, this declaration stated that

> where Christians share a wholehearted consensus in their understanding and proclamation of the Gospel, it is sinful separatism for them to erect or maintain barriers to fellowship.[20]

The "Gospel" Approach to Fellowship

Throughout these study documents the perspective is that of the Gospel as explicated in the Lutheran Confessions.[21] This "Gospel"-centered approach to fellowship and relations with others became increasingly noticeable within the Synod during this period. A document begun by faculty members of both seminaries at the request of the Synod's 1956 convention, and finally adopted "as a synodical document for reference and guidance"[22] as revised by the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, known as "Theology of Fellowship," carefully reflects this approach. Studying the Scriptural concept of fellowship, this document noted that the

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[19] Ibid., p. 422.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Cf., viz., ibid., pp. 417-419.

[22] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 91.

call to faith is a call into fellowship with God through the Gospel,[23] and that "Those who have fellowship with God through faith in Christ are also in fellowship with one another."[24] This Christian fellowship is "nourished and sustained only by the Gospel, which created it. . . ."[25] The church guards this fellowship "By remaining steadfastly under the power of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament,"[26] and by "applying the corrective measures of the Law and the healing powers of the Gospel whenever the church is invaded by errors. . . ."[27]

In sketching church fellowship in the history of the church, Article VII of the Augsburg Confession was emphasized with this definition:

> The doctrine of the Gospel is not here to be understood as one doctrine among many, or as a bare recital of John 3:16, but rather as a doctrine composed of a number of articles of faith.[28]

It was further noted that "our Confessions use the terms doctrina and evangelium as synonyms . . ."[29] Accordingly it was concluded:

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[23] LCMS, "Theology of Fellowship," Convention Workbook, 1967, p. 368.

[24] Ibid., p. 369.

[25] Ibid., p. 372.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 373.

[28] Ibid., p. 380.

[29] Ibid.

> Though the subject of pulpit and altar fellowship is not discussed expressis verbis in the Lutheran Confessions, these confessions themselves became the effective limits for pulpit and altar fellowship for Lutherans. Those who subscribed to them were automatically in pulpit and altar fellowship with one another.[30]

Evaluating the Missouri Synod and Synodical Conference principle that church practice also be a criterion for church fellowship, the documents concludes that "at times they demanded for church fellowship more with respect to churchly practice than is warranted by the Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions." Specifically reference was made to theses accepted by the Synodical Conference that "a temporary call" and lack of zeal "to start orthodox parochial schools" were contradictions of the Confessions.[31]

Likewise, an examination of Scriptural passages traditionally used by the Synod to forbid fellowship with other Lutherans considered to be in error, concluded that some passages have been used in a way which "have gone beyond the clear words of the text . . ."[32] The church will use these passages properly, the document summarizes,

> when she is taught by them to avoid men who either by false teaching of separatistic, schismatic, factious activities attack the Gospel and the faith of Christians. She will be misusing these

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 383.

[32] Ibid., p. 388.

> passages if she uses them to hinder the church's ongoing attempts to heal the schisms in the church and to foster the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.[33]

Although the document advises that the principle be retained that Scriptural practice is important for church fellowship, because it can constitute a demonstrable denial of the Gospel, it also warns that "Christians ought not apply this principle legalistically or employ doubtful logic and labored conclusions to prove that a certain practice is against the Gospel."[34]

This same "Gospel"-centered approach is also seen in a number of memorials directed to the Synod asking for altar and pulpit fellowship with TALC, many of which refer specifically to Article VII of the Augsburg Confessions.[35]

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 390. This same "Gospel"-centered approach is also apparent in other CTCR study documents of this period such as "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies," LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 393-396; and "The Witness of Jesus and Old Testament Authorship," ibid., pp. 397-402.

[35] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 87, 89, 91; LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 100, 101, 104, 105, 106, 107. It is of some significance, also, that the Synod's 1971 convention resolved to engage in fellowship discussions with the Wisconsin Synod "on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions," LCMS, Proceedings,1971, p. 136; adopted a resolution favoring discussion "of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions with those Lutheran churches with whom we are not in fellowship in order to seek agreement in doctrine and practice leading to a declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship," ibid., p. 139; and declined an overture asking for fellowship negotiations to be a study of Martin Chemnitz's The Two Natures in Christ by resolving that the Synod has found the Lutheran Confessions of 1580 "to be a sufficient basis for approaching the matter of fellowship . . ." Ibid., p. 133. Cf. LCMS, Convention Workbook, pp. 194-195.

Missouri--TALC Negotiations as Presented in the Synod's Periodicals

Outside of only very occasional news-type reports of committee meetings, the Lutheran Witness does little with the question of Missouri--TALC fellowship prior to the Synod's New York (1967) convention.[36] Twice during this period a regular column devoted to news from the office of the Synod's president spoke of fellowship with TALC. Dr. Oliver R. Harms reported at one point regarding Missouri--TALC fellowship that

> we have found broad areas of agreement [sic] with the former American Lutheran Church. Our principal concern in our dealings with other Lutheran bodies is that we have the same approach to the Scriptures. If we come to agreement here, we can iron out other matters.[37]

His column later reported that fellowship discussions had begun with sola gratia because "all our discussions are to be controlled by the Gospel. This is the true Lutheran approach." He reported that agreement had been made "at the outset that no attempt [sic] would be made to formulate a document covering all Scriptural doctrines." Previous talks with the ALC

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[36] Cf., viz., note 3 above. It should be remembered that the Lutheran Witness had sub-divided itself into two periodicals, the Lutheran Witness continuing in magazine form appearing monthly with feature and discussion type articles, and the Lutheran Witness--Reporter appearing bi-weekly in newspaper form concentrating on news articles.

[37] "Synodalgram," Lutheran Witness, LXXXIII (June 23, 1964), 21.

resulting in the Common Confession of the 1950's, it was noted, "indicated a doctrinal consensus which is still apparent [sic] after resumption of joint discussions."[38]

Following the Synod's 1967 declaration that a Scriptural and a confessional basis for fellowship with TALC did exist, the editors of the Lutheran Witness began to promote fellowship, but certainly not with the same approach as was used thirty years previously. Other than occasional references to the three joint essays, the declaration, and previous negotiations with the old ALC, no effort was made to demonstrate doctrinal unity in Missouri's "traditional" sense.

The first major article promoting fellowship referred to the doctrinal consensus experienced by the representatives of the two synods which the church at large should discover and that differences in dealing with practical matters (for example, the lodge) may "represent only an alternate approach" rather than a "denial of the Gospel."[39]

Three district presidents of TALC contributed feature articles promoting fellowship. One hoped for fellowship with Missouri because we "share a common Gospel and a common trust in the inspired Word of God, which brings us God's grace in Christ . . ."[40] Another said,

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[38] "Synodalgram," Lutheran Witness, LXXXIV (January 5, 1965), 12.

[39] "Altar and Pulpit Fellowship," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVII (February 1968), 18-19.

[40] Gordon S. Huffman, "Why I Hope for Fellowship with the Missouri Synod," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVII (May 1968), 14-15.

> We stand on common ground. We preach the same Gospel. We hold to the same doctrines. We subscribe to the same confessions. To be separated from each other in the year of our Lord 1968 is, in my opinion, a sin against each other and against our Lord.[41]

A third promoted fellowship on the basis of the practical concerns of serving small rural parishes.[42]

Aside from occasional printed letters to the editor revealing the "traditional" approach to fellowship by bringing up the writings of various individuals within TALC containing a viewpoint different than that traditional within Missouri,[43] the Lutheran Witness featured arguments against fellowship only in one two-part dialogue article. The first part of this article opposed fellowship because of concerns regarding the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the binding nature of the Lutheran confessions, lodge practice, open communion practices, unionism, selective fellowship, and the relationship of TALC with the Lutheran Church in America.[44] The second part of the article favors fellowship by arguing that TALC should be evaluated "by its official teachings and positions as

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[41]Theodore A. Ohlrogge, "We Stand on Common Ground," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVII (July 1968), 4-5.

[42]Reidar A. Daehlin, "Help! We Need Each Other," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVII (October 1968), 11.

[43]Cf. Lutheran Witness, LXXVII (September 1968), 23.

[44]Frederic E. Schumann, "Concerns About Steps Toward Fellowship with the ALC," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVII (November 1968), 3-4.

stated in its official documents." When this is done, the article states after referring to several such official documents, "we find them in agreement with Scripture."[45]

A final major article in the Lutheran Witness prior to the Synod's Denver (1969) convention where fellowship was declared, compared Missouri and TALC statements regarding lodges and concluded that although each has the same position toward lodges, their practice differs. However, the article stressed the same position of the two synods and did not say or imply that the practice of one was right and the other wrong.[46]

The Synod's Concordia Theological Monthly did not refer often to the fellowship question. One editorial subtly promoted fellowship by arguing that the Missouri idea of a heterodox body has "undergone significant modification and tightening up" since Walther and the Altenburg Debate: "It has changed from a simple recognition of the public confession to a rather stringent and inclusive demand for orthodox teaching and practice."[47]

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[45]Edgar C. Rakow, "Why We Should Take Steps Toward Fellowship," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVII (November 1968), 5-6.

[46]Philip Lochhaas, "Religious Lodges: Theses for Discussion," Lutheran Witness, LXXXVIII (February 1969), 26-28.

[47]Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial: 'The Alleluia Way,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIX (October 1968), 579-582, esp. p. 580.

A more extensive editorial specifically on the topic of Missouri--TALC fellowship reviewed a number of current practices and joint efforts already existing, looked at several major roadblocks to fellowship which need to be examined and adequately dealt with, and predicted that fellowship will be declared at the Synod's next convention, or, if delayed then, will ultimately be achieved.[48]

Arguments Against this "Gospel" Approach

However, not everyone in the Synod agreed to this method of approaching church fellowship with TALC. A number of memorials were directed to the Synod asking that fellowship with TALC not be declared because Missouri and TALC were not in doctrinal agreement in the sense that Missouri had traditionally approached agreement. A number of memorials indicated concern about TALC's position on Scripture, noting especially matters of inspiration, interpretation (for example, regarding evolution and authorship), and relationship of Scripture and Word of God.[49] Many of the same memorials and

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[48]Alfred O. Fuerbringer, "Editorial: 'What's Your Prediction?,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIX (November 1968), 643-652.

[49]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 88-89. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 111-114; 114-117; 142-125; 125-126; 126-127; 130, 131, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 140, 141, 143, 144, 148, 149, 151, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 182, 185, 187, 189.

and others questioned TALC's position on inerrancy.[50] Likewise in the area of practice, many referred to TALC's lodge practice[51] and unionism[52] as hindrances to fellowship. Smaller numbers of memorials referred to other concerns. Some memorials argued that the three joint "essays do not deal specifically and adequately with the particular issues that we face in our day and time . . ."[53] Some specifically rejected the Synod's use of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession in its resolution on fellowship at the New York (1967) convention.[54] Quite a few memorials referred to A Brief Statement as a standard of doctrine.[55] Others referred to lack of

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[50]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 88-89. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 110-111; 111, 111-114; 114-119; 123, 123-124; 124-125; 125, 126, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 137, 139, 143, 144, 145, 146, 148, 151, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 175, 178, 179, 182, 186, 187.

[51]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 88-89; 89. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 110-111; 111, 123-124; 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 151, 153, 154, 157, 158, 159, 160, 164, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 183, 187, 188, 189.

[52]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 88-89. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 111-114; 123-124; 129, 131, 132, 134, 138, 140, 142, 144, 145, 148, 149, 153, 156, 157, 158, 160, 165, 166, 167, 168, 172, 173, 179, 181, 183, 186, 188.

[53]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 110-111. Cf. pp. 123-124; 125, 148.

[54]Ibid., pp. 186, 188.

[55]LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 88-89. LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 109, 111-114; 114-117; 124-125; 130, 144, 146, 150, 152, 160, 168, 169, 170, 176, 179, 180, 182, 185, 189.

agreement between the two synods on the doctrines of conversion,[56] justification,[57] synergism,[58] church,[59] Lord's Supper,[60] Sunday,[61] and original sin.[62] There were memorials that called for "full agreement of doctrinal truth,"[63] and the settlement of doctrinal controversies dating as far back as 1917[64] or even to the predestinarian controversy.[65]

This same traditional approach to doctrinal agreement and therefore opposing fellowship with TALC is reflected in an essay given at two district conventions of the Synod in 1968.[66] Saying that fellowship based only on Article VII of the Augsburg Confession is "simplistic," the essay argues that this article of the Augsburg Confession "was never meant

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[56] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 131, 137, 148, 151, 160.

