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THE MISSOURI SYNOD'S UNITY ATTEMPTS DURING THE
POTENIAUER PRESIDENCY, 1911 - 1935

A thesis presented to the faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
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requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the Preface to the Augsburg Confession, the following goal for unity is set forth:

. . . we are prepared . . . to discuss . . . in so far as this can honorably be done, such practical and equitable ways as may restore unity. Thus the matters at issue between us may be . . . discussed amicably and charitably, our differences may be reconciled, and we may be united in one, true religion, even as we are all under one Christ and should confess and contend for Christ.¹

Although this was written by Philip Melancthon to Emperor Charles V in 1530 and applied originally to the differences between certain evangelical principalities and city-states in Northern Germany and the Roman Catholic Church, the goals set forth in this Preface apply to any division that arises within the Church. In seeking unity, the early Reformers set forth the Scriptural principles upon which this unity was to be based. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession reads:

For 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 that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.²

The formulators of the Formula of Concord made it clear that unity was to be based on agreement in doctrine and all of its articles:

We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by

¹From The Book of Concord, Theodore G. Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959, p. 25. (Hereafter cited as BC).

²BC, Augsburg Confession, Article VII, p. 32.

God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments . . .³

True Lutheranism seeks not only the proclamation of the Gospel and the preservation of pure doctrine, but also the true unity of the Church.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the unity attempts of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States⁴ (hereafter referred to as the Missouri Synod) during the presidency of Frederick Pfotenhauer (1911-1935). This period of the Missouri Synod's history has been chosen because it was during these years that American Lutheranism, as a whole, began to consolidate through mergers, amalgamations, and various federations. The synodical alignments and boundaries that exist today in American Lutheranism found much of their early formation during this period of time. In analyzing the Missouri Synod's attitude and involvement in Lutheran unity from 1911 to 1935, this paper will focus specifically on the leadership role of President Pfotenhauer. The President is the chief executive officer of the Synod who exercises supervision over the doctrine which is taught therein, the administration of other synodical officials, and the execution of synodical resolutions. Because the synodical President is elected by a convention of the Synod, his attitude and leadership generally reflect the attitude and intent of the synodical members. This paper will consider whether or not Pfotenhauer, as President of the Missouri Synod, was consistent in applying the Lutheran principles of unity to Missouri Synod's unity attempts.

³BC, Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article X, 7, p. 493.

⁴In 1917, the name of the Synod was changed to the "Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States," and in 1947 it was changed to "The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."

This analysis will limit itself only to the Missouri Synod's unity attempts with other American Lutherans. The Synod was involved with Lutheran churches in other parts of the world. However, an analysis of this kind is beyond the scope of this paper.

The paper will begin with a brief background of the Missouri Synod's unity attempts prior to 1911. Then the Synod's principles of unity as understood by key synodical officials prior to 1935 will be set forth. This will be followed by the main body of historical data to be considered in analyzing Pfotenhauer's leadership role in the Missouri Synod's unity attempts. In so doing, the following will be considered: the merger of the English and the German Missouri Synods (1911), the effects of the Quadricentennial of the Reformation on Lutheran unity attempts, the merger attempt between the Missouri and the Wisconsin Synods (1914-1917), the relation of the Missouri Synod to other Lutherans during World War I, the Intersynodical Conferences (1915-1929), the Missouri Synod's relations with the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church, the attempted merger of all the members of the Synodical Conference (1932-1935), and the Missouri Synod's reaction to proposed discussions with the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America (1935). In addition, information will be provided which illustrates other factors that affected or influenced President Pfotenhauer's leadership role in the Missouri Synod's unity attempts. These include a biographical sketch of Frederick Pfotenhauer, the reactions of the Missouri Synod to a world war that included the ancestral homeland of many of its members, the way in which the Missouri Synod dealt with the language transition and Americanization, and the way in which Pfotenhauer reacted to change.

This writer knows of no current work which bases its analysis of American Lutheran unity attempts on a consistency to confessional Lutheran principles. The major three modern American works which speak to the question of Lutheran unity in some way are The Lutherans in North America by E. Clifford Nelson, ed., Which Way to Lutheran Unity? by John H. Tietjen, and Documents of Lutheran Unity in America by Richard C. Wolf. Wolf endeavors to write without a bias by presenting documents which include doctrinal and confessional materials. In his introductions and editorial comments, however, he seems to write without the question of confessional consistency in mind. Tietjen and Nelson, on the other hand, place more emphasis on ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic, ecclesiastical, and chronological factors than on doctrinal or confessional principles. For these men, the success or failure of Lutheran unity is judged on its pragmatic results as union is based on the least common denominator.⁵

⁵ Although pragmatism is part of the basis for the modern approach toward Lutheran unity, it is not the entire basis. Beginning with the [F. H.] Knobel - [C. M.] Jacobs statement, "The Essentials of the Catholic Spirit in the Church," in Documents of Lutheran Unity in America by Richard C. Wolf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 301-12, many Lutherans based Lutheran unity on a narrow understanding of Augsburg Confession, Art. VII. This made Lutheran unity depend only on agreement in teaching of the Gospel in the narrow sense (the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior). Traditionally, this was taken to mean Gospel in the broad sense (all articles of faith, BC, Formula of Concord, Epitome Article V. 6.). With this new understanding, it was unnecessary to seek agreement in all matters of doctrine and further doctrinal statements were considered to be contrary to the spirit of the Lutheran Confessions. Many proponents of this view also combine the understanding of the invisible Church with the visible church, basing unity on the fides qua creditur instead of the fides quae creditur. John H. Tietjen, Which Way To Lutheran Unity? (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, reprinted 1975), pp. 150-59. The difference in the understanding of Lutheran unity that exists today is clearly set forth in the Lutheran Council in the USA document, The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church, 1978.

In obtaining data for an analysis of Pfothenhauer's leadership role in Missouri Synod unity attempts, this writer has sought to use primary source material. However, the research for this paper was severely hampered by the fact that the vast majority of Pfothenhauer's presidential papers was burned (see Appendix A). Therefore, it was necessary to depend on the personal records of other individuals, as well as the Proceedings of the synodical conventions and secondary source material. The Concordia Historical Institute contains the records of several Missouri Synod officials who worked under President Pfothenhauer. From their records came the majority of the documents which are cited in this paper. In addition, the archives of the American Lutheran Church (see Appendix B), the Lutheran Church in America (see Appendix C), and the Wisconsin Synod (see Appendix D) have been checked for Pfothenhauer correspondence. Throughout the paper, documents and resolutions are often quoted verbatim in order to give as objective a presentation as possible.

This paper will show that President Pfothenhauer was consistent in applying Lutheran principles of unity to the Missouri Synod's unity attempts. It will be seen, however, that other factors came into play which affected the outcome of those unity attempts. These factors include the actions of the other Lutheran church bodies, disagreements that were openly aired before the public, and language differences. It will be shown that, while Pfothenhauer did not engage directly in unity endeavors, he led the Missouri Synod in its unity attempts by delegating the responsibility to selected individuals and overseeing their actions. These individuals were directly responsible to Pfothenhauer for decisions and guidance. Pfothenhauer further believed that he was responsible to the

Delegate Synod for direction and guidance. And the Delegate Synod, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, acted out the will of God for His Church through its vote. Pfotenhauer believed that the will of God could be determined through the vote of a delegate synod. Yet, the individual delegates were guided in their decisions by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace.

Pfotenhauer was a man of honor and deep confessional principles. He held a strong devotion to the tradition of his German Lutheran heritage. On the one hand, this enabled him to lead the Missouri Synod consistently in its unity attempts, in maintaining pure doctrine, and in reaching out to German immigrants with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, this often kept the Missouri Synod from adapting to a changing American society.