[57] Ibid., p. 137.

[58] Ibid., pp. 164, 167, 168, 172.

[59] Ibid., pp. 137, 174.

[60] Ibid., p. 137.

[61] Ibid., p. 137.

[62] Ibid., pp. 159, 186.

[63] Ibid., p. 140. Cf. pp. 150, 159, 187.

[64] Ibid., p. 161.

[65] Ibid., p. 188.

[66] Missouri and North Dakota. Robert D. Preus, "Fellowship Concerns," Missouri District, 1968, pp. 27-43. Cf. the same author's "Fellowship Reconsidered," a similar essay presented to the Wyoming District Pastoral Conference, April 13-15, 1971, printed and distributed by Mt. Hope Lutheran Church, Casper, Wyoming.

to be any kind of formula for reunion of disunited or separated churches or synods." What the essay advocates is that

> The understanding of the Missouri Synod has been that the agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel spoken of in the Augsburg Confession is complete doctrinal agreement, agreement in all the articles of the Christian faith.[67]

From this basis that there must be "full agreement in Christian doctrine," and noting that the three joint essays "tell us nothing about the actual teaching in the American Lutheran Church but whose aim was simply to 'explicate the content of the Lutheran Confession,'" the essay maintained that "we of the Missouri Synod must know what the theology of the American Lutheran Church really is."[68]

A sketch of the background of TALC concluded that Missouri has had no negotiations with three of the synods "which now make up a majority of the present American Lutheran Church."[69] Therefore the essay supplies "what is the actual practice and doctrine of the ALC [sic] on certain crucial issues."[70] Mentioned first is the problem of lodge practice, where it was maintained that although TALC has some "fine statements" about lodges, "The American Lutheran Church has

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[67] Missouri District, Proceedings, 1968, p. 41.

[68] Ibid., p. 28.

[69] Ibid., p. 33. Cf. pp. 28-31.

[70] Ibid., p. 30.

no [sic] method in dealing with lodge members who are in her fellowship."[71] Secondly, the essay criticized TALC's involvement in the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, both of which are taken to task for their non-confessional stand. Thirdly, the essay said that Missouri fellowship with TALC would "involve us immediately in virtual fellowship (de facto) with the Lutheran Church in America. . . ."[72]

Pointing to only one historic doctrinal difference which the essayist considered a "crucial issue," it was argued that the doctrine of conversion had never been resolved and that within TALC today synergism is allowed and taught (which question the joint essay on sola gratia "never even mentions") and Missouri "is still being accused of Calvinism in its doctrine of conversion . . . ."[73] Finally, the essay spends some time demonstrating that

> a false and pernicious doctrine concerning Scripture is now commonly taught within the American Lutheran Church, a doctrine which makes it utterly impossible for us of the Missouri Synod to have fellowship and make common cause with the American Lutheran Church at this time.[74]

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[71] Ibid., p. 31.

[72] Ibid., p. 33.

[73] Ibid., pp. 33-36.

[74] Ibid., p. 36.

Mention is made specifically of statements of TALC men regarding the authority, inspiration, and inerrancy of Scripture, which views, it is maintained, "have filtered down to the Sunday School level of the Synod. . . ."[75]

Therefore, the essay concludes on the basis of A Brief Statement that such fellowship would be "a clear and undeniable case of what our synod has always called sinful unionism . . ."[76]

Several unofficial publications directed to members of the Synod also opposed fellowship with TALC on similar grounds. The Confessional Lutheran opposed Missouri fellowship with TALC on the basis of the three joint essays.[77] In addition to almost weekly opposition to fellowship, Christian News printed a special 64-page edition opposing fellowship with TALC.[78] Several issues of a four-page paper entitled Balance were circulated within the Synod to combat fellowship.[79]

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[75] Ibid., pp. 36-39.

[76] Ibid., p. 39.

[77] Cf. Confessional Lutheran, XXVIII (February 1968), 21-22; XXVIII (March 1968), 26-28.

[78] Christian News, II (March 3, 1969).

[79] Edited by Ewald J. Otto, the paper carried a number of articles written by faculty members of the Synod's Springfield seminary.

Fellowship with TALC Reconsidered

Following the Synod's decision to declare pulpit and altar fellowship with TALC, many who favored the Synod's traditional approach to fellowship began to press for a reconsideration of the question at the Synod's next convention. This move was given added impetus by the decision of TALC at its 1970 convention permitting the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry, which also caused the Synod's representatives on the Interchurch Commission on Fellowship to recommend to the Synod that TALC be asked to reconsider its action.[80] In addition to the same argumentation directed against fellowship for the Synod's 1969 convention catalogued above, more than 125 memorials directed to this 1971 convention of the Synod included TALC's decision to ordain women as a reason to reconsider fellowship.[81] Another new periodical appeared within the Synod prior to its 1971 convention, also opposing Missouri--TALC fellowship: Affirm.[82]

After considering the options available, to rescind fellowship with TALC, suspend fellowship until the "most glaring disagreements" are removed, negotiate some changes

[80] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, p. 147.

[81] Ibid., pp. 150-183.

[82] Affirm began publication with its March 1971 issue, sponsored by Balance Inc., "a group of conservatives concerned about theological and related developments in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod." Affirm, I (March 1971), 2. Many of its articles are written by faculty members of the Synod's Springfield seminary.

with TALC, or "go full-steam ahead in implementing" fellowship, and taking special note of the fact that "serious differences in the doctrine of the authority of Scripture still exist," especially regarding the ordination of women, the Synod resolved to continue fellowship with TALC, but with several reservations: That the Synod "register its strong regret" over TALC's decision to ordain women, that the Synod ask TALC "to give serious reconsideration to this action," that TALC be requested "not to implement further its resolution to ordain women," and that "because of doctrinal concerns still remaining," new implementation of fellowship be deferred.[83]

Conclusion

Fellowship negotiations with TALC succeeded where they had failed with the old ALC. Although sociological, cultural, and other factors may have played a part, the different doctrainal approach of the negotiations was an important factor. Whereas Missouri had previously attempted to establish fellowship by arriving at exact word for word agreement on understandings of articles of faith and matters of biblical interpretation, these negotiations concerned themselves with exploring together the meaning of the Gospel and its centrality in the Lutheran Confessions. Missouri's previous view of

[83] LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, pp. 136-137.

doctrine as a series of biblical teachings, was here supplanted by an understanding of doctrine in which the Gospel is the focus and chief article, the perspective from which theology must be viewed.

Not everyone within the Synod agreed with this implicit shift in Missouri's understanding of doctrine. Some wanted doctrinal agreement in the sense that Missouri had attempted to achieve it formerly, by arriving at complete agreement in articles of faith, especially those concerning which there had been controversy. This was doctrine viewed as biblical teachings arranged in logical or topical order. Disagreement at any point would indicate lack of agreement in doctrine and thereby jeopardize fellowship.

In these Missouri--TALC negotiations, Missouri shifted from this implicit position held by Missouri during the earlier ALC negotiations to a view of doctrine in which agreement in the Gospel is sufficient for fellowship, for it is the Gospel that unites man with God and man with man.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT IS DOCTRINE?

Introduction

Preceeding chapters have hinted at the role that Missouri's implicit understanding of the nature of doctrine has played in the Synod's doctrinal position. Not only have specific doctrinal conclusions been expected and demanded of members of the Synod and other church bodies wishing to be in fellowship, but an implicit understanding of the nature of doctrine also has existed. The Synod has had a traditional understanding of what doctrine is. Fellowship negotiations have been slowed when Missouri sensed that the other church body (American Lutheran Church) operated with a different view of the nature of doctrine.[1] Another church body (Iowa Synod) was repeatedly criticised in Missouri's literature for holding a "false theory of open questions."[2] A suggested

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[1] Supra, pp. 111-112.

[2] C. F. W. Walther, "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," translated by Wm. Arndt and Alex Guebert, LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, pp. 227-244. (The article appeared serially in Lehre und Wehre, XIV and Concordia Theological Monthly, X.) Cf. Northern District, 1867, pp. 50-51; Eastern District, 1867, pp. 30-31. Titles of the official reports, memorials, minutes and proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity, all references to district proceedings will be cited as in this footnote. References to the reports and memorials (Convention Workbook in some years) and proceedings of the general synod will be

re-definition of doctrine at one time brought a reaction from the very next convention of the Synod.[3] In recent years, however, the Synod itself has asked for a study of the question[4] and much of the current internal doctrinal discussion within the Synod relates to precisely that question, "What is doctrine?"

Although Missouri has traditionally operated with an implicit understanding of the nature of doctrine, this understanding is not explicitly part of the Synod's constitutionally stated doctrinal norm. In this chapter, accordingly, the writer investigates this traditional understanding of doctrine that has been part of the position the Synod expected of its members and of those in fellowship with Missouri, that has been part of the Synod's de facto position (its public doc- doctrine), and several current emphases that have implications for an understanding of the nature of doctrine.

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cited: LCMS, Proceedings or Reports and Memorials, followed by the date and page number. References to the proceedings of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America will be cited similarly. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

[3] Infra, p. 222.

[4] "A Review of the Question, 'What Is A Doctrine?,'" LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 501-507.

Missouri's Traditional Concern for Purity of Doctrine

According to its emigration code, the Saxon colony that later formed the nucleus of the Missouri Synod, emigrated in order to retain and freely exercise true Lutheranism. The members of the colony confessed that they accepted God's Word of the Old and New Testaments and the Symbolical Writings of the Lutheran Church in their entirety without any addition "according to the simpler sense of their wording, as they have, since their origin, been unanimously and uniformly understood and applied . . . by all who have not departed from the old, pure Lutheran faith."[5]

Although the colony experienced a traumatic controversy regarding the nature of the church almost immediately upon arriving in Missouri, it was soon resolved by the adoption of a view of the church considered to be the true Scriptural and Lutheran understanding. When the "Loehe men" began negotiations with the Saxon colony and others for the establishment of a new synod, the colony's understanding of the church became one of the prerequisites for fellowship.[6]

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[5] Translated in Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), pp. 566-567.

[6] Cf. Chapter II above.

The Saxon colony promoted its understanding of true Lutheranism with its periodical Der Lutheraner (established September 7, 1844), which was weighted with doctrinal articles. When favorable responses came from Lutherans not associated with the colony, negotiations leading to the formation of the Missouri Synod were likewise heavily doctrinal.[7]

Although the Missouri Synod formally described its doctrinal position as that of accepting the Scriptures, the three ecumenical creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions,[8] the Synod soon indicated that this subscription included the same specific understanding of these confessional bases as was held by the Synod. Although the Buffalo and Iowa synods, for example, subscribed to the same confessional basis, they were not included in Missouri's fellowship because they held a differing interpretation of several articles of faith. When controversy arose regarding an article of faith, the Synod took a position and enforced it as the doctrinal position of true Lutheranism.[9]

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[7]Cf. Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 51-52, 83-95.

[8]Article II of the Synod's Constitution.

[9]Cf. the controversy regarding chiliasm with pastors Schieferdecker and Gruber, supra, p. 4, and the election controversy, Chapter III.

The primary content of Missouri's synodical and district conventions until well into the twentieth century was the doctrinal essay at most meetings. The normal procedure was that the person leading the discussion[10] presented theses giving a concise summary of the doctrine to be discussed and often antitheses condemning major incorrect teachings that have been advocated concerning that doctrine.[11] The leader then explained the theses, developing an exact point of view. His statements were supported by citations of individual Bible passages (usually with little indication of context or exegesis), by quotations of Lutheran theologians of a previous era (Luther, of course, being the favorite), and occasionally by a quotation from or reference to the Lutheran Confessions. These statements were discussed and it was expected that all would agree to them or correct them in such a way that all could agree. All district and synodical convention proceedings were expected to be published and were subject to synodical censorship.[12]

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[10]Usually the essayist was a professor or recognized theologian of the Synod. Only rarely did a lay person or teacher have the essay.

[11]The source of antitheses was usually from church history, sometimes from a contemporary writing or controversy. Occasionally the theses were published in a Synodical periodical in advance of the meeting.

[12]The Saxon emigration code also contained provision for censorship of all matter printed within the colony. Forster, p. 582.