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF BACKGROUND

From its very inception, the Missouri Synod fostered the idea of Lutheran unity, true Lutheran unity based on agreement in doctrine and practice. One can even assert that the founding of the Synod was a union effort in that a group of Lutherans from Missouri joined with Lutherans from Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan.¹ As the Saxons from Missouri reached out through Der Lutheraner, the Loehes responded with a call for union, and after a series of meetings the Missouri Synod was formed on April 26, 1847, in Chicago, Illinois.²

The Synod's first President, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, sincerely desired Lutheran unity hoping for the formation of one large, united, orthodox Lutheran Church on American soil.³ In order to attain this goal, "free conferences" (1856-1859), colloquies (1866-1872), and the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (1872-) (hereafter referred to as the Synodical Conference) were employed.⁴

¹August Suelflow, "Walther's Significant Contributions to Lutheranism in America," Proceedings of the 11th Convention of the Montana District of the Missouri Synod, October 4-5, 1961, p. 36.

²Walter A. Baeppler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 84-97.

³W. G. Polack, The Building of a Great Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 117.

⁴In response to the "Definite Platform" (1855), Walther called for "free conferences" of all who subscribed unconditionally to the

The Synodical Conference became the vehicle for Lutheran unity based on agreement in doctrine and practice. It was initially composed of six Midwestern confessional Lutheran synods who subscribed unequivocally to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions: the Ohio Synod, Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, Minnesota Synod, Illinois Synod, and Norwegian Synod.⁵ To stress the ultimate goal of uniting all Lutherans in America, Article III of the Synodical Conference Constitution stated that the Conference's purpose was:

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

Yet, the Synodical Conference had only limited powers and with reference to the authority of the new federation Article IV of the constitution stated:

Unaltered Augsburg Confession. Four such free conferences were held: Columbus, Ohio (October 1856); Pittsburgh, Pa. (October 1857); Cleveland, Ohio (August 1858), Ft. Wayne, Ind. (July 1859). The conferences were free in that they were open to all Lutherans and the participants were not officially to represent their church bodies. Erwin L. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856-1859," Concordia Theological Monthly 15 (August 1944):529-63. A series of seven colloquies led to the formation of the Synodical Conference. Colloquies differed from free conferences in that colloquies were held between the Missouri Synod and another specific synod. Polack, p. 112. Although not active today, the Synodical Conference has never been officially dissolved. By 1963 both the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Synod withdrew, leaving only the SELC (Slovak Synod) and the Missouri Synod. In 1969, the SELC became a nongeographical District of the Missouri Synod.

⁵A. W. Meyer, "The Organization of the Synodical Conference," in Ebenezer by W. H. T. Dau, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. 321-32.

The Synodical Conference is solely a counselling body in all matters in which it has not been granted power of decision by all the constituent synods; the entirety of the synods alone can decide concerning the reception of corporate church bodies into the Synodical Conference, and in addition such admission can take place only through the consent of all the united synods; it is to provide for the holding of regular joint pastoral conferences through the mediation of the presidents of the individual synods; none of the represented synods can enter into official church relations with other church bodies without the agreement of all the represented synods.⁶

As soon as the Synodical Conference was formed, Walther and others began working toward a union. Initial talks were frustrated due mainly to the difference of opinion with regard to the outward aspects of the church. The Wisconsin Synod differed from the Missouri Synod in this matter. However, Wisconsin was also hesitant because she was fearful of being consumed by her larger sister, the Missouri Synod.⁷ Both the Missouri and Ohio Synods pushed for a union which included the formation of "state synods" and one or two joint seminaries in order to alleviate the competition as each synod tried to get new congregations to join its body. When this proposal appeared at the 1877 convention of the Synodical Conference, both the Minnesota and Wisconsin Synods expressed dissatisfaction and reluctance. To keep the discussion going, a new committee was appointed allowing for more Wisconsin Synod representation.⁸ A new "state

⁶Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 196-97.

⁷David Schmiel, "The History of the Relationship of the Wisconsin Synod to the Missouri Synod until 1925" (S.T.M. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1958), p. 30.

⁸The first plan for state synods urged the smaller synods to join either Missouri or Ohio who would then further organize and join together. This plan was rejected by the smaller synods who feared they would be consumed by Missouri in its drive for expansion. Roy Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod during the Second Twenty-Five Years of Its Existence 1872-1897," (Th.D. Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946), pp. 49-55.

synod/joint seminary" plan was received favorably at the 1878 Synodical Conference convention and all of the Synodical Conference delegates were to take the plan to their respective church bodies for approval.⁹ However, beginning in 1878, building through 1879, and exploding in 1880, a controversy over the doctrine of predestination rocked the foundations of the Synodical Conference and destroyed Walther's hope of one united, orthodox Lutheran church in America.

Even though the synods of the Synodical Conference embarked on this unity endeavor with great zeal in June of 1872, a decade did not pass before this unity was torn by controversy. The Predestinarian Controversy divided the Synodical Conference, causing both the Ohio and the Norwegian Synods to withdraw (the Ohio Synod in 1881 and the Norwegian Synod in 1883).¹⁰ The major points at issue were well stated by Walther:

1) Whether God from eternity, before the foundations of the world were laid, out of pure mercy and only for the sake of the most holy merit of Christ, elected and ordained the chosen children of God to salvation and whatever pertains to it, consequently also to faith, repentance, and conversion; or 2) whether in His election God took into consideration anything good in man, namely the foreseen non-resistance, and the foreseen persevering faith, and thus elected certain persons to salvation in consideration of, with respect to, on account of, or in consequence of their conduct, their non-resistance, and their faith.¹¹

The Ohio Synod and many members of the Norwegian Synod held to the latter position, insisting that the phrase intuitu fidei be

⁹The new plan urged the smaller synods to join one of the three bodies: Missouri, Ohio or Wisconsin. Ibid., pp. 55-60.

¹⁰William J. Schmelder, "The Predestinarian Controversy: Review and Reflection," Concordia Journal 1 (January 1975):26-27.

¹¹C. F. W. Walther, The Controversy Concerning Election (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881), p. 3.

maintained.¹² The Missouri Synod, supported by the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods, held to the first position so that sola gratia would be maintained.¹³ The controversy resulted in much animosity with fierce polemical discharges being fired back and forth in various church periodicals.¹⁴

From 1882 until the turn of the century, the Predestinarian Controversy continued to simmer and no official discussions were conducted between the Missouri and the Ohio Synods. However, in 1902 a free conference of individual pastors from various synodical affiliations was held in Beloit, Wisconsin. The conference members called for official intersynodical conferences to discuss doctrinal differences that existed between the Synodical Conference and the Ohio and Iowa Synods. The first intersynodical conference was held in Watertown, Wisconsin, April 19-30, 1903. Subsequent meetings were conducted at Milwaukee (1903), Detroit (1904), and Ft. Wayne (1905 and 1906). The various conferences were attended by hundreds of pastors, but no agreement was reached.¹⁵

¹²Intuitu fidei means "in view of faith." It was held that God elected man in view of his faith. This position was also held by the Iowa Synod.

¹³The Illinois Synod was absorbed by the Illinois District of the Missouri Synod in 1879 in anticipation of the "State Synod" plan. Baep-ler, p. 162.

¹⁴Roy Suelflow, pp. 129-35. Schmelder, p. 24. John W. Behnken, This I Recall (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 159.

¹⁵John H. Tietjen, Which Way To Lutheran Unity? (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, reprinted 1975). Carl S. Meyer, "The Missouri Synod and Other Lutherans Before 1918" in Moving Frontiers, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 286. Hereafter cited as Moving Frontiers. Fred W. Meuser, The Formation of the American Lutheran Church (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1958), p. 115.