Occasionally a succeeding convention would change or explain a sentence in the essay as printed in its previous proceedings to make sure that no one would understand it incorrectly.[13] The Synod wanted to make sure that it taught the true doctrine, and only the true doctrine. Consequently the synodical essays are often examples of wide acquaintance with and quotations from previous Lutheran authorities and organization of inherited teachings rather than imaginative and fresh presentations of a topic.[14]

Among other things, this procedure produced an implicit understanding of the nature of doctrine and a printed backlog of synodically censored treatments of many topics and articles of faith, each of which spelled out a precise, acceptable point of view that was considered part of the public doctrinal position of the Synod.[15] At various times conventions indicated

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[13] Michigan District, 1906, p. 83.

[14] Cf. Atlantic District, 1945, pp. 28-29.

[15] Illinois District, 1883, pp. 15-16; Harold H. Engelbrecht, "Concerning 'A Statement,'" Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII (November 1970), 169; Michigan District, 1939, pp. 8-9; Eastern District, 1940, pp. 28-29. In recent times of controversy within the Synod a number of the essays of previous district and synodical conventions have been quoted to demonstrate the official doctrinal position of the Synod. E.g., LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1950, pp. 455-462; 472, 510; 1956, pp. 389-394; 1962, pp. 167-168. Eckhardt's Reallexikon did much to draw together these formulations and to provide pastors with a handy summary of the Synod's accepted position. E. Eckhardt, Homiletisches Reallexikon, I-VII (St. Louis: Success Printing Co., 1907-1914.

that pastors were expected to discuss the content of the convention's essay with their congregations, members were encouraged to study these proceedings as well as synodical periodicals, and a number of districts distributed a copy of the proceedings containing the entire essay to each family or congregational voting member of the district.[16]

If the essays, presidential addresses, and various resolutions of district and synodical conventions are any indication, the Missouri Synod has long had a self-image of teaching the pure Word of God without any adulteration.[17]

Missouri's Traditional Implicit Definition of Doctrine

What is doctrine? in first generation Missouri

As the above indicates, the Missouri Synod has operated with an implicit understanding of the nature of doctrine that

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[16] Western District, 1894, p. 7; Iowa District, 1910, p. 73; 1915, pp. 66-67; 1921, p. 61; Michigan District, 1912, p. 63; 1913, p. 74; Northern District, 1858, p. 20.

[17] E.g., LCMS, Proceedings, 1854, 2nd edition, p. 284; 1887, p. 27; 1896, pp. 125-126; 1941, p. 420; 1947, pp. 399-400. Eastern District, 1883, pp. 7-9; 1898, p. 14; 1916, p. 7; 1919, p. 37. Central District, 1910, pp. 7-9; Western District, 1925, p. 43. Northern District, 1873, p. 11; 1943, p. 81. Michigan District, 1900, p. 12; 1916, pp. 8-10; 1930, pp. 35-36. Atlantic District, 1912, pp. 6-8. Iowa District, 1894, pp. 6-7. Eastern District, 1927, pp. 7-8. Central District, 1892, pp. 10-12. Illinois District, 1880, pp. 13-14. Der Lutheraner, IV (September 8, 1847), 1-2. This sampling could easily be amplified.

can be inferred from the Synod's literature. The Synod's leading theologian during its first generation, C. F. W. Walther, began with Scripture as "the sole and perfect source, rule, and norm, and the judge of all doctrine."[18] Everything that is taught in the Scriptures must be accepted and taught as God's Word. One of his theses put it this way:

> The Evangelical Lutheran Church receives the entire Holy Scripture (as God's Word), regarding nothing set forth in it as superfluous or unimportant, but everything as necessary and weighty; it accepts also all doctrines which necessarily follow from the Scripture words.[19]

When this thesis was discussed by Walther at a district convention, it was proclaimed that a characteristic of Lutheranism is that it accepts all of God's Word while all other denominations retain only parts of it.[20] All of the Bible, Walther said, is God's Word. The Bible does not merely contain God's Word. Lutherans can say "es steht geschrieben," for every word, syllable, and letter of Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit. This includes all of Scripture, even matters of geography. Because of the principle of inspiration, not a single letter of Scripture should be doubted. Man is to be judged by God's Word, not a judge over it.[21]

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[18] C. F. W. Walther, The True Visible Church, translated by John Theodore Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 50.

[19] Ibid., p. 90.

[20] Western District, 1868, p. 19. Cf. Michigan District, 1897, pp. 5-7.

[21] Western District, 1868, pp. 19-22.

At the same time, Walther said, something must appear in Scripture or it is not binding. Although some parts of Scripture are more important than others, no part is unimportant.[22] It is possible for a person to be a good Christian and perhaps not know parts of Scripture, but it is not possible to be a good Christian who knows that something is revealed in Scripture and not be subject to it.[23]

Every correct conclusion from the Word of God is also divine doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, is not a possible conclusion, but a necessary one. The same is true of infant baptism and the divinity of Christ.[24]

Just as a sin against one commandment makes one guilty of the entire law, Walther argued, to deny one clear Bible teaching is a denial before God of the entire Word of God. One must accept all of God's Word or he accepts none of it.[25]

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[22] Ibid., pp. 22-23. Cf. 1876, p. 13.

[23] Ibid., 1868, p. 23. Cf. Eastern District, 1868, p. 15.

[24] Western District, 1868, pp. 24, 27-29. Cf. Northern District, 1867, p. 12, which enunciates the same principle and refers to the doctrine of the antichrist.

[25] Western District, 1868, pp. 25-27. Cf. Western District, 1875, p. 11, where it is argued that error is not to be permitted in even one article of the Christian faith. After admonition such a person cannot remain with the orthodox church which steadfastly remains with the words of Christ. Cf. a short article which, although composed only of several Luther quotations, is headed by the title: "Wer einen Glaubensartikel verwirft, der verwirft sie alle und macht alles, was er sonst Gutes thut, verwerflich," Der Lutheraner, III (January 3, 1847), 62-63.

A text of Scripture has but one literal sense.[26] Its interpretation, however, is not determined by the church. The church simply takes all of God's Word.[27] Every doctrine is taught in clear and plain words of Scripture.[28]

Although Walther and early Missouri taught that the central message of the Bible is justification and the key to its interpretation,[29] the Synod's understanding of inspiration and therefore inerrancy was taken for granted as basic. There could be no errors in the holy Scriptures.[30]

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[26] Walther, The True Visible Church.

[27] Northern District, 1867, p. 17; Western District, 1897, pp. 6-8.

[28] Walther, The True Visible Church, p. 114; Northern District, 1867, p. 48. The same concept was also taught in second generation Missouri: Fr. Pieper, "Von der Einigkeit im Glauben," Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1888, pp. 5-35; Western District, 1901, p. 63; Atlantic District, 1909, p. 32.

[29] Viz., Western District, 1859, pp. 11-65; 1868, pp. 30-35; 1859, pp. 6-8; 1879, pp. 12-14; Walther, The True Visible Church, p. 94; Eastern District, 1875, pp. 10-12; Illinois District, 1879, p. 17; Erwin L. Lueker, "Doctrinal Emphases in the Missouri Synod," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII (April 1972), 198-211; Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1872, pp. 20-68.

[30] Northern District, 1867, p. 36. Cf. Northern District, 1865, pp. 52-59, where Pastor Ahner's short essay begins with the premise of inspiration and draws a number of traditional logical conclusions.

What is doctrine? in second generation Missouri

The Synod's leading theologian of the next generation, Francis Pieper, began with similar presuppositions.[31] One of his theses for a synodical convention stated:

> A doctrine is a Scriptural doctrine only when it is based on clear words of Scripture, or, what is the same, when it is drawn from and judged only by those places of Scripture which deal specifically with this doctrine.
>
> A. What we mean here: Not, that every word, with which we speak of a doctrine must stand in the letters [Buchstaben] of Scripture, but rather, that everything that is said of a doctrine must lie revealed in the words of Scripture.
>
> B. What we reject here: (a) The deduction of a doctrine from the so-called totality of Scripture [Schriftganzen] or from places which do not deal with this doctrine; (b) The rejection or modification of a doctrine clearly expressed in the words of Scripture to comply with so-called necessary deductions or in the interest of a so-called system.[32]

In Missouri's traditional view there is no such thing as an evolution of Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine

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[31] Cf. Edward H. Schroeder, "Law-Gospel Reductionism in the History of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII (April 1972), 241-243.

[32] LCMS, Proceedings, 1884, p. 161. Cf. another essay by Pieper at the Atlantic District, 1919, pp. 9-50.

has always been the same. It has passed through no stages of development.[33]

When advocates of higher criticism in Europe and America began to cast doubts on inspiration as understood by Missouri, the Synod repeatedly emphasized the basic necessity of its view of inspiration and therefore inerrancy.[34] "Everything correctly taught or preached from a pure source is therefore pure, clear truth. We can say, 'So steht geschrieben' [sic]."[35]

Missouri's traditional position crystallized

The view of doctrine implicit in Missouri's first and second generations was crystallized in the Synod's A Brief

[33]Western District, 1897, p. 31: "We stand in doctrine today exactly as the Christians stood in the first century. What, e.g., the congregation in Rome or Corinth in the year 97 knew or still could know, exactly that and no more, for example, does Trinity congregation in St. Louis in 1897 know. In short, in doctrine the Christian church of the past 1800 years can boast no progress." Cf. ibid., p. 43; Michigan District, 1930, p. 34; Atlantic District, 1909, p. 33; David W. Lotz, "The Sense of Church History in Representative Missouri Synod Theology," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLII (October 1971), 597-619.

[34]F. Pieper, Unsere Stellung in Lehre und Praxis (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1896), p. 11; Michigan District, 1925, pp. 19-34; Western District, 1886, pp. 6-8; 1930, p. 3; Central District, 1916, pp. 12-14; LCMS, Proceedings, 1905, pp. 16, 25; Eastern District, 1936, p. 8; 1906, pp. 10-11; 1894, pp. 39, 46; Atlantic District, 1916, p. 8; Iowa District, 1891, p. 7; 1892, pp. 15-17; P. E. Kretzmann, "Die Inspiration in der Realien," Concordia Theological Monthly, I (January 1930), 21-32; J. H. C. Fritz, "Doctrinal Preaching," Concordia Theological Monthly, VII (September 1936), 671, mentions "verbal inspiration of the Scriptures" in first place in a list of chief doctrines that should be preached. The atonement and justification by faith are listed third and fourth.

[35]Michigan District, 1895, pp. 8-9.

Statement. As was indicated previously,[36] A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod delineates a precise understanding of the articles of faith covered, and implicitly of doctrine itself. Although covering only nineteen topics, it includes such topics as church and state, Sunday, millennium, antichrist, open questions, and the Symbols of the Lutheran Church along with treatments of Scripture, God, creation, man and sin, redemption, faith in Christ, conversion, justification, good works, means of grace, church, public ministry, and election.

A Brief Statement contains Scriptural references in its treatment of every topic except that of subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. It develops a precise and uncompromising understanding of each topic covered, leaving no doubt as to the Synod's position. False or erroneous teachings are often condemned and warned against. Topics on which the Synod had experienced controversy are generally treated in more detail than others, Missouri's historic position being presented clearly and the view of the Synod's opponent rejected.

Missouri's A Brief Statement treats first the topic of Scripture, emphasizing already in the opening paragraph that view of inspiration that necessarily includes inerrancy.[37] The Scriptures, A Brief Statement says,

[36]Supra, pp. 142-143.

[37]Cf. Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations: A Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy (The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d. [1963-1964]), p. 9.

> are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration . . . Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallibel truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10, 35.[38]

As the source, rule and norm of all doctrine, A Brief Statement says that the Scriptures are to be understood according to "the clear passages of the Scriptures themselves [sic] which set forth the individual doctrines." Doctrine is to be taken from clear Scriptural citations, not from a "totality of Scripture."[39] Doctrine, accordingly, is revealed in Scripture. It is not the outcome of doctrinal controversies, but the decisions of Scripture itself. The Christian Church cannot make doctrines. It "can and should simply profess the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture . . ."[40] Missouri's doctrine, the treatment of one topic says, is "precisely [sic] the Scriptural teaching. . . ."[41]

To summarize, Missouri's position could be described like this. Although justification was considered the chief content

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[38] A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), paragraph 1.

[39] Ibid., paragraph 2.

[40] Ibid., paragraph 46.

[41] Ibid., paragraph 15.

of Scripture, the one article which no other teaching dare contradict, the Synod's view of inspiration that necessarily included inerrancy was basic to its understanding of doctrine. Doctrine was nothing more or less than a restatement of what Scripture says organized according to topics. Every doctrine must have its basis in specific Scriptural citations, although logical conclusions based on Scriptural citations were also considered Scriptural doctrine. Although every doctrine is clearly presented in Scripture and there is no development of doctrine, the doctrinal conclusions reached by the Synod from its controversies also were considered clear Scriptural teaching and prerequisites for fellowship. Since doctrine is Scriptural teaching, no deviation can be permitted. All doctrines must be accepted equally as Scriptural truth, although some are obviously more important than others.

Missouri's Traditional Position Challenged

Shortly after the adoption of A Brief Statement the Synod entered into fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church that called into question the Synod's public doctrine and inherited understanding of doctrine.[42] Although the Synod's landmark 1938 convention stated that the ALC position contained "the truth as expressed in the Scriptures and our Lutheran confessional writings," Missouri recognized

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[42] See Chapter IV above for a more detailed study of these negotiations.

disagreement on the "non-fundamental doctrines" of the antichrist, universal conversion of the Jews, physical resurrection of martyrs, thousand years of Revelation, and terminology regarding the doctrine of the church.[43] After making a point of the fact that leading synodical writers of the past had said that these non-fundamental doctrines "need not be divisive of church-fellowship,"[44] the Synod resolved that it had a "doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship," but asked that "full agreement" be established, including "uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology."[45] This adopted committee report of the Synod's 1938 convention set off debate within the Synod about fellowship and the definition of doctrine.[46]

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[43] LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 231.

[44] Ibid., pp. 229-231.

[45] Ibid., pp. 231-232.

[46] In addition to articles that appeared in synodical literature noted in Chapter IV above (pp. 100-109), a periodical entitled The Confessional Lutheran made its appearance in January 1940, obviously motivated by the desire to fight the 1938 St. Louis resolution regarding fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. The same was true also of The Crucible, which began publication in 1939. Theodore Graebner, on the other hand, supported the 1938 resolution with a thirty-one page booklet, The Historic Lutheran Position in Non-Fundamentals (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), "Published by Resolution of the One-Day Conference of St. Louis, Mo." Cf., however, a memorial to the 1941 convention of the Synod signed by six pastors, including Theodore Graebner, which asked the Synod to "reaffirm our position that anything which is taught in the Bible can never be considered as non-essential for church-fellowship and that accordingly we regard the distinction of fundamentals and non-fundamentals as easily confusing in the discussion of church-fellowship, since to urge it in

By the time of the Synod's next convention three years later (1941), the Synod no longer seemed so sure that the ALC shared either its doctrinal position or its definition of doctrine. Accordingly, the Synod resolved that there should be one document of agreement "so clearly written that there can be no misunderstanding in reference to the meaning which the words are to convey."[47] The Synod added that "In calling for one document, we do not mean to dispense with any doctrinal statement made in our Brief Statement,--for we believe that it correctly expresses the doctrinal position of our Synod . . ."[48] The Synod again specified that full agreement should be reached in the non-fundamental points mentioned in its previous convention, and made the point that "It be understood that the term 'non-fundamental doctrines' which has been used should not be made to convey the idea that anything clearly revealed in Scripture, although not absolutely necessary for salvation, may be denied . . ."[49]

Following this convention, some within the Synod began specifically to question the Synod's inherited operating

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[47] LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, p. 302.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

definition of doctrine. One writer, J. H. Gockel, argued that the identification of the Pope as the antichrist is not properly doctrine at all, because it is not a teaching that is clearly revealed in Scripture. If something is really a clear Scriptural teaching, and therefore a doctrine, agreement must be reached, deviation must be divisive. There should not be intermediate stages between doctrine and open questions. "Either a teaching _is_ a Scriptural doctrine, or it is _not_." Likewise in the area of the inspiration of Scripture, the same writer said, the question is not a doctrinal one of whether or not the Scriptures are inspired--all agree to that--but the debate centers on the open question of "how": "Just _how_ God inspired the prophets, evangelists, and apostles is not stated specifically."[50] He proposed that doctrine be defined:

> When the Lutheran Church, which adheres to the _sola Scriptura_ principle, uses the word _doctrine_ with reference to its own teachings, it can mean only a restatement of what is clearly taught in the Scriptures, a teaching for whose every part there is a plain "thus saith the Lord."[51]

This suggested definition of doctrine drew reactions not only from various people within the Synod, but implicitly from

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[50] J. H. Gockel, "For a Re-Study of So-Called Non-Fundamentals," _American Lutheran_, XXV (June 1942), 8.

[51] _Ibid._, XXV, 6. The same author's article in the following issue modified his definition by the addition of two words so that the main clause reads: "it can mean only a restatement of what is clearly (or expressly) taught in the Scriptures . . ." "What Is A Doctrine?," _American Lutheran_, XXV (July 1942), 7.

the Synod's next convention. In answer to a memorial which cited Gockel's definition as a reason for asking for a synodical definition of the term, the Synod adopted "the following definition of 'a Scriptural doctrine': A Scriptural doctrine is a truth contained in, expressed by, or properly drawn from Scripture."[52]

Following this 1944 convention of the Synod, a number of men who considered it to be the "'low water mark' in the theology and polity of the Synod up to that time,"[53] met in Chicago and circularized the Synod with _A Statement_. Their meeting and its resulting statement were motivated in part by the question, "What is a doctrine?"[54] This statement advocated that only that should be considered doctrine which is based on the clear words of Scripture.[55]

The next meeting of the Synod, its "Centennial Convention" (1947), began the discussion of doctrinal matters with an introductory resolution reaffirming that _A Brief Statement_

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[52] LCMS, _Proceedings_, 1944, p. 250.

[53] Thomas Coates, "'A Statement'--Some Reminiscences," _Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly_, XLIII (November 1970), 159.

[54] Walter E. Bauer, "To Recall As Well As I Can," _Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly_, XLIII (November 1970), 172.

[55] "A Statement," _Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly_, XLIII (November 1970), statements 8 and 9, p. 151. Twenty years later the Synod said the same when it resolved that there must be clear passages of Scripture if there is a doctrine. Their intent and context must demonstrably teach and support that particular doctrine. LCMS, _Proceedings_, 1965, p. 102.

"correctly expresses its doctrinal position," which was ordered incorporated in the Synod's official proceedings.[56] This was used as the Synod's answer to several memorials asking what the Synod believes.

One index of the Synod's traditional doctrinal solidarity prior to this decade can be seen in the fact that beginning with the separate publication of Reports and Memorials in 1908, no doctrinal concerns indicating controversy, contention, or differences of viewpoint within the Synod are apparent until 1944 when one memorial differs with the definition of doctrine advocated by a synodical writer in the American Lutheran. The tables of contents of the Reports and Memorials do not even contain such a general category until 1941, when one can first find section "VI. Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters." All six reports and memorials that year dealt with relations with other synods; no internal differences were expressed. In 1947, however, internal differences within the Synod become apparent, and the 1950 Reports and Memorials section on "Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters" was 117 pages long, much of it about internal differences within the Synod. In 1965 this one section was further divided into two separate sections, one dealing with "Doctrinal Matters," and a separate floor committee for "Church Relations." In the last twenty years, the question "What is a doctrine?" has been raised at every convention of the Synod, either implicitly or explicitly.

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[56] LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, p. 476.

Doctrine an Issue Within Missouri

Missouri's traditional position as advocated in convention memorials

The most common element in the argument of those who memorialize the Synod in behalf of the Synod's traditional understanding of doctrine is a specific view of Scripture. These memorials operate with the Synod's traditional understanding of verbal and plenary inspiration: All of the Bible is given by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore true and absolutely factually correct in every detail. Because of its divine inspiration, there can be no errors in the Bible. Not only is it reliable in spiritual matters, but the Bible is factually correct also when speaking of geography, scientific matters, and history. Accordingly, it must be interpreted "literally." This means, for example, that the historicity of Adam and Eve, Jonah, and every person mentioned in the Bible must be accepted. Events such as a six-day creation, the fall, the exodus, Jonah's experiences occurred exactly as described. The authorship of the books of the Bible is to be accepted as traditionally ascribed. Traditionally understood messianic prophecies directly predict a personal Messiah.[57]

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[57] LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1959, p. 512; 1962, pp. 149, 159, 161, 164-165; 166, 167-168; 169; LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1965, pp. 49, 50, 51, 52, 68, 74, 75, 56, 57-58, 60, 62, 64, 72, 74, 75, 52, 54; 1967, pp. 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 65; 1969, pp. 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 90, 91; 1971, pp. 57-58, 59, 63, 65, 66, 67, 69, 73, 75, 80, 102, 103, 108, 110, 112, 117, 118.

Applying this view of inspiration to doctrine, the writers advocating Missouri's traditional position stressed the clarity of Scripture. Since it was inerrantly inspired by the Holy Spirit, Scripture is clear and uniform. This means that there can be only one clearly intended meaning of a passage, and therefore only one correct doctrine. To differ in teaching would impugn the clarity and authority of God's Word. There are no variations in doctrine in the Bible. All doctrines are presented clearly. Answers can be given in a "definitive, Scripturally based manner what God would have his church believe, teach, and confess. . . ."[58] There cannot be "two opposing doctrinal positions . . . as Scriptural truth . . ."[59]

Obviously, therefore, only the Scriptural position should be allowed within the Synod and doctrinal discipline should be exercised.[60] Those who disagree with the Synod's biblical

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[58] LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1962, p. 155. Cf. 1947, pp. 389-392; 402; 1950, pp. 418-419; 452-455; 455-462; 464-466; 470-471; 474-476; 480, 483, 497-498; 1956, pp. 377-378; 1959, p. 518; 1962, pp. 152, 161, 166-167; 178; 1965, pp. 68, 75; LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 60- 63, 72; 1971, pp. 57, 58, 70, 101-102; 103, 110.

[59] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, p. 57.

[60] LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1956, pp. 387, 392, 401-402; 385-386; 1959, pp. 509, 517, 521, 526; 1962, pp. 148, 158, 159, 160, 163-164; 170, 177; LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1965, pp. 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 64, 66, 72, 73, 74, 77; 1967, pp. 65, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 85; 1969, pp. 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 90, 91; 1971, pp. 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 101, 102, 103, 104.

position should convince the Synod that its position is wrong, seek their fellowship elsewhere, or be excluded by discipline.[61] There can be only one correct position and the Synod certainly has the right to pass resolutions expressing the doctrines of Scripture and enforce these resolutions.[62]

Many of those who thus argued for the Synod's traditional position pointed to A Brief Statement as an exemplary standard of doctrine, some advocating mandatory subscription to it.[63]

Much of the thinking of this traditional position is summarized in the report of the Synod's president to the Synod's 1971 convention. Relating his comments to the convention theme, "Sent to Reconcile," President J. A. O. Preus spoke first of the necessity of having the pure word of reconciliation. Doctrine, he said, "is nothing less than the articulation of the message of reconciliation in Jesus Christ."[64] This means, he said, that "the message of the cross must be preached in all its purity . . . We cannot act as if truth

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[61] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, pp. 58, 61, 67, 68, 81.

[62] Ibid., pp. 58, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 77, 79, 80, 81.

[63] LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1950, pp. 443-444; 452-455; 470-471; 475; 1953, pp. 353, 366; 1956, pp. 383, 389, 398; 1959, pp. 507, 512; 1962, pp. 148, 149, 152, 160, 164; LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1965, pp. 50, 51, 73, 79, 81; 1967, pp. 60, 64, 73, 74, 77, 82; 1969, pp. 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 90, 91; 1971, pp. 56, 59, 60, 68, 69.