At the intersynodical discussions which took place between 1903 and 1906 it became evident that, in addition to the doctrine of predestination, the question of Scriptural interpretation was at issue. Does one use the analogie fidei to harmonize rationally God's general decree of universal grace with His decree of election?¹⁶ Throughout all five of the conferences, the Ohioans and the Iowans stood together in defense of the intuitu fidei phrase, claiming the support of the analogia fidei. This common stand helped pave the way for closer ties between those two synods.¹⁷

While unity efforts between the Missouri Synod and the Ohio and Iowa Synods proved to be a failure, doctrinal agreement was achieved with two newly formed Lutheran church bodies: the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri and Other States (commonly referred to as the English Missouri Synod) and the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church.

During the 1890s, the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States (the German Missouri Synod), extended the hand of friendship and assistance to the scattered Slovak Lutheran churches in America.¹⁸ When the Slovak Synod was organized, September 2, 1902, it declared itself to be one in doctrine with the German Missouri Synod. A few years after its organization, the Slovak Synod considered

¹⁶ Moving Frontiers, pp. 286-87.

¹⁷ Meuser, p. 115.

¹⁸ J. L. Neve and Willard D. Allbeck, History of the Lutheran Church in America, 3rd ed. (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1934), p. 249.

applying for membership in the Synodical Conference.¹⁹ Although certain differences in practice remained, the German Missouri Synod agreed to the Slovak's membership with the hope that these differences would soon be straightened out:

Beschlossen: dass die Slovakisch-Evangelische Augeburgische Confessions-Synod in die Synodelkonferenz ausgenommen werde in der Hoffnung, dass es ihr mit Gottes Hilfe gelingen werde, vorhandene Differenzen in der Praxis zu beseitigen.²⁰

In August 1908, the Slovak Synod was unanimously accepted into membership by the Synodical Conference New Ulm Convention.²¹

The General Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri and Other States had been founded in August 1872. In 1887, this small scattered group of English speaking, confessional Lutherans petitioned the much larger, German Missouri Synod for membership. However, the German body declined its request because, "according to the constitution, our Synod is purely German. Therefore, it is hardly reconcilable with this condition that we establish an English district in our midst." The English Conference was then encouraged to form its own English Lutheran Synod and apply for membership to the Synodical Conference.²²

¹⁹George Dolak, "A History of the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America, 1902-1927" (Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1953), p. 98.

²⁰Resolved: that the Slovak Evangelical Synod of the Augsburg Confession be admitted into the Synodical Conference in the hope that it will succeed in removing present differences in practice with God's help. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 27th Regular Meeting, in Fort Wayne, Ind., 1908 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1908), p. 144. The differences that continued to exist consisted of the Slovak Synod's participation in the Slovak Evangelical Union. The Slovak Union, a broader organization of Slovak congregations including pastors and congregations outside the Slovak Synod, was reported to have been involved in unionistic and syncretistic activities. Dolak, pp. 88-95.

²¹Ibid., p. 102.

²²Roy Suelflow, pp. 352 and 384-85.

This it did and in 1890 the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States joined the Synodical Conference.²³

Although full doctrinal agreement had been achieved between the German and English Missouri Synods, the barrier of a language difference remained. In 1899, it had been agreed among the members of the Synodical Conference that German congregations should seek German synodical affiliation and that English congregations should seek English synodical affiliation. However, by 1905, practically all of the German Missouri Synod's Districts were engaged in English mission work. Undoubtedly, this must have frustrated some of the members in the English Synod. But, at the 1905 German Synod's convention, President A. W. Meyer of the English Synod requested the German Synod to again consider admitting the English Synod as a nongeographical district. Apparently, the German Synod was reluctant to take this step. However, Professors F. Bente and J. Herzer and Pastor C. F. Obermeyer attended the convention of the English Synod in 1905 and reported that the German Synod had resolved:

- 1) That the official language on the floor of Synod remain, as heretofore, the German; 2) that the German Synod, however, is now ready and willing to receive²⁴ into its membership English speaking congregations and pastors.

In 1908, the German Synod resolved that union with the English Synod was desirable and appointed a committee to confer with the English Synod. The meeting was held during the English Synod Convention, July 7-13, 1909, and the joint committee set forth the so-called Cleveland Articles of Union:

²³ Moving Frontiers, pp. 286-87.

²⁴ Baepler, p. 254.

1. That the English Synod transfer its publishing business and its book trade to the German Synod, but that a committee, the majority of its members being members of the English District, shall be elected in order that such a committee may have such literature as hymnbooks, . . . etc, prepared for the special needs of the English District.
2. That the Lutheran Witness be made the official English church paper for the entire Synod, but that the editor be elected from the English District or that the English District be at least equally represented on the editorial committee.
3. That the English language may be used by the members of the English District at the meetings of Synod and that at least a brief summary of the minutes be read and printed in the English language.
4. That the Mission Board of the English District be permitted to open English missions wherever it thinks such be necessary, provided that it properly respect the divine principles of congregational rights (church membership) and the law of Christian charity.
5. That as a rule, entire English congregations affiliate with the English District but that finally every congregation may decide for itself which District it will join, provided that Christian charity be not offended against and that congregations shall not be blamed if for special reasons they do not follow this rule.
6. That the Concordia College at Conover, N.C. be transferred to the Synod.
7. That the question when and how the English District shall meet shall be decided by the District itself.²⁵

The congregations of the English Missouri Synod were given until January 1, 1911 to discuss the merger and respond to their President.²⁶ In January 1911, President H. P. Eckhardt and Vice-President George A. Romoser met in Washington, D. C. to count the votes. There were thirty votes in favor of union as a district, three and one-half in favor of

²⁵"Convention of Synod," The Lutheran Witness 28 (July 22, 1909): 323.

²⁶Ibid.

total amalgamation, eleven and one-half opposed to union of any kind, and eight failed to record a vote.²⁷

For the members of the English Synod, the merger was not a question of doctrine, nor of church polity: in both they were at one with the larger German Synod.²⁸ The issue was a matter of policy. Financially, the English Synod was having trouble supporting its college in North Carolina, as well as its various publications.²⁹ In addition, the German Synod was already engaged in much English mission work. For both synods, merger was the best policy.

In the era of Missouri Synod history in which Pastor Frederick Pfotenhauer served as President (1911-1935), the merger between the English and German Missouri Synods had actually already taken place. During the Synod's 1911 convention where the union was adopted, Pfotenhauer was the acting President in the absence of Dr. Francis Pieper. His actual term of office did not begin until after the convention.

Prior to the 1911 convention, the German Missouri Synod had also been reaching out to other Lutheran bodies, both within and without the Synodical Conference. Yet, in discussions with the Ohio and Iowa Synods, no agreement had been reached on the doctrine of election nor on the role of the analogia fidei in interpreting Scripture. Both Missouri and Ohio

²⁷"Synodical Union," The Lutheran Witness 30 (February 2, 1911): 19-20. It was set forth that a vote which was not cast would be recorded as a vote for union. "Union," The Lutheran Witness 29 (February 3, 1910): 17.

²⁸"Synodical Union," The Lutheran Witness 29 (March 3, 1910): 36-37.

²⁹William Dallmann, "Why I'm for a District," The Lutheran Witness 29 (June 23, 1910):99-100.

believed that church-fellowship could only be based on agreement in doctrine and practice. For both the Missouri and the Ohio Synods, the Predestinarian Controversy was still too close at hand.