[64] LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, p. 51.

and falsehood are the same, or as if truth is only relative and can never be stated correctly and categorically."[65]

Since the Word of God alone establishes doctrine, Preus continued, "The Synod accepts only what the Scripture teaches, but also everything and anything that Scripture teaches" [sic].[66] Moreover, since the "Word of God rules in our church . . . the church of today . . . can interpret the Scriptures and expect its members to hold to a particular interpretation of the Scriptures" [sic].[67] "We have a right to expect our professors, pastors, teachers, and congregations to teach according to our understanding of the Word of God."[68] The church can "insist on unity in the interpretation of any Scripture passage," because "doctrine--pure, immutable, clear doctrine--can be drawn from the Scriptures and formulated in confessional statements and unanimously subscribed to by Christians."[69]

Emphasizing the validity of binding doctrinal resolutions by the Synod, Preus cited several examples of current variations of doctrinal opinion which he argued cannot be permitted to be treated as "mere open questions." He listed the

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., p. 52.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

historicity of the creation of Adam and Eve and the fall; the unique inspiration of the Scriptures which makes them "authoritative and true simply because God said it"; inerrancy, miracles, the existence of angels and a personal devil; and the idea that certain "interpretations of a Scripture passage need not be rejected if they do not harm the Gospel." As examples of this "Gospel reductionism" he referred to the ordination of women and the historicity of the fall and the flood.[70]

Missouri's traditional position as supported by convention resolutions

Not only have individuals within the Synod advocated such a view of doctrine, but the Synod itself often has promoted such a view by its convention resolutions. Several recent conventions of the Synod have reaffirmed "our belief in the plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, and that Scripture is in all its words and parts the very Word of God . . ."[71]

From a particular view of this inspired and inerrant Bible, the Synod has further operated on the basis that the teachings of Scriptures can be clearly determined. The Synod

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[70] Ibid., pp. 54-55. Cf. Robert Preus, The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), pp. 410-411.

[71] LCMS, Proceedings, 1962, p. 104. Cf. 1965, p. 103; 1967, pp. 92, 95; 1969, pp. 85, 93.

has affirmed "its wholehearted desire to follow true biblical teaching in all its doctrines, teaching, and practice and to reject all false teaching."[72] It once asked the ALC for a clarification of its statement that

> to assume that the church can arrive at human concepts or expressions that are in every respect correct is as much a symptom of pride as to assume that the church or its members can achieve sinlessness in their daily lives.[73]

After reaffirming its position on several specific points of doctrine, another convention of the Synod resolved that "we affirm our position that those who teach otherwise are in error."[74] Similarly one convention asked the Synod's St. Louis seminary faculty "to continue its study of the doctrine of Scripture with a view toward giving a more definite statement. . . ."[75] The Synod's previous convention had adopted a Synodical Conference statement on Scripture, which, relative to our topic, can be viewed as affirming that understanding of the inspiration and authority of Scripture which supports the Synod's traditional approach to doctrine:

> We believe and teach that God has given us His Holy Scripture to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. . . . We therefore confess Scripture to be the only, but all-sufficient foundation of our faith, the source of all our teachings, the norm of our conduct in

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[72] LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 92.

[73] Ibid., p. 93.

[74] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 95.

[75] LCMS, Proceedings, 1962, p. 111.

> life, and the infallible authority in all matters with which it deals. . . .
>
> We believe and teach that where Scripture has not spoken decisively or is silent, differences of opinion may be held without violating Scripture or breaking the bonds of fellowship. . . . But where Scripture has spoken, there God has spoken, whether it be on a central dogma or on a peripheral point; where Scripture has not spoken, the matter must forever remain open.
> . . . . . .
> Where Scripture speaks historically, as for example, in Gen. 1 to 3, it must be understood as speaking of literal, historical facts.[76]

The same convention regretted that a requested theological study of fellowship had not been completed as expected because of the "immediate urgency of a clear and unequivocal statement on the matters assigned."[77]

Perhaps more eloquent evidence that the Synod has frequently supported the view that a uniform doctrinal position is clearly taught in the inspired and inerrant Scriptures are the resolutions calling for doctrinal discipline within the Synod. One synodical convention (1959), resolved that the Synod's pastors, teachers, and professors "are not to teach

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[76] LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1959, pp. 484-485; LCMS, Proceedings, 1959, p. 189. In 1960 the faculty of the Synod's St. Louis seminary adopted "A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures." This statement, affirming that the Scriptures are the source and norm of the church's dogmas, stressed that the form and content of the Scriptures are to be differentiated but never divorced. The unique purpose of Scripture, the statement said, is the "proclamation of God's judgment in the Law and of His grace in the Gospel." Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXI (October 1960), 626-627. Critics of this statement were quick to point out that it does not necessarily teach inerrancy as Missouri traditionally has. Cf. "Special Report," Lutheran Witness, LXXX (April 4, 1961), 18.

[77] LCMS, Proceedings, 1959, p. 188.

contrary" to "every doctrinal statement of a confessional nature adopted by Synod as a true exposition of the Holy Scriptures. . . ." Such statements are to be regarded "as public doctrine (publica doctrina) in Synod."[78]

Although the Synod's following convention declared that resolution "unconstitutional on the ground that said resolution has the effect of amending the confessional basis of the Constitution of the Synod without following the procedure required by Article XIV of the Constitution,"[79] several other resolutions on the subject were adopted. The members of the Synod were asked "to honor and uphold the doctrinal content of these synodically adopted statements," (for example, A Brief Statement and the Common Confession) and to present their concerns if they "believe these synodically adopted doctrinal statements to be faulty in their formulation of Scriptural doctrine . . ."[80] Officers of the Synod with the constitutional responsibility were directed "to discharge their responsibilities of supervision of doctrine and practice in our Synod and inaugurate prompt and effective disciplinary action when warranted."[81] Another resolution thanked God "for the blessing of purity of doctrine and practice He has

[78] LCMS, Proceedings, 1959, p. 191.

[79] LCMS, Proceedings, 1962, pp. 122-123.

[80] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

[81] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

granted to our Synod without any merit on our part," and charged the administrations of synodical schools to "exercise careful supervision over the curricula and that they be urged to apply proper disciplinary action when necessary."[82]

The Synod's next convention (1965), repeated that members of the Synod are to "honor and uphold the doctrinal content of synodically adopted statements," called upon "those who teach publicly in the church (pastors, teachers, and professors) to test their findings and opinions with their peer groups before presenting them to the church at large," and assured "responsible officials of our prayers and support as they perform their difficult task of dealing with doctrinal aberrations in a firm and evangelical manner . . ."[83] This basic position was repeated at succeeding conventions of the Synod.[84]

The Synod's 1971 convention repudiated the inadequacies of "A Call to Openness and Trust,"[85] admonished those who had

[82] Ibid., p. 103.

[83] LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 96. Cf. also pp. 99-100.

[84] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, pp. 88-89; 1969, pp. 85-86; 91; 1971, p. 119. It should be noted that an attempt to declare the Synod's "doctrinal resolutions to be of binding force until it can be demonstrated to the Synod that they are not in accord with the Word of God" as presented by the 1971 convention's floor committee was defeated when the convention substituted a statement of the Synod's Council of Presidents similar to the Synod's statements noted above of 1962, 1965, 1967, and 1969 in place of the original resolveds of the resolution.

[85] Cf. infra, p. 243.

"disturbed the Synod by circularizing this document," and asked "those who are publicly identified with this document to publicly assure the Synod through the office of the President of the Synod that they are faithful to the confessional stance of the Synod and repudiate the inadequacies pointed out by the CTCR."[86]

At the same time that the Synod struggled for its formal statements on the binding force of synodically adopted doctrinal statements, it continued to make specific doctrinal statements. The Synod reaffirmed its belief that "Adam and Eve were real, historical human beings, the first two people in the world . . . created in God's image with body and soul. . . ."[87] Creation occurred "in 6 days by a series of creative acts."[88] "The fall of our first parents is a historical fact."[89]

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[86]LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, p. 128. This "narrowly adopted" (ibid., p. 42) resolution was based on an evaluation of the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, who reported that "certain basic emphases of the document are in serious disagreement with the confessional position of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod." Among other things, the CTCR stressed inerrancy because "the authority of Scripture and of the Gospel of Jesus Christ compels us to affirm the full truthfulness of Holy Scripture. The truthfulness of Scripture is affirmed by the Synod's Brief Statement . . ." LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, pp. 37-39.

[87]LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 95; 1965, p. 101.

[88]LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 95.

[89]Ibid., p. 95; 1965, p. 101.

"The events recorded in the Book of Jonah did occur. . . ."[90] Likewise the historicity of the New Testament was affirmed.[91] The words of the creed "He descended into Hell" were retained as being the translation "most acceptable," and continued usage of the terms "visible" and "invisible" were encouraged along with "any other terms that correctly set forth the doctrine of the church. . . ."[92] An attempt to state definitely the authorship of the Pentateuch and the book of Isaish, however, received only qualified acceptance.[93] Similarly a resolution with several possible applications stated that "Old Testament prophecies of the Savior find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of sinners."[94]

Different Doctrinal Emphases Surface

As the preceeding indicates, there were differences within the Synod about specific doctrinal statements or conclusions and implicitly about the nature of doctrine and Missouri's public doctrine. Mention has already been made of the discussions regarding the nature of doctrine triggered by the

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[90]LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 100.

[91]LCMS, Proceedings, 1969, p. 88.

[92]LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, p. 117.

[93]LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 103.

[94]Ibid., p. 100.

question of fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines in the Missouri-ALC fellowship negotiations, the different approach to doctrine apparent in the Common Confession, and in the Missouri-TALC fellowship negotiations. In much of this the different emphases in regard to Missouri's public doctrine and the nature of doctrine were implicit rather than having been explicitly stated and discussed.[95] In large part this seems to be true of the surfacing of a different approach to doctrine in general. Few have clearly stated Missouri's traditional position and openly challenged it. Yet the existence of other points of view, different approaches to doctrine, or alternative emphases and structure of doctrine are readily inferred from the polemics of those who support Missouri's traditional position. Perhaps there is no single, uniform alternative advocated in contrast to Missouri's traditional position. There are, however, a number of emphases that can be observed.[96]

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[95]Since 1953 several conventions of the Synod have asked its seminary faculties and the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations specifically to study the question, "What is doctrine?" The results of all these studies are incorporated in the CTCR's most recent report to the Synod, "A Review of the Question, 'What Is A Doctrine?,'"

[96]One editorial within Missouri described the different doctrinal approach this way: "We should like to suggest an answer which may partially explain our present disturbed condition. We have always been a body which emphasized propositional theology. This term has gained prominence in very recent years as a description of what was formerly called systematic theology. Propositional theology is marked by the setting forth of religious truths in the form of absolute statements which the church member is required to accept. These statements are either taken directly from Scripture or based

The Lutheran Confessions as the Norm of Doctrine

There has been resistance within Missouri in recent years to the attempt of advocates of the Synod's traditional position

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on Scripture by processes of deduction which are usually quite plain and obvious. We are grateful to God for this heritage. . . .

However, in very recent years another type of theology has gained prominence in our circles, a theology which cannot be simply and easily described. The label "Biblical theology" is not adequate, for our theologians have always been Biblical theologians. The label "inductive theological discoveries" versus "deductive" formulations is no real help. One could use the term "heilsgeschichtliche theology" if one always had 15 pages at his disposal to define precisely what is meant by it. . . . Let us say that it is Biblical theology and that it focuses our attention in a primarily inductive and exegetical fashion upon the contemplation, study, and adoration of the God who acts mightily in history for the redemption and final salvation of His people. (Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVI [February 1965], p. 68).

Several years later the same editorialist observed that Missouri reflects several theological and sociological elements in the makeup of her character. "There is, for example, a long-standing difference in emphasis between those who understand faith as a relationship to God through Jesus Christ and those who understand it as the acceptance of a series of propositional statements about God." Mention was also made of the traditions within Missouri shaped by pietism, the struggle "between true ecumenical concerns and a passion for pure doctrine," "between an evangelical and a legalistic stance," and others. (Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLII [June 1971], 339-341. Cf. another editorial by the same author: "Editorial: The Issue in This Issue," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII [April 1972], 195-197.

A word of praise for a former professor of the St. Louis seminary, Martin Franzmann, makes a similar observation when Franzmann is lauded as being "among the first to introduce genuine historical awareness to our church's study of Holy Scripture and thus enabled us to break out of an interpretive methodology that read the sacred record as if it were merely a collection of dogmatic propositions." (Richard Jungkuntz, "Editorial," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLII [September 1971], 483.)

to introduce doctrinal norms in addition to those prescribed in the Synod's constitution. Although the decision that A Brief Statement cannot be a norm of public doctrine within the Synod was formally debated on the level of constitutionality,[97] advocates of Missouri's traditional position charged that the real issue was doctrine.[98] In the triennium between the convention of the Synod that implicitly made A Brief Statement a norm of the Synod's public doctrine (1959) and the convention that declared that action unconstitutional (1962), the Synod's Concordia Theological Monthly published a series of articles on A Brief Statement and its relationship to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The limited nature, scope, and intent of A Brief Statement in contrast to the Lutheran Confessions was noted repeatedly.[99] A decade later when an attempt was made to declare the Synod's doctrinal

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[97] Arthur C. Repp, "Scripture, Confessions, and Doctrinal Statements," A Symposium of Essays and Addresses given at the Counselors Conference (The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1960), pp. 100-112; LCMS, Reports and Memorials, 1962, pp. 149-150, 272-273.