As the twentieth century unfolded, Lutherans throughout America were caught up in movements toward Lutheran unity. Many of the unions that were going to take place would be governed by compromise and a minimalizing of confessional principles. How would the Missouri Synod respond to these movements? What would be Missouri's concept of Lutheran unity? How would Missouri's President lead the Synod with respect to Lutheran unity? These are the major questions that will be considered in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

MISSOURI'S CONCEPT OF UNITY UNTIL 1935

In the previous chapter, we noted that from its inception the Missouri Synod has striven for Lutheran unity, unity based on agreement in doctrine and practice. This concept of unity, although considered to have been too stringent by many outside the Missouri Synod, was maintained on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.¹ This chapter will consider how this concept of unity found expression in the writings of several theologians within the Synod from before its founding until 1935. In so doing, it must be remembered that this concept of unity was not framed within a vacuum. The German Lutheran immigrants who came to the New World found a totally different ecclesiastico-political situation from what they were accustomed to in their homeland. From the near failure of the Saxon colony in Perry County to the struggle over Americanization which faced a predominantly German enclave in the 1920s and 1930s, the Missouri Synod has had to answer questions concerning her own identity as a church, doctrinal unity, union with other Lutherans,

¹The Missouri Synod has traditionally based its doctrine of church fellowship on such Scriptural passages as Matt. 7:15; John 8:31-32; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:17-21; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 John 9-10, as well as Article VII of the Augustana and Formula of Concord, Epitome, Arts. V.6. and X.7. In addition, Missouri Synod theologians have often used the support and testimony of the Early Church Fathers, Martin Luther, and later orthodox Lutheran theologians.

what it is that constitutes an orthodox and a heterodox church, and the nature of unionism.

Walther -- What Is the Church?

When the Saxon immigrants settled in Missouri in 1839, they did not set out immediately to answer the questions of how to establish a church apart from the state;² of how to maintain one's confessional identity in a land of religious pluralism; of how to establish Lutheran unity with Lutherans already living in America. A much more pressing issue confronted the Gesellschaft when their appointed bishop and leader, Martin Stephan, was deposed for apparent sexual immorality. Not only was the entire emigration brought into question, but more distressing, their identity as a church, the validity of their sacraments, the validity of their pastors' calls were challenged. To these questions the emerging ecclesiastical leader, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, responded in April 1841 at Altenburg, Missouri with eight theses on the Church. As we will see, it is from the Missouri Synod's doctrine on the Church that her teaching of church fellowship and her concept of unity are derived.

Walther's Altenburg Theses state:

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

²This had actually been settled on the Saxon Lutherans' trans-Atlantic voyage aboard the Olbers when they appoint Martin Stephan as bishop of the Gesellschaft on January 17, 1839. Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 215.

- II. The name of the true Church belongs also to all those visible companies of men among whom God's Word is purely taught and the holy Sacraments are administered according to the institution of Christ. True, in this Church there are godless men, hypocrites, and heretics, but they are not true members of it, nor do they constitute the Church.
- III. The name Church, and in a certain sense, the name true Church, belongs also to those visible companies of men who have united under the confession of a falsified faith and therefore have incurred the guilt of a partial departure from the truth; provided they possess so much of God's Word and the holy Sacraments in purity that children of God may thereby be born. When such companies are called true churches, it is not the intention to state that they are faithful, but only that they are real churches as opposed to worldly organizations.
- IV. The name Church is not improperly applied to heterodox companies, but according to the manner of speech of the Word of God itself. It is also not immaterial that this high name is allowed to such communions, for out of this follows:
1. That members also of such companies may be saved; for without the Church there is no salvation.
- V. 2. The outward separation of a heterodox company from an orthodox Church is not necessarily a separation from the universal Christian Church nor a relapse into heathenism and does not yet deprive that company of the name Church.
- VI. 3. Even heterodox companies have church power; even among them the goods of the Church may be validly administered and the keys of the kingdom of heaven exercised.
- VII. 4. Even heterodox companies are not to be dissolved but reformed.
- VIII. The orthodox Church is chiefly to be judged by the common orthodox, public confession to which its members acknowledge and confess themselves to be pledged.³

The early Saxon immigrants had faced an identity crisis, but Walther showed that even if this relocated assembly of believers had certain problems in their midst, they still were to be given the name

³ Ibid., pp. 523-25. The original German appears in J. F. Koestering, Auswanderung der saechsischen Lutheraner im Jahre 1838; ihre Niederlassung in Perry-Co., Mo., und demit zusammenhaengende interessante Nachrichten (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1867), pp. 51-52.

"church." Their orthodoxy was to be judged by the "common, orthodox, public confession to which its members acknowledged."

Even before the Missouri Synod was formed in 1847, its doctrine of the church and ministry was called into question by the leader of a Prussian Lutheran immigrant group who had formed the Buffalo Synod, Rev. J. A. Grabau.⁴ In response, Walther issued "The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry" or "Kirche und Amt" in 1852. Part one sets forth nine theses concerning the doctrine of the Church in which Walther clarifies and readdresses the position set forth in the Altenburg Theses:

I. The church in the proper sense of the term is the congregation of saints, that is, the totality of all those who have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel out of the lost and condemned human race, truly believe in Christ, and are sanctified and incorporated into Christ through this faith.

II. No godless person, no hypocrite, no unregenerate person and no heretic belongs to the church in the proper sense of the term.

III. The church in the proper sense of the word is invisible.

IV. It is this true church of believers and saints to which Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And it is therefore the proper and only possessor and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly goods, rights, powers, offices, etc., which Christ has procured and which are found in His church.

V. Although the true church in the proper sense of the term is essentially invisible, its presence can nevertheless be definitely recognized, and its marks are indeed the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution.

⁴ Grabau held that the true visible character of the church is identified with the office of the ministry. Walther on the Church in Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, August R. Suelflow, ed. 6 Vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), trans. by John M. Drickamer, p. 13. Hereafter cited as Walther on the Church.

VI. In an improper sense Holy Scripture calls "church" (the universal church) also the visible totality of all the called, that is, of all who confess and adhere to the proclaimed Word and use the holy sacraments, which consists of good and evil persons; so also it calls "churches" (particular churches) its several divisions, that is, the congregations that are found here and there, in which the Word of God is preached and the holy sacraments are administered. It does so because in these visible assemblies the invisible, true, and properly so called church of believers, saints, and children of God lies hidden, and outside the assembly of the called no elect are to be looked for.

VII. As visible congregations which still essentially have the Word and the sacraments bear the name "church" according to God's Word because of the true invisible church of true believers which is found in them, so also they possess the authority which Christ has given to His whole church, on account of the true invisible church which is hidden in them, even if there were only two or three (believers).

VIII. Although God gathers for Himself a holy church of elect persons also there where His Word is not taught in complete purity and the sacraments are not administered totally according to the institution of Jesus Christ, if God's Word and the sacraments are not denied entirely, but both essentially remain; nevertheless, everyone is obligated by his salvation to flee all false teachers, to avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and to acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox pastors, wherever he finds such.

A. Also in heterodox and heretical churches there are children of God, and also there the true church is made manifest by the pure Word and sacraments which still remain there.

B. Everyone is obligated by his salvation to flee all false teachers and avoid fellowship with heterodox congregations or sects.

C. Every Christian is obligated by his salvation to acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox pastors, wherever he finds such.

IX. Absolutely necessary for the obtaining of salvation is only the fellowship in the invisible church, to which alone originally all the glorious promises regarding the church have been given.⁵

In 1866, Walther delivered an essay to the synodical convention which further identified the nature of the church and the Synod's position on church fellowship. Much of Walther's essay "The Evangelical Lutheran Church, the True Visible Church of God on Earth" reiterates

⁵Ibid., pp. 17-72.

what was said in "Kirche und Amt." Therefore, only selected theses will be given:

- II. While the only holy Christian church as a spiritual temple cannot be seen, but only be believed, there are nevertheless unmistakable outward marks by which its presence can be known. These marks are the pure preaching of the Word of God and the uncorrupted administration of the holy sacraments.
- IV. Scripture calls even such visible communions "churches" as are guilty of a partial deviation from the pure doctrine of the Word of God as long as they still retain God's Word essentially.
- V. Fellowships which, though retaining God's Word essentially, nevertheless err obstinately in fundamentals of the Word of God are, insofar as they do this, not churches in the sense of Scripture but factions or sects, that is heretical fellowships.
- VIII. While ecclesiastical writers at times call those fellowships true or real churches that retain God's Word essentially, in distinction from those that are not churches, nevertheless a true visible church in the strict sense of the term, in opposition to heterodox churches or sects, is only that in which God's Word is proclaimed in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.
- X. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the sum total of all who without reservation profess the doctrine which was restored by Luther's Reformation and was in summary submitted in writing to the emperor and the realm at Augsburg in 1530, and was treated and expounded in the other so-called Lutheran symbols, as the pure doctrine of the divine Word.
- XI. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is not the one holy Christian church outside of which there is no salvation, although it has never separated itself from the same and professes no other.
- XII. If the Evangelical Lutheran Church has the marks that it preaches the Gospel in its purity and administers the sacraments according to the Gospel, it is also the true visible church of God on earth.
- XIII. The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes the written Word of the apostles and prophets as the sole and perfect source, rule, and norm, and as the judge of all doctrine; (a) not reason; (b) not tradition; (c) not new revelations.
- XXIV. The Evangelical Lutheran Church practices fellowship of confession and Christian love with all who are one in faith with it.⁶

⁶Ibid., pp. 156-92.

Although Walther's primary concern was that the church remain orthodox (God's Word be taught and maintained in its truth and purity and the sacraments be administered rightly), he readily encouraged Lutheran unity:

As every true Evangelical Lutheran local congregation has the same official Confessions as the whole true Evangelical Lutheran Church, it should also diligently seek to be united with the latter also in life and with it to speak the same thing, in the same mind and in the same judgment.⁷

Yet, Walther also urged congregations and their members to avoid those who differ doctrinally:

Lastly, the congregation shall also see to it that neither the congregation nor individual church members enter into any church union with unbelievers or heterodox communions and so become guilty of religious unionism in matters of faith and the church.⁸

That Walther considered certain Lutheran church bodies to be heterodox is quite evident from his 1860 article in Lehre und Wehre, "Do We Draw the Lines of Fellowship too Narrowly?," in which he takes issue with Pastor Wilhelm Loehe and the Iowa Synod because of their chiliastic beliefs:

Thus our synod has expressed itself on three matters: 1. what the chiliasm that must be rejected and condemned is; 2. that the synod, following the practice of the whole Lutheran Church in its best days, will deny the hand of brotherhood and church fellowship to all who persist in this error; 3. but that only those are to be regarded as persistent, that is, stiff-necked chiliasts, with whom the church's

⁷C. F. W. Walther, "The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Congregation Independent of the State," published in 1964, in Walther on the Church, p. 150.

⁸Ibid., p. 144. Here Walther uses the term "unionism" in a way that is not precisely the same as the historic German usage. "Unionism" had referred to the mixing of different creeds, particularly Lutheran and Reformed, in an effort to bring about union through compromise. It had traditionally been linked with the "Unierte" church of Frederick Wilhelm III of Prussia in 1817. Walther is using the term to refer to any joint activity with heterodox churches, whether they call themselves Reformed or Lutheran.

available resources for turning them from their error to the truth have been exhausted and have proved fruitless.⁹

With regard to Walther's concept of Lutheran unity, it can be seen that fellowship was to be based only on agreement in doctrine and practice. This teaching was rooted in the doctrine of the Church, particularly in the distinction between the invisible Church and the true visible church. The marks of the true visible church are the pure teaching of God's Word and the correct administration of the Sacraments. There are Christians in heterodox communities, but by God's command believers are to avoid heterodox church bodies because of their false teaching. A church body is to be considered heterodox only when it persists in its false doctrine after due consideration.

Eckhardt -- What Is Unity?

Von Ernst Eckhardt was a Missouri Synod pastor who served parishes in Nebraska from 1891 to 1921 before becoming the statistician for the Missouri Synod (1921-1938).¹⁰ Eckhardt had a great talent for cataloguing large amounts of information. While serving on the prairies of Nebraska, he catalogued all of the articles that had appeared in Der Lutheraner and Lehre und Wehre, developed an eight volume homiletical outline on numerous doctrines, and included the catalogue of periodical sources in the margin of his homiletical outline as an index for further

⁹ Editorials from "Lehre und Wehre", trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman, in Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, August Suelflow, ed., 6 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981, p. 98. First appeared in Lehre und Wehre, 6 (February 1860):33-47.

¹⁰ Erwin L. Lueker, ed., Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, revised edition 1975), p. 254.

study. Eckhardt called this voluminous work Homiletisches Reallexikon.

Eckhardt's work represented the doctrine which had been taught in the Missouri Synod for over sixty years. However, unlike Walther, Eckhardt did not deal with the question of unity by first discussing the doctrine of the Church. Instead, he asked the question directly: what is unity (Einigkeit)?

Unity is not a matter of externals such as language, outward orders of worship, fixed constitutions or mutual cooperation in mission. True unity is unity in the Spirit (the new life created by the Holy Spirit), in faith, in the area of conviction, and in doctrine.¹¹ Unity in Spirit and in doctrine are linked closely together and give rise to the concept of "Church":

It is only one faith, thus Christians must be one in faith. If they wish to propagate their faith, then they must be one in doctrine. If they wish to profess their faith, then they must be one in confession.

For true unity, concord is necessary in all articles of faith. Unity is necessary for the continuance of the church.¹²

Eckhardt points out that unity is disrupted because of the enemies of true unity: the devil and our flesh.¹³ Unity is a reality in heaven, but the reason it is not accomplished here on earth is our flesh and its susceptibility to temptation.¹⁴ Thus there are various opinions

¹¹Von E. Eckhardt; Homiletisches Reallexikon, 8 vols. (St. Louis: Success Printing Co., 1908), vol. C-F, pp. 665-66. The analysis of Eckhardt's Homiletisches Reallexikon has been done with the help of a translation of this section provided by Mark S. Willig.

¹²Ibid., pp. 666-67.

¹³Ibid., p. 672.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 666.

and denominations within Christendom which can only be attributed to the devil and the folly and unbelief of man. "The enemy has done that."¹⁵

The Christian is not to submit to this disunity. The sacrifice of truth and rightness does not help the church. Unionism does not cover up differences, but only makes them permanent. "The differences remain in the pulpit, in writings, in hearts." Therefore, the church should not arrange unity where none exists: through pulpit exchanges, exchange of delegates, common prayer at free conferences.¹⁶

That God desires true unity comes from all passages in which it is said that man is supposed to accept the whole Word of God (Deut. 12:32; Jer. 23:28; Matt. 5:19; Acts 20:20; 1 Pet. 4:11); that one should strive after true unity (John 17:11, 20-23; Rom. 12:6, 16; 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 13; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:10; 1 Pet. 3:8); that one cast out false teachers (Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10); that false unity will be reprov'd (Rev. 2:14).¹⁷ However, this unity cannot be achieved

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 670.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 667-68. This rejection of prayer fellowship at free conferences is a change from Missouri's position at the first free conferences (1856-1859) where all of the free conferences were opened with some form of devotional exercise which usually included a hymn, a prayer and the confession of the Apostles Creed. Erwin L. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856-1859," Concordia Theological Monthly 15 (August 1944):543. It was during the Predestinarian Controversy at a meeting of all the seminary faculties of the Synodical Conference at Milwaukee, January 1881, that the Missouri Synod theologians refused prayer fellowship to other Lutherans with whom they were discussing doctrinal problems. This was done because Missouri's opponents had charged them with false doctrine (crypto-Calvinism) and had refused to withdraw the charges. Roy Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod during the Second Twenty-Five Years of Its Existence 1872-1892, (Th.D. Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946), p. 156.