[98] Viz., Christian News, IV (January 4, 1971), 12.

[99] Paul M. Bretscher, "Two New Series of Articles," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (May 1961), 260; Erwin L. Lueker, "Functions of Symbols and of Doctrinal Statements," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (May 1961), 274-285; Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (July 1961), 403-428; XXXII (August 1961), 466-482; XXXII (September 1961), 526-542; Carl S. Meyer, "The Role of A Brief Statement Since 1932," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (April 1962), 199-209; [Editorial staff], "A Brief Statement--Guidelines and Helps for Study," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (April 1962), 197-198, 210-223.

resolutions binding,[100] it was opposed by the argument that the Lutheran Confessions are the distinctive mark of Lutheranism[101] and that the Synod's constitution establishes the Lutheran Confessions "as the only and unalterable norm for defining what is 'Lutheran' in doctrine . . ."[102]

Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions were similarly cited as the norm of doctrine in "A Declaration of Determination" signed by more than one thousand of the Synod's clergymen and presented to the president of the Synod on January 20, 1971. Twice the short document touched on this point:

> We deplore the suggestion and the charges that theological differences about the definition of inerrancy, authorship, genealogies, et al. are divisive of our fellowship. Together we have pledged ourselves to the sacred Scriptures as the only infallible rule and norm of faith and practice and to the Lutheran symbols, because they are a true exposition of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has made us one in the doctrine of the Gospel.
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> . . . . . .
>
> We deplore the suggestion that our pastors and teachers should be required to teach in harmony with every resolution of our synodical conventions.
>
> We are determined to resist any efforts in the next convention(s) of our Synod that would bypass or amend Article II of the constitution of our

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[100] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, pp. 56-71; LCMS, Proceedings, 1971, pp. 51-56; 117-120.

[101] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1971, p. 52.

[102] Ibid., pp. 52, 55.

> Synod by calling for doctrinal discipline on the basis of convention resolutions, as though they were to be equated with confessional norms.[103]

The Synod itself has at times said or implied the same. The Synod's adopted "Theology of Fellowship"[104] states that the Lutheran Confessions "themselves became the effective limits for pulpit and altar fellowship for Lutherans. Those who subscribed to them were automatically in pulpit and altar fellowship with one another."[105] Negotiations leading to fellowship with TALC accordingly centered on three essays explicating "the content of the Lutheran Confessions themselves; they are not to be understood as new or supplementary confessions."[106]

Doctrine is Related to the Gospel

Another emphasis within the Synod is that doctrine is often spoken of in relation to the Gospel rather than the authority of Scripture. Although C. F. W. Walther frequently articulated the centrality of justification in theology, that emphasis has been stated and applied with more consistency in

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[103] Bertwin L. Frey, "A Declaration of Determination" (n.p., October 21, 1970). Cf. "Critical Declaration Presented to Dr. Preuss [sic]," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Thursday, January 21, 1971), p. 3D.

[104] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 91.

[105] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, p. 380.

[106] Ibid., p. 405. Cf. supra, pp. 185-191.

recent years. In addition to this emphasis surfacing in the Common Confession[107] and the Missouri--TALC negotiations leading to fellowship[108] noted previously, it received explicit treatment in the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations document "Theology of Fellowship." One section of this document stressed Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: "And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." The "Theology of Fellowship" explained that "The doctrine of the Gospel is not here to be understood as one doctrine among many, or as a bare recital of John 3:16, but rather as a doctrine composed of a number of articles of faith."[109] The same document's examination of passages traditionally understood within Missouri to command separation likewise stresses that the Gospel is the proper frame of reference. For example, those who use the 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 passage "to forbid fellowship with other Lutherans who were considered to be in error," the document concluded at one point, "have gone beyond the clear words of the text." In general, the passages are properly used, the statement summarizes,

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[107] Cf. supra, pp. 128-135.

[108] Cf. supra, pp. 185-191. Especially pertinent here is the essay adopted by the Missouri--TALC commissioners, "What Commitment to the 'Sola Gratia' of the Lutheran Confessions Involves." LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 405-409.

[109] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, p. 380.

when the church "is taught by them to avoid men who either by false teaching or separatistic, schismatic, factious activities attack the Gospel and the faith of Christians."[110] The synodical resolution adopting this document included in its resolution to "continue to uphold the doctrine of the Gospel and its implications as determinative in the theology and practice of Christian Fellowship."[111]

Similarly, another synodically adopted statement, "A Review of the Question, 'What Is a Doctrine?,'" concludes that Article VII of the Augsburg Confession

> makes the preaching of the Gospel according to a pure understanding of it and the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the divine Word the only absolute doctrinal demands for church unity. . . . All articles of faith are integrally related to the Gospel and articulate the Gospel from different perspectives.[112]

The Synod's "Detroit Mission Affirmations" are a direct application of this emphasis on the Gospel. They center on the Gospel and breathe a new spirit of concern for and working with other Christians. For example,

> we affirm as Lutheran Christians that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is chiefly a confessional movement within the total body of Christ rather than a denomination emphasizing institutional barriers of separation. The Lutheran Christian uses the Lutheran Confessions for the primary purpose for which they were framed: to confess

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[110] Ibid., p. 388.

[111] LCMS, Proceedings, 1967, p. 91.

[112] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, pp. 506-507.

> Christ and His Gospel boldly and lovingly to all Christians. While the Confessions seek to repel all attacks against the Gospel, they are not intended to be a kind of Berlin wall to stop communication with other Christians; and be it further
>
> Resolved, That we affirm that by virtue of our unity with other Christians in the body of Christ, we should work together when it will edify Christ's body and advance His mission, refusing cooperation, however, on such occasions when it would deny God's Word . . .[113]

Several recent memorials to synodical conventions and statements of Missouri clergymen make similar points. One memorial requests an end to theological censorship on the basis that Lutheranism "does not demand agreement on all points of theological opinion (but only concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments). . . ."[114] Another requested that woman suffrage be a matter of congregational choice, because "Our true synodical fellowship is in commitment to Christ and in the doctrine we proclaim hinging on salvation . . ."[115]

"A Declaration of Determination," mentioned earlier, also emphasizes the Gospel:

> We deplore the suggestion and the charges that theological differences about the definition of inerrancy, authorship, genealogies, et al. are divisive of our fellowship. Together we have pledged ourselves to the sacred Scriptures as

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[113] LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 80.

[114] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1969, p. 79.

[115] LCMS, Convention Workbook, 1967, pp. 78-79. Cf. 1969, pp. 84-85.

> the only infallible rule and norm of faith and practice and to the Lutheran symbols, because they are a true exposition of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has made us one in the doctrine of the Gospel.[116]

Another document adopted on January 31, 1970 by a number of clergymen within the Synod entitled "A Call to Openness and Trust," likewise stressed the Gospel:

> We speak for freedom: diversity in unity. We recognize and accept the relationship established between God and man by Jesus Christ, rejoice in our relationship to all men through Him, and hold that the unity in which we live is based on our relationship in Christ and not on rules and principles. We do not desire to be understood as judging the reality of anyone's spiritual life, so long as he holds to Christ as Savior and Lord.
> . . . . . .
> The Gospel that is Christ is not a doctrine which equates Gospel with Bible--is basis for unity of the family of God. We specifically hold that differences concerning: (1) the manner of the creation of the universe by God, (2) the authorship and literary form of any books of the Bible, (3) the definition of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, (4) the moral obligation of Christians in individual or corporate action, (5) the question of factual error in the Bible, and (6) the role and authority of clergy in the church are not to be the basis for inclusion or exclusion of people among the true disciples of Jesus Christ or membership in the Missouri Synod.[117]

A published sermon preached at the Synod's St. Louis seminary shows concern for the centrality of the Gospel and its proper use in a similar context. The Gospel is not properly used, the preacher said, when one merely debates the historical question of how much of the history of Christ

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[116] Frey.

[117] "A Call to Openness and Trust," reprinted in Christian News, III (Monday, February 9, 1970), 6.

is to be believed as having actually occurred. The purpose of Christ's resurrection is not to guarantee the reliability of the biblical authors. Thomas was not rebuked for doubting the authority or inerrancy of the other disciples. "The proper 'use' of Him [Jesus] and his history," rather, "is to believe Him for one purpose and one purpose alone, namely that, 'believing you may have life in His name.'"[118]

The same emphasis on the Gospel permeates "A Parting Peace" given to its 1972 graduating class by the faculty of the St. Louis seminary. In one place, for example, the statement says:

> A moment ago we said that the inspiring by the Holy Spirit dare not be separated from the facts of history. The converse is also true: the facts of biblical history cannot be understood without the Holy Spirit. Without Him to teach us, we might still retain all sorts of facts, but not as Gospel facts, hence not the facts of Scripture. We do run the danger of forgetting that. We tend to reduce the things which happened in biblical history--for example, Jesus' virgin birth or His resurrection or the Exodus--reduce them to where we can no longer see what really was happening there "for us men and for our salvation." All we have left then is the fact that this or that miracle took place. That much many a pagan believes. So do the devils. Once we have stripped these facts of their real Gospel secret, what good does it do to ask, "Do you believe that they happened or don't you?" Of course they happened. But that does not require believing in any evangelical sense of faith. So the first question is not, Did it happen or didn't it? Nó, the first question is, Did what [sic] happen? For example, what really happened when Jesus was born of a virgin? Or when He suffered, died and was buried? What does it mean when the Large Catechism

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[118] Robert Bertram, "The Lively Use of the Risen Lord," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII (July-August 1972), 438-441.

says, "All this in order to become my Lord." (The Creed, 31) Only as we first answer that question, discerning the Lordship of Jesus in and through those events, do we thereby answer the other question ("Did it happen?") in a way that really honors our Lord. That is possible only by faith in Christ, out of love for Him. For as Jesus says, in order to "heed what I say" it is necessary first to "love me." And that is why He sends the Holy Spirit.[119]

Finally, the relationship between Gospel and the authority of Scripture is a major concern in a document released in 1972 by the president of the Synod's St. Louis seminary. He emphasized that inspiration must be related to the Gospel rather than be viewed as a principle of cognition; that the authority of the Bible is both normative and causative; that inerrancy cannot be separated from the intent and function of the Scriptures; that the Gospel must be at the center of theology, not one doctrine among many; that Gospel may not be separated from Scripture. This section is concluded with a statement of position:

> To the seminary faculty the Gospel is the one source of life and meaning for the church and therefore the chief accent in the faculty's work of preparing its students for the ministry. Together with the Lutheran Confessions the faculty sees everything in Scripture as either law or Gospel. It sees so close a connection between law

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[119]The Faculty [of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis], A Parting Peace (n.p., The Week of Pentecost, 1972), pp. 8-9. Recent editorials in the Synod's Concordia Theological Monthly, edited by the same faculty, include similar statements emphasizing the centrality of the Gospel and applying that principle to doctrinal discussion. Cf. Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial: 'Which Birds?,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII (September 1972), 483-484.

> and Gospel that they cannot be separated from each other. It does not look upon the Gospel as a locus in dogmatics, one doctrine among others, but as the one doctrine of all the Scriptures which guides and determines all of its teaching and work. The faculty's position on the Gospel . . . is the position of the Lutheran Confessions . . .[120]

Conclusion

In Missouri's fellowship negotiations, in her doctrinal controversies, in her internal discipline, and in her internal doctrinal discussions, the Synod has shown that Missouri's de facto doctrinal position is at times more encompassing or more specific than the Synod's constitutionally delineated position. Not only has Missouri insisted on subscription to the three ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as necessary interpretations of the Scriptures, but at times has demanded agreement with specific interpretations of such "doctrines" as the church, ministry, election, chiliasm, and Schwagerehe (prohibited degrees of marriage). Through it all the Synod has usually been very convinced that her position is the true biblical understanding which any informed and fair-minded reader of the inspired and therefore inerrant and clear Scriptures would have to accept.

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[120]John H. Tietjen, Fact Finding or Fault Finding? (n.p., n.d. [September 8, 1972]), pp. 15-16. This study has deliberately avoided discussing the current investigation of the Synod's St. Louis seminary by the president of the Synod.

Along with that, Missouri's implicit definition of doctrine is also part and parcel of the Synod's de facto doctrinal position. At times the Synod has expressed concern that other church bodies do not accept her implicit understanding of the nature of doctrine. On one occasion a tentative re-definition of doctrine resulted in immediate Synodical response. Current doctrinal discussion and calls for discipline center as much on the question "What is doctrine?" as on specific articles of faith.

This writer, accordingly, has endeavored to present and document conclusions reached during his research of synodical literature. In his view, the Synod's relationship with other church bodies and the Synod's internal discipline have been significantly determined by a de facto position of the Synod as well as by the Synod's constitutionally stated doctrinal norms. This de facto position of the Synod, what the Synod has actually said, taught, and done, is the Synod's public doctrine. It, too, has been normative for the Synod, and, currently, an area of much doctrinal discussion.

SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER V:

OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY WISCONSIN

Introduction

The issues of the military chaplaincy, Scouting, and Missouri's communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council also were the subjects of repeated treatment and disagreement between Missouri and Wisconsin.[1] They are significant for this study by the very fact that these issues even became matters of church controversy and in the way that discussion proceeded on these topics. Both reveal an implicit understanding of doctrine.

The discussion of these issues is almost completely devoid of reference to the Gospel, but is carried on on the level of logical deduction from accepted premises. At the same time, however, Missouri resisted Wisconsin's strict logical conclusions and operated with a somewhat more Gospel-oriented approach, although Missouri's arguments rarely showed it in this controvery.

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[1] See supra, p. 159.

Military Chaplaincy

The Synodical Conference began extended treatment of the military chaplaincy question when its 1946 convention elected a special "Interim Committee" to study the question and include "all other matters relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry, and the Church . . ."[2] The first report of this committee announced that they had determined that controversy on this subject within the Synodical Conference existed on the following questions:

1. What is a Christian congregation?
2. Is the local congregation a specific divine institution, and is it the only divinely instituted unit in the Church?
3. Is a synodical organization divinely instituted, or does it exist purely by human right?
4. Does a synod possess the rights and powers of a congregation, including that of exercising church discipline?
5. Is the office of the public ministry a specific divine institution, distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers?
6. Is the power to call vested solely in the local congregation?
7. May a synod as such, without specific delegation of authority by its constituent congregations, extend calls?
8. Is the placement of chaplains by the Government a usurpation of the prerogatives of the Church and a violation of the principle of separation of Church and State?

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[2]Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1946, p. 61. Titles of the official minutes and proceedings of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (LCMS) vary from convention to convention. For the sake of brevity and uniformity all such references will be cited as in this footnote. See the bibliography for full printed titles.

9. Does the performance of a chaplain's prescribed duties necessarily involve him in unionistic practices?[3]

Accordingly, the Interim Committee decided on a four-fold study of underlying principles:

1. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to synodical organization.
2. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to the office of the ministry.
3. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to the call into the ministry.
4. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to its relation to the State.[4]

Reporting on the first three items that had been discussed so far, the majority, including all committee members except one of the Wisconsin Synod delegation, agreed to a number of conclusions:

a. A congregation is a group of professing Christians united to maintain the ministry of the Word in their midst.

b. The congregation is the only divinely designated body or unit of the visible church.

c. The congregation exercises its powers (that is, calls pastors, uses the Keys) only by virtue of the believers in it.

d. Synods and other organizations fall into the area of Christian love and liberty as long as they do not violate the authority of the local congregation. A Synod can exercise only those powers delegated to it by congregations, which it, in turn, possesses by virtue of the believers in its midst.

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[3]Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1948, p. 136.

[4]Ibid.

e. The formation of a congregation does not deprive the individual believer of any of the inherent rights, duties, or privileges of the royal priesthood, which rights, however, may be exercised publicly only by authority of the local congregation. Although some of its functions can be delegated to Synods, excommunication can never be delegated from the local congregation.

f. The public ministry is an institution of God distinguished from the general priesthood of believers by a proper call, a particular aptitude, and an exemplary walk of life.

g. Only a local congregation has the right to call ministers. The authority and validity of the call stems from the universal priesthood of all believers and from the divine institution of the ministry.

h. A congregation may delegate its authority to call.

i. A call may be terminated.[5]

A minority of the committee (composed of only one of Wisconsin's delegates), reported that he maintained the following major points in disagreement with the majority:

a. The divinely instituted church does not refer only to the local congregation, but equally to larger groups such as synods.

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[5] Ibid., pp. 135-140.

b. Likewise, the divinely instituted ministry is not restricted to the pastorate of a local congregation, but is a comprehensive term which covers such offices as teachers, professors, and synodical officials.[6]

Four years and two Synodical Conference conventions later, the Interim Committee reported that although it had not been able to take up the question of the chaplaincy yet in its discussions, it had come to the unanimous conclusion that the "Thiensville Theses" correctly express the Scriptural principle of church and ministry. This the convention adopted, recognizing that it does "not resolve all the difficulties that still exist among us, and that further clarification on the points in question is desirable."[7]

Thiensville Theses

Statements adopted by the faculty of the Thiensville Seminary and representatives of the faculty of the St. Louis Seminary and the Presidents of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods at Thiensville, Wis., April 16, 1932.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 140-144. Following Synodical Conference action thanking the Interim Committee for its efforts to attain full harmony, suggesting additional advisory members to be appointed by the presidents of each synod to help complete the study, and requesting that it continue to function, the Wisconsin Synod president protested that the representation on this Interim Committee had been elected by the entire Synodical Conference instead of permitting each synod to determine its own representatives, and asked that the additional advisory members to be appointed to the committee be admitted to all sessions, including executive sessions. This declaration of the Wisconsin Synod was referred to the Intersynodical Relations Committee with power to act. Ibid., p. 144.

[7] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1952, p. 143.

I. As we know from Scripture, it is God's will and regulation that Christians who reside in the same area also establish an external connection in order to exercise jointly the obligations of their spiritual priesthood.

II. As we know from Scripture, it is furthermore God's will and regulation that such Christian local congregations have shepherds and teachers, who in the name and on behalf of the congregation carry out the duties of the ministry of the Word in their midst.

III. As we know from Scripture, it is also God's will and regulation that Christian local congregations give expression to their unity of faith with other congregations and carry on jointly with them the work of the Kingdom of God, as is done among us in the unprescribed form of a Synod.

IV. Because every Christian possesses the keys of the kingdom of heaven, every judgment pronounced in agreement with God's Word by an individual Christian or by more Christians in any kind of combination, is valid also in heaven. But, as we know from Scripture, it is God's will and regulation that proceedings against a brother who has sinned shall not be considered completed until his local congregation has acted. Congregational discipline and synodical discipline, if everything is done properly, cannot cause a conflict, since the local congregation excludes from Synod and not from the local congregation.

Note.--In accordance with ecclesiastical usage we call the exclusion executed by a congregation excommunication (ban).[8]

The actual discussion of the military chaplaincy issue reached the floor of the Synodical Conference at its next (August 10-13, 1954) convention in East Detroit (a recessed session met in Chicago on November 16-19, 1954). There both Wisconsin andMissouri presented essays on a number of issues in contention between the two bodies.

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[8] Ibid., p. 143.

From the Wisconsin point of view, the history of the controversy is brief. In 1939 Wisconsin decided that it could not commission army and navy chaplains, and its 1941 convention gave a threefold reason to which Wisconsin still adheres: (1) The application and appointment to the chaplaincy conflicts with Wisconsin's stand on the divinity of the pastoral call; (2) The appointment to the chaplaincy by the government violates the "principle of separation of Church and State"; and (3) Government regulations promote doctrinal indifferentism and foster unionism.[9]

Speaking of Wisconsin's first reservation that the chaplain's call does not measure up to the standards the Bible sets for the divine call, it was pointed out that a person can be a chaplain only by authority of the government, not by the right of the church. The government sets the standards, area of service, numbers, and numerous other regulations. Even worse, Wisconsin maintained, is that the chaplain is required to promote the service character-guidance program which contains "the old false doctrine that man has full free will and is of himself willing and able to keep the Law." The chaplain's call is further violate by duties that require "the aid of false teachers of other denominations," and worship services acceptable to a maximum number of protestants.[10]

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[9] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 57-58.

[10] Ibid., pp. 58-61.

In regard to the principle of separation of church and state, Wisconsin maintained that by providing for the post of chaplain and maintaining it by public funds, the state is providing a religious ministry and going beyond its prescribed field and function. In any other setting, if the government were to determine who the church should serve, where, and how to do it, it would be recognized as a violation of the principle of separation of church and state and should be so recognized here. It does not matter that the government in this case is not maliciously invading the realm of the church and deliberately attempting to dominate it.[11]

Most serious of its concerns, Wisconsin said, is that of unionism. "The chaplaincy involves in unionism by making the chaplain the spiritual leader of a certain group without regard to denominational lines." He dare not regard those of his own church body as his exclusive charge, nor be passive in dealing with those of another denomination. He must respect the convictions of others. This means, Wisconsin argued, that he may not warn against false doctrine and deviation from the Word. He must offer certain pastoral services to those of other denominations and must function with his spiritual rights impaired or annulled. The chaplain must provide for spiritual ministrations of which he disapproves as being contrary to God's Word. In the general

[11] Ibid., pp. 61-64.

protestant services, those separated by differences of doctrine are united in worship and prayer, and the chaplain is not free in those services to say anything unacceptable to members of other denominations.[12]

Responding for Missouri at this convention on the chaplaincy issue was Martin Scharlemann, who gave personal examples of the evangelism opportunities of the chaplaincy, noting that the chaplain is free to do with the general protestant service whatever he wants. Official regulations guarantee the position of our Synod on worship, and our chaplains are protected to a greater degree than when Wisconsin had chaplains at the turn of the century and during the years prior to 1935, during which Wisconsin had an endorsing agency for military chaplains.[13]

Similarly Scharlemann argued that the military chaplaincy is not a violation of the principle of separation of church and state, for that constitutional principle has the concern of keeping any single or any group of church organizations from receiving state sanction and support. But that is not to say that the government is not interested in religion. Our pledge of allegiance, the slogan on our coins, the tax exempt status of church properties, and the military

[12] Ibid., pp. 74-67.

[13] Ibid., pp. 84-86.

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[12] Ibid., pp. 74-67.

[13] Ibid., pp. 84-86.

chaplaincy all reflect the same interest in religion to undergird the life of the nation.[14]

Missouri had previously defended its position on the military chaplaincy by emphasizing that chaplains have complete freedom of conscience. Chaplains are called by the church which ordains them, not the government. The government commissions the chaplain called and endorsed by the respective church bodies to promote religion and morality in the armed forces. The government is only concerned about the welfare of its men in the service in this life; it is not concerned about questions of the divinity of Jesus, heaven, eternal life, and so on. It is buying a service to contribute toward the morals and morale of its men now. Chaplains are expected to follow their denominational beliefs.[15]

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[14] Ibid., p. 86.

[15] Another Fraternal Endeavor (Issued by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d. [1954]), written by Theo F. Nickel, O. E. Sohn, Martin Graebner [several essays are unsigned], pp. 51-53. Cf. Eugene F. Klug, "The Chaplaincy in American Public Life," Church and State Under God, edited by Albert G. Huegli (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 365-393. This chapter traces the military chaplaincy through the history of the U. S. from George Washington's request for a government salaried military chaplaincy to the time of its publication. It, too, emphasizes that there is no such thing as a non- or inter-denominational chaplain. All are expected to teach and function according to their denominational beliefs.

The Missouri Synod had one chaplain for several months during the Civil War, F. W. Richmond. Carl S. Meyer, editor, Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 236.

At the turn of the century, Missouri Synod records indicate that a Pastor C. J. Broders was a chaplain (Feldprediger) under the jurisdiction of the Southern District with 1281

Scouting

Scouting became an openly controversial subject within the Synodical Conference when Missouri in its 1944 convention resolved that the issue of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation. When subsequent conventions of the Synod reaffirmed that decision,[16] Wisconsin brought the

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Lutheran soldiers under his care. He ministered to 239 in their illness and buried 6. LCMS, Proceedings, 1899, p. 136.