¹⁷ Eckhardt, pp. 668-69.

through a church hierarchy or other ecclesiastico-political means, nor by any human statutes.¹⁸ True unity comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as worked by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. "There is nothing which can make men united except the Gospel." The unity in faith and doctrine is given outward expression when one unites himself with a congregation and synod, fighting together under one banner and living together in harmony.¹⁹ True unity is maintained when God's Word dwells plentifully among the fellowship of believers.²⁰ When a dissension in doctrine occurs, then one should begin doctrinal correction.²¹

Congregations and synods are to strive for unity with such church bodies which are not one with them in doctrine. This is to be accomplished through witnessing verbally and in print, through debates, and through free conferences. In this endeavor, we must guard against ambition, haughtiness, hate, internal strife, and unnecessary verbal disputes; instead devoting ourselves to love, humility, and forbearance.²²

Pieper -- What Is The Difference Between
Orthodox and Heterodox Churches?

After the death of Walther in 1887, Franz August Otto Pieper served as the Missouri Synod's leading theologian, particularly in the field of dogmatics. Pieper had begun as Walther's understudy at Concordia Seminary in 1878, and served as a professor at that institution during the stormy years of the Predestinarian Controversy. From 1887 until his death in 1931, Pieper was President of Concordia Seminary,

¹⁸Ibid., p. 667.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 672.

²⁰Ibid., p. 673.

²¹Ibid., p. 674

²²Ibid., pp. 675-77.

and during that time, from 1899 to 1911, he served as President of the Synod. Throughout his career, Pieper was often chosen to represent the Missouri Synod in doctrinal discussions with other Lutheran church bodies.²³

Like Walther, Pieper approached the question of unity by beginning with the doctrine of the Church. Yet, Pieper did not have to deal with the problem of the church's identity; that had been answered by Walther. Instead, Pieper asked the question, "What is the difference between orthodox and heterodox churches?" In answering this question, Pieper set forth the following six theses:

- I. Every man's first principal concern should be, that he belong to the Communion of Saints, that is, to the 'Invisible' Church.
- II. The Divinely ordained 'external' form of the Church is its 'orthodoxy'. 'Heterodox' church bodies have their existence only by God's permission.
- III. It is, therefore, not a matter of indifference which church group a Christian joins; but he has God's earnest 'command' strictly to distinguish between orthodox and heterodox churches, and, avoiding all church fellowship with the heterodox, to adhere only to the orthodox Church.
- IV. Likewise, only in the orthodox Church is God 'given the honor' which He requires; and, only in it 'are souls rightly cared for'. Fellowship with heterodox churches militates against God's honor, and is a constant danger for the soul.
- V. We should, therefore, regard membership in the orthodox Church not only as our duty, but also as the greatest privilege and highest honor, even when the orthodox Church outwardly bears a very humble form.
- VI. The reasons which have been advanced for joining heterodox church bodies, and for remaining in them, partly sound very pious; but they are considered in the light of God's Word, altogether

²³Lutheran Cyclopedia, p. 621.

invalid, and originate in our blind, conceited, selfwilled, and presumptuous flesh.²⁴

Unlike Walther and Eckhardt, Pieper placed more emphasis on avoiding heterodox church bodies and less emphasis on the achievement of unity. A possible reason for this could be the Predestinarian Controversy and the failure of many unity attempts which Pieper witnessed in his lifetime.

After the failure of the Intersynodical Conferences in 1929, President Frederick Pfotenhauer appointed a committee headed by Pieper to formulate theses presenting the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. In 1932, the "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod" was adopted as Synod's official position.²⁵ This was the first official position of Synod on church-fellowship to be adopted by a synodical convention, and it stated:

28. On Church-Fellowship. -- Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4,11; John 8,31.32; 1 Tim. 6,3.4, all Christians are required by God 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. We repudiate 'unionism', that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as the real cause of the origin and continuance of divisions in the Church, Rom. 16,17; 2 John 9.10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2, 17ff.

²⁴ Franz Pieper, The Difference Between Orthodox and Heterodox Churches, 2nd ed. (Coos Bay, Oregon: Private Printing by E. L. Mehlberg, 1981), pp. 7-37. Dr. Pieper gives a similar, but more complete presentation in Christian Dogmatics, 4 vol. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3:419-27.

²⁵ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 35th Regular Meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 15-24, 1932 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), pp. 154-55.

29. The orthodox character of a Church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is 'actually' taught in its publications. On the other hand, a Church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20,30; 1 Tim. 1,3.²⁶

Graebner -- What Is Unionism?

From 1913 until his death in 1950, Theodore Graebner was a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, during which time he also served as editor of the Missouri Synod's English organ, The Lutheran Witness.²⁷ As editor of The Lutheran Witness during the years when the Missouri Synod was still largely a German speaking church body (1913-1920), Graebner became Missouri's English voice, reporting on the American religious scene, particularly Lutheranism within this country. The mergers which took place, the documents and articles that were issued from other Lutheran bodies gave Graebner opportunity to comment and set forth the Missouri Synod position. As one goes through the boxes of records which he has left behind, one realizes that it was to Theodore Graebner that countless pastors in the Missouri Synod wrote for advice on doctrinal matters, especially with regard to fellowship and unionism.²⁸

²⁶"Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," Concordia Theological Monthly 2 (June 1931):409.

²⁷Lutheran Cyclopedia, pp. 346-47.

²⁸Theodore Graebner papers, Box 107, File 1, Concordia Historical Institute (hereafter cited as C.H.I.), St. Louis, Mo. This box of Graebner manuscripts contains numerous letters from people reporting unionistic activities among Lutherans both within and without the Missouri Synod. Some are very cogent while others are rather extreme. With the movement to Americanize the Missouri Synod which eventually

With the influx of reports and questions concerning unionism, Graebner felt the need to respond. In January 1933, Graebner wrote a set of thirteen theses on the nature of unionism which were apparently delivered at a pastoral conference:

1. Spiritual fellowship consists in the spirit-wrought union of one God, one faith, one baptism, active in mutual recognition and joint religious undertaking.
2. The admonitions to confess the entire truth and to avoid those who depart from the doctrine of the apostles certainly demands spiritual separation (because of the absence of spiritual fellowship).
3. Such absence of fellowship would be denied where orthodox and heterodox churches, and members of such unite in spiritual activities. Refusal to deny fellowship to such is unionism.
4. Such unionism is sinful because it permits man to say Yea where God has said Nay, and to say Nay where God has affirmed.
5. Such unionism offends against the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture because it takes for granted that the true doctrine cannot be established from the Word of God.
6. Inasmuch as such unionism presumptuously sets aside the majesty of God's revelation in Scripture, it is a sin against the First Commandment.
7. Our first duty over against errorists is to instruct them, if and when we have opportunity, and to testify against their perversion of Scripture. Since fellowship with them would necessarily be viewed as a condoning and tolerance of their departure from the sound doctrine,

elected John W. Behnken in 1935, pastors were encouraged to reach out to other people besides German immigrants. Many Missouri pastors did this by conducting services at nursing homes, university chapels and other institutions. Some Missouri pastors reacted by calling this activity unionism. In response to one such report, Graebner wrote: "I can see as much danger from handling our Lutheran principles in a mechanical way as I can see in indifference to these principles. Any kind of church practice that is not based upon Scripture . . . is going to breed radicalism, liberalism, and modernism. Certainly I appreciate the sincerity of those who wish to limit our public testimony by some kind of rigid and formal system. But it is not evangelical nor a Lutheran type of practice." Letter from Theodore Graebner to Theodore Schliepsick dated November 18, 1936.

we would confirm them in their error and this would constitute a sin against the command of Love.

8. An offense against Love is involved also since by fraternizing errorists we are likely to cause our fellow-Christians to take offence, either by causing them to doubt our sincerity of profession or by leading them into associations in which their own faith may suffer shipwreck.

9. Fellowship with those who are united with us in the faith and testify to such union cannot be sinful unionism per se, since unity in faith is not only a condition but the only condition of fellowship; though such fraternizing may become sinful per accidens, as when actual offense is given.

10. Those holding the orthodox doctrine but outwardly members in an unorthodox body are in statu confessionis. This status is maintained so long as there is continued testimony on the part of such against the error of the unorthodox body and as long as such testimony is received. Separation is not demanded immediately by God's Word, but after admonition has proven fruitless. Hence those applying such admonition to their erring associates are not to be treated as outside the fellowship.

11. Those who are united with us in faith but out of carnal weakness refuse to sever fellowship with errorists are not themselves to be treated as errorists -- since the profession of false doctrine can be established only by their own lips -- but as disobedient to the command "avoid them" and for this reason are not to be accorded the status of brethren. To do so would be to offend against the law of love, since our fraternal attitude would confirm them in their weakness.

12. Until those who by their own testimony are in agreement with us, have given proof that they recognize and testify against the error of their organization, or of those who are its official spokesmen, they are not to be treated as carnally indifferent but must be given opportunity to enter first of all into the status confessionis. To do otherwise would be to reject them without admonition, and this would be against the law of Love and against the Scriptures.

13. The issue of joint prayer is one with the issue of unionism. It would argue a lack of fear of God and of Christian love, if we were to pray jointly:

- a. in congregational or other public worship with gatherings of those who hold membership in a heterodox church;
- b. in conference with those who cling to any form of error and meet us for the purpose of defending error;
- c. in conference with those who held our faith but do not testify against and reject the error of their own church body which they have recognized;

d. in conference with those in statu confessionis whose connection with an unorthodox body is known and whose status confessionis is not publicly known (element of offense).²⁹

In 1935, Graebner published The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays in which he outlined the difference between the Missouri Synod and the other American Lutheran church bodies. In defense of the Missouri Synod position on altar- and pulpit-fellowship, Graebner issues the following 'apology':

What is the alternative to our rules of altar- and pulpit-fellowship? I can see only confusion and multiplied offense. Those outside the Synodical Conference are not 'excommunicated' by us when we refuse the hand of fellowship. We simply feel that for relations of fellowship more is needed than the belief that there are Christians among them. Are we to recognize the good 'Christians' in the Norwegian Church or Swedish Church and refuse to recognize the 'Christians' in the Baptist and Presbyterian churches? Are we to fellowship Protestant Christians, but not Catholic children of God? Where is your logic? Indeed, where is your liberal spirit? To fellowship Lutherans only is far too narrow a principle for me if it is on the basis of the presence of 'Christians' in those synods. It would be an insult to the Catholic and Methodist 'Christians' to make so restricted a rule of fellowship. But as for acting on our convictions regarding some one's personal Christianity, why, we do not even receive men into 'our' churches on such a basis, but solely on the basis of correct 'profession' and a practice consistent therewith. This is not only logic, but fairness and true charity -- 'love that transcends the narrow boundaries of creed while observing limitations which Christ Himself has established for our communing of others.'³⁰

Missouri's Concept of Unity Summarized

The Missouri Synod's concept of unity is based on the unity that exists in the Church, the unity of all true believers in Jesus Christ. However, the faith of believers, the fides qua is subjective and so it is

²⁹Theodore Graebner, "Unionism an Analytical Study," Box 107, File 8, C.H.I.

³⁰Theodore Graebner, The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), p. 106.

invisible. The outward expression of unity, therefore, must be based on the believer's confession of faith, the fides quae, which is objective. Because Scripture requires believers to teach God's Word in its truth and purity and urges them to avoid false teachers, fellowship, the outward expression of unity, can only be based on agreement in doctrine and practice. If members of an orthodox church were to fellowship with a heterodox body, the truth would be compromised and error would be condoned.

Yet, the Missouri Synod also believed that unity is something to be sought after where doctrinal disagreement exists. In this endeavor, one is to witness to the truth both orally and in writing whenever possible and engage in free conferences so that true unity may be achieved.

Missouri's concept of unity was not based on the formation of an ecclesiastico-political organization; it was not based on the concept of relativism. Missouri's concept of unity was based on the belief that the truth of God's Word in Holy Scripture, the doctrines contained therein, have been presented in such a way that they may find clear expression in human confessions for the glory of God and the edification of His people. Any outward unity that was to exist was to be based on agreement on that doctrine from God's Word and the way that doctrine is practiced in human life.

From Walther's theses on the Church to the Graebner statements of the 1930s, Missouri's basic position on Lutheran unity did not change. It may be true that Walther, in his earlier years, was willing to pray with other Lutherans in free conference while later he and other Missourians refused. However, it must be remembered that this change was brought

on by heated polemics and charges of false doctrine. The situation that existed at those first free conferences (1856-1859) was to be completely altered after 1881. After the polemics and accusations had basically subsided, many third and fourth generation Missourians forgot the willingness of their founding father's to pray with other Lutherans and an excessively stringent position on prayer-fellowship was maintained. However, both before and after the Predestinarian Controversy and continuing through 1935, the Missouri Synod believed that unity and fellowship could only be based on agreement in doctrine and practice.

CHAPTER III

A NEW PRESIDENT IS ELECTED THE 1911 ST. LOUIS SYNODICAL CONVENTION

Setting the Stage

Until 1911, the Missouri Synod had remained a solid German enclave. Although English speaking congregations had been permitted to join the Synod in 1905, the official language of the church body remained German and most of its members were first or second-generation German immigrants.¹ Yet, the Synod had not remained stagnant. With the large influx of German immigrants in the latter part of the nineteenth century and a continuous home mission outreach program, the Missouri Synod grew to be the largest Lutheran church body in America.² By 1911, the congregations of the Synod held a total membership of 917,309 souls.³

Throughout this period of growth, the German Missouri Synod had remained a largely rural church body in an English speaking country that was quickly becoming urban.⁴ While isolation and travel that was limited

¹O. H. Pannkoke, A Great Church . . . Finds Itself (Quitman, Georgia: Private Printing, 1966), p. 17.

²J. L. Neve and Willard D. Allbeck, History of the Lutheran Church in America, 3rd ed. (Burlington, Ia.: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1934) p. 190.

³The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Statistical Yearbook (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1912), p. 174. Throughout America there existed 21 distinct and autonomous Lutheran church bodies carrying out their work in 18 different languages. Pannkoke, p. 14.

⁴Ibid., p. 18.

to wagons and buggies was the predominant situation confronting many in the Missouri Synod,⁵ the rest of the country faced a swell of technological advances as invention crowded upon invention. Industry was developing rapidly; the "horseless carriage" was now the automobile;⁶ through the efforts of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, rail travel was made economically reasonable;⁷ and the experimental flight in aviation at Kitty Hawk in 1903 had developed into International Aviation Meets and the formation of airway companies by 1910.⁸ While the people of the Missouri Synod were considering the effects of an English speaking District on their German speaking church body, the people of the nation were soon to struggle through a three candidate election (Taft, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson) involving such issues as nationalism, woman's suffrage, antitrust legislation, and progressivism.⁹ Within four years, the members of the Missouri Synod would be forced to deal with the beginnings of a World War that would involve their homeland. What would have a profound effect on the Missouri Synod in the next ten years was the fact that the United States was changing rapidly, but the Synod was responding very slowly.

⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶ Foster Rhea Dulles, The United States Since 1865 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 220.

⁷ Ibid., p. 200.

⁸ F. H. Stadler, St. Louis (St. Louis: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1962), p. 83.

⁹ Dulles, pp. 206-07.