In the mid 1930's an article in the Lutheran Standard promoted Lutheran Naval chaplains in view of the fact that at that time there were only four: three from the ALC, one from ULC. Missouri's Concordia Theological Monthly responded that Missouri had fears that its chaplains would be required "to do something prohibited by their conscience," and there were concerns about the principle of the separation of church and state. A., "Theological Observer: The Duties of a Navy Chaplain," Concordia Theological Monthly, VI (August 1935), 624-625.

In 1935 Synod resolved to appoint a committee to investigate if government assurances about chaplains that "our principles will be honored by the Government," and if so, that an "Army and Navy Board for our Synod" be appointed. LCMS, Proceedings, 1935, p. 133. This committee reported to the Synod's next convention that it "was impressed with the fact that again and again it is emphasized in these documents that the chaplains are to function 'according to their respective creeds or conscientious practice in each case.'" The Synod's committee also "received interpretations personally from the Chief of Chaplains on some of the paragraphs and wording of the regulations which were indefinite and might be variously interpreted." The committee therefore urged that the Synod's previous resolution that an Army and Navy Board be appointed if conditions were favorable be carried out. This was done. LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 161.

In this same line, as early as 1956 the Synod resolved that compulsory church attendance at military academies "is contrary to the true American Spirit and may involve infringement of conscience." LCMS, Proceedings, 1956, p. 763. The Synod's 1965 convention resolved to "underscore the commission's [Armed Services Commission] plea to young pastors under age 33 to seek appointments as chaplains in the armed services and national guard units . . ." LCMS, Proceedings, 1965, p. 189.

[16] In 1932 the Synod's Board for Young People's Work reported on negotiations with Boy Scout executives and the progress made. Synod acknowledged the willingness of Boy Scout

issue to the Synodical Conference where the Missouri and Wisconsin positions were contrasted clearly at its 1952 convention.

Missouri contended that Scoutism is a secular boys' organization designed to promote good citizenship and does not teach religion. Consequently an individual's conscience should not be burdened by making something a sin which is not.

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leaders to remove objectional features and requested the board to continue its work, but could not "endorse the Boy Scout Movement in its present state . . ." LCMS, Proceedings, 1932, pp. 107-109.

In 1938 the Synod resolved in regard to Boy Scouts that: (1) The Synod does not endorse any secular movement or organization; (2) The national headquarters of Scouting has changed its position so that the individual congregation is in complete control of its troop and a troop is thus not required "to take part in any activities which are contrary to our principles;" (3) "Because of the naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement, membership in non-Lutheran or sectarian troops cannot be sanctioned;" (4) It was suggested that the Walther League provide a program to interest the youth and thus counteract the Boy Scout program. LCMS, Proceedings, 1938, p. 341. The Synod declined to change this position on Scouting at its next convention. LCMS, Proceedings, 1941, pp. 418-419.

The following (1944) convention of the Synod adopted the Report of the Bureau of Information of Secret Societies. In regard to Scouting, this report said: "We were unable to find any factors which would violate our principles and have not been able to discover anything in the practices of scouting, as outlined in these handbooks, to which a Christian parent, scoutmaster, or pastor would take exception." "Accordingly, your Committee believes that the matter of scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected." LCMS, Proceedings, 1944, p. 257.

Although a number of subsequent conventions dealt with the matter of Scouting, the Synod repeatedly reaffirmed its 1944 decision. LCMS, Proceedings, 1947, p. 540; 1950, pp. 669-671; 1953, pp. 555-556; 1959, p. 269.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, maintained that the Scouting program contains religious features with which a Christian cannot identify. For example, Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion, endeavors to train character without the motivation of the Gospel, is unionistic in that it obligates the scout to faithfulness in his religion without defining the God he is to serve, and the scout oath is condemned by the Word of God.

After spending almost an entire evening session discussing Scouting and its relation to the doctrines of the oath, natural law, natural knowledge of God, civic righteousness, and unionism, the vonvention resolved that the seminary faculties of the Synodical Conference study the doctrines of natural law, natural knowledge of God, and civil righteousness which are a prerequisite for the solution of the Scouting question.[17]

Since the next convention of the Synodical Conference was that meeting where the issues between Missouri and Wisconsin received extended discussion, Scouting was also treated in essays by both Missouri and Wisconsin. While Missouri had contended that Scouting is a secular organization, Wisconsin argued that although it may be largely a secular organization, it has a religious feature and seeks religious ends, often improper and false. Such essential religious features include the oath or promise "to do my duty to God," the basic

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[17] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1952, pp. 145-148.

idea of the movement that a boy scout cannot become the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligations to God, and the written claim of Scouting that it is nonsectarian in its attitude toward religious training.[18] Countering Missouri's arguments about the natural knowledge of God and His law and civic righteousness, Wisconsin argued that this can

> hardly be stretched so wide that it covers things like regular worship, faithfulness to Almighty God's Commandments, prayer, love to God, all of which are, according to Scouting itself, included in its oath or promise, law and slogan.[19]

In evaluating these religious features of Scouting, Wisconsin noted that the "God" of Scouting is not the Triune God, and any recognition of a God not identical with the Triune God is a sin. Immaterial, Wisconsin said, is Missouri's argument that a deistic concept of God is not required. The point here is of a failure to confess the Triune God. Similarly, scouts promise to do their duty to God by being faithful to God's commandments. An explanation that "It is something to be good, but it is far better to do good," fosters a fulfillment of the law that is self-righteous. There is no reference to repentance or faith. Again, the implication of Scouting that all gods are of equal value and validity, that any kind of worship and duty is good and God-pleasing, is the idea that underlies all unionism.[20]

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[18] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, pp. 69-70.

[19] Ibid., p. 71.

[20] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

Even though the local congregation can superimpose its alterations and corrections on objectionable religious elements in Scouting, it would still, Wisconsin argued, "find itself in the position of sponsoring elsewhere by moral and financial support of Scouting the same objectional religious elements it corrects in the privacy of the church troop . . ." The church troop would then be a contradiction of the confession that "the church owes the world regarding the depravity of natural man, the sin of false worship, the evil of false doctrine."[21]

Finally, responding to a Missouri argument that Scouting has changed, not Missouri, Wisconsin pointed out that as late as 1938 Missouri refused to sanction Scouting because of its "naturalistic and unionistic tendencies," even though the local congregation was assured of local sovereignty of the church troop. This was reaffirmed by Missouri in 1941. When Missouri changed its position in 1944, Wisconsin maintained, all the documents supporting the change from Scouting antedate 1938. Consequently the "naturalistic and unionistic tendencies" prevalent in 1941 are still prevalent, and the Synodical Conference should present a united testimony.[22]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 74-75.

[22] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

Missouri responded to this essay from Wisconsin by pointing out the necessary perspective that Missouri's stand on Scouting is not that of a blanket approval, but "is an attempt to recognize that it is possible under certain conditions for individuals to belong to Boy Scout troops and for congregations to sponsor such troops without compromising their faith." Local situations vary. Where it might not be possible to be a scout without compromising one's faith in Salt Lake City, Utah, for instance, the local situation is quite different in Perryville, Missouri, or Minneapolis, where Lutheranism is strong. That's what Missouri's 1944 resolution means.[23]

At one time, the essayist said, Missouri had five objections to Scouting: The moral and religious purpose of Scouting; the scout oath; the "one-good-turn-a-day philosophy"; the requirement to attend unionistic services; the troop controlled by the local scout council, the sponsoring congregation having only advisory rights. However, in all these areas, Scouting has changed, not Missouri. Scouting now gives the responsibility of selecting the scoutmaster and controlling the local troop to the scout committee of the congregation of which the pastor is a member. It is the obligation of the local group to direct the religious training. In no case is

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[23] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

a boy required to participate in a religious ceremony peculiar to another denomination. The scout oath is notan oath in the religious sense, but is expressly called a "Scout Oath, or Promise." And the "good turn" philosophy can be prevented by proper religious instruction under the auspices of the local congregation. Therefore, Missouri concluded, Scouting is a secular organization and although the possibility of going wrong exists, that is not enough to condemn it as sinful per se. Local conditions are the determinative factor.[24]

In this light Missouri noted also that the Boy Scouts of America does not operate a single scout unit. Scouting is a program available to institutions, principally churches, to use as a part of their own youth program. The national organization only develops the program, maintains standards, provides program helps, trains leadership, develops camping facilities, and provides a means through which institutions that use Scouting for their youth work can work together. The local congregation is to assume responsibility for its scout units and make it an integral part of its religious educational and youth work. For example, the requirements of the Pro Deo et Patria award were noted in detail.[25]

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[24] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[25] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

Speaking to the charge of Wisconsin that Scouting is a religious movement, Missouri responded that it is not in the sense that we use the word religion to refer to the Mohammedan or Hindu religion. Boy Scouts of America does not teach a particular religion and is not concerned with the question of eternal life. Because it has respect to a Supreme Power does not make it any more a religion than the public school system which teaches people to pledge allegiance to "one nation, under God," and the courts of our nation that conclude their oath with "So help me God." None of these three cases mention that God is Triune, yet none of these is necessarily a contradiction of the confession that God is Triune.[26]

Moreover, it was argued, the belief that there is a God lies in the area of civil righteousness, which need not of itself stand in contradiction to the revelation of grace. The interest of Scouting in the existence of God is a concern for civil righteousness just as Jefferson included in the Declaration of Independence and the church's concern for moral responsibility in a community. Civil righteousness can be a part of the Law to serve as a "schoolmaster" that brings to Christ. The "church not only preaches the Gospel but also has an interest in the Law."[27]

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[26] Ibid., p. 83.

[27] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

Finally, it was argued, the scout pledge speaks of a person's honor in the same way as Luther's explanation to the Eighth Commandment.[28]

Missouri Unionism, Such as the NLC Communion Agreement

This same 1954 convention of the Synodical Conference also heard two essays, one each from Wisconsin and Missouri, on other matters causing tension between the two synods. In addition to matters already covered, the Wisconsin essay raised the issues of unionism, the NLC communion agreement, and negotiating with lodges.

Speaking first of the definition of unionism, Wisconsin argued that the definition best expressing what has been understood in the Synodical Conference of what constitutes unionism is not that of the Brief Statement (which actually does not attempt a definition of unionism), but of the Concordia Cyclopedia, which says in part:

> In the light of these [biblical] texts all joint ecclesiastical efforts for religious work (missionary, educational, etc.) and particularly joint worship and mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who confess the truth and those who deny any part of it, is sinful unionism.[29]

Accordingly, Wisconsin argued,

> Unionism is more than the actual practice of church fellowship. It includes prayer fellowship, condoning of error, willingness to compromise, a desire to

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[28] Ibid., p. 84.

[29] Ibid., p. 103.

> hide differences for the sake of outward union or peace; unionism includes all efforts to arrive at agreement at the expense of the truth; it includes cooperation with errorists and evasion of confession of the truth for the sake of a gain in efficiency or an increase in numbers or for any other reason.[30]

From this point of view, Wisconsin criticized Missouri's communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council as joint spiritual welfare work and therefore unionism. It is a violation of a principle whether circumstances are unusual or exceptional or not. If the principle is biblical it should apply whether at home or in camp.[31]

Wisconsin was also sarcastically critical of Missouri's negotiations with lodges. Lodges such as the Masonic Order cannot be made unobjectionable by the elimination or rewording of a few religious features of the order. To be honest Missouri would have to tell them to take away everything religious. To suggest that agreement can be reached by the removal of external features through negotiation is unionistic. "Our call to preach the Gospel does not include the commission to reform worldly organizations so that our church members can join them."[32]

Responding to these charges of Wisconsin, Missouri began with its definition of religious unionism as "church fellowship

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., pp. 107-108.

[32] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

without doctrinal unity."[33] In this connection negotiations with lodges is a matter of witnessing, telling what is needed to be done to remove our objections. This is not unionism, it is witnessing.[34] In the same way, Missouri said that its communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council is just the opposite of unionism because it sets up exactly that recognition that has always been contended for. The normal procedure is to be that members of each group attend the communion services of its own group and not invite the members of the opposite group. Only in exceptional cases when a member of one group seeks communion from the other group is that individual case to be considered by the pastor concerned. If the case is exceptional, then it is agreed that in such cases the synodical membership of the Lutheran serviceman is not to be a required condition for admission to the Lord's Supper. This arrangement, Missouri emphasized, both recognizes that there are exceptional cases and seeks to keep these exceptional cases from becoming the rule.[35]

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[33] Ibid., p. 89.

[34] Ibid., p. 94.

[35] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

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