From 1899 to 1911, Dr. Franz Pieper had served as both President of the Missouri Synod and President of Concordia Seminary.¹⁰ Pieper was the first second-generation leader of the Missouri Synod. A Pomeranian by birth, Franz Pieper had come to America at age eighteen and had studied for the ministry at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. After serving parishes in Wisconsin for three years, Pieper accepted a call to teach at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1878, where he became Dr. Walther's understudy. It was during his early years as professor that the Predestination Controversy broke out within the Synodical Conference, and Pieper became intricately involved in defending the position of the Missouri Synod. With the death of Walther in 1887, Pieper succeeded him as the President of Concordia Seminary. In addition, the 1899 Delegate Synod elected Pieper to succeed the retiring Dr. H. C. Schwan as President of the Missouri Synod.¹¹ Although the Synod was small in many respects (as compared to today) and loosely organized, it was growing fast and the administration of a 170-190 student seminary¹² and a 723,240-878,654 soul church body¹³ was too much for anyone to handle. Apparently, there were even complaints from within the Synod because Pieper was spending more

¹⁰Carl S. Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 438. Hereafter cited as Moving Frontiers.

¹¹W. G. Polack, The Building of a Great Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 173-74.

¹²Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 304.

¹³The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Statistical Yearbook 1900-1910.

time on Seminary affairs than on synodical business.¹⁴ Be that as it may, the task proved to be too difficult. In the early part of 1911, Pieper's health failed and he was sent to Europe for rest and recovery.¹⁵ Because of this, President Pieper was not present at the 1911 synodical convention of the Missouri Synod. First Vice-President Frederick Pfothenhauer read the President's Report.¹⁶ At the same convention, it was resolved to sever the general presidency from any pastorate or professorship, and Pastor Pfothenhauer was elected full-time President of the Missouri Synod.¹⁷ Before getting into the highlights of the 1911 St. Louis Convention, however, it might do well to become acquainted with the background of the man who became President at that convention.

A Brief Biographical Sketch of Frederick Pfothenhauer

Frederick Pfothenhauer was born at Altencelle, Hanover, Germany on Good Friday, April 22, 1859. His father, Pastor Hermann Pfothenhauer represented the ninth successive generation of Lutheran ministers,¹⁸ a succession that went all the way back to the Reformation. When Frederick was fifteen years old, his father died, leaving his mother to raise nine children. This proved to be an oppressive situation for the whole family.

¹⁴Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., December 11, 1981. Manuscript located at C.H.I.

¹⁵Theodore Graebner, Dr. Francis Pieper (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1931), p. 47.

¹⁶The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 28th Regular Meeting at St. Louis, Missouri, May 10-20, 1911 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1911), p. 18.

¹⁷Graebner, Pieper, p. 47.

¹⁸Henry Grueber, "F. Pfothenhauer: The Man and the Leader," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 13 (April 1940):22.

However, Mother Pfotenhauer wished her boys to continue their education and preparation for the ministry. With the encouragement of his mother, Frederick enrolled in the school of Pastor Brunn who was gathering and preparing young men to go to America and there be trained in the service of the Missouri Synod.¹⁹

In April 1875, Frederick Pfotenhauer joined eleven other pupils at Pastor Brunn's school in the valley of the Lahn at Steeden, all of whom were preparing to go to America. By August 1875, preparations were completed and Frederick said good-by to his family and homeland. Ten Steedeners traveled to the Missouri Synod college at Fort Wayne, Indiana.²⁰

Frederick studied at Ft. Wayne for two years. There the German language was the medium for both instruction and conversation. Under Rector Schick, Frederick learned the Greek and Latin classics, and from Prof. W. Stellhorn he was taught the rudiments of the Hebrew language.²¹ In September 1877, Frederick began his ministerial training at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he was greatly influenced by Walther.²² During Pfotenhauer's years at Concordia Seminary, Walther lectured on various theological themes, but probably the most outstanding at this time were his lectures on Law and Gospel. Pfotenhauer made a stenographic record of these lectures, and after Walther's death they were published.²³

¹⁹E. A. Mayer, "Dr. Friedrich Pfotenhauer (1859-1939)," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 13 (April 1940):3.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²¹Ibid., p. 5.

²²Grueber, p. 22. Professors Walther, Schaller, and Gunether were the only instructors at Concordia Seminary at that time.

²³Mayer, p. 5.

In 1880, at the age of twenty-two, Frederick Pfothenhauer was graduated from Concordia Seminary. However, before entering the ministry, young Frederick returned to Hanover to visit his family. Upon his return, Candidate Pfothenhauer was issued a call to a congregation in Odessa, Minnesota, as well as a call to several families in the Dakota Territory. On November 7, 1880, the twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity, Pastor Frederick Pfothenhauer was ordained and installed by Pastor H. Vetter.²⁴

During his years as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church at Odessa and traveling missionary throughout the Dakotas and Montana, Pastor Pfothenhauer encountered harsh conditions, especially in his travels. Both shelter and worship services were often found in sod huts. Blizzards and swollen rivers made journies risky.²⁵ At Odessa, Pastor Pfothenhauer lived in what has been termed an "old shack." During the second year of his ministry, an addition was built, and it was here that the young pastor brought his young bride, Helene Brauer, daughter of Pastor E. Z. Brauer of Crete, Illinois. While Frederick was on his mission journeys, Helene would serve as substitute teacher at Odessa.²⁶

²⁴ From the 1860s through the 1880s a great stream of emigrants from Germany was pouring into the western part of Minnesota and the Territories of Dakota and Montana. Pastor H. Vetter had been engaged as a traveling missionary in this area since 1872 and had organized a number of congregations and preaching-stations. Two of these congregations had sent a call to the Commission on Distribution of Calls for candidates, and it was this call which was assigned to Frederick Pfothenhauer. In addition, the Mission Board of the Northwest District also instructed Pfothenhauer to explore the territories of Dakota and Montana in order to gather and organize the unchurched Lutherans. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

²⁵ F. Albers Hazen, "Reminiscent of Dr. Pfothenhauer," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 13 (April 1940):117-19.

²⁶ Mayer, pp. 10-11.

After seven years at Odessa and the organization of several congregations and preaching stations throughout the Dakotas and Montana, the hardships of pioneer life proved too much for Pastor Pfothenhauer and his health failed. The doctor demanded a long period of rest, and so Frederick took his family to visit his mother and other relatives in Germany.

Upon his return to the United States, Pfothenhauer received a call to Lewiston, Minnesota. Located in the Southeastern part of the state, Lewiston provided a more settled field of ministry. The congregation at Odessa gave Pastor Pfothenhauer a peaceful dismissal and in December 1888 he was installed at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lewiston. Within the next few years, Pastor Pfothenhauer became secretary of what was then the Northwest District and counselor for his circuit. When his congregation was host to the District convention in 1891, Pfothenhauer was chosen President of the largest district in the Missouri Synod, comprising the states of Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, as well as Central and Western Canada. While continuing as District President, Pfothenhauer accepted a call to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Hamburg, Minnesota, located about thirty miles west of Minneapolis. Here Pastor Pfothenhauer was installed on October 7, 1894.²⁷ In 1908, Pastor Pfothenhauer was elected to the position of First Vice-President of the Missouri Synod, a position he would hold for only three years. At Synod's St. Louis Convention in 1911, Pastor Pfothenhauer became President of the Missouri Synod.²⁸

In contrast to the academic leadership that had preceded him, President Pfothenhauer represented more of a grass-roots ministry, much

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²⁸ Grueber, p. 23.

like the pastoral leadership that President Schwan²⁹ had typified. With the missionary experience on the Great Plains, the pastoral experience at congregations in Minnesota, the leadership and administrative skills demonstrated as District President and First Vice-President, Pastor Frederick Pfothenauer represented the kind of leader the Missouri Synod now wanted. He shared all the confessional principles of his immediate predecessor, yet with a much simpler understanding. Pastor Pfothenauer's greatest joy in life was bringing the Gospel to "poor neglected souls."³⁰ Yet, Pfothenauer also maintained a strong devotion to his native tongue. His major missionary emphasis had been toward German speaking Lutherans who had settled on the Plains.³¹ This parochial German attitude would be the source of many problems for the Missouri Synod in the years that followed. In 1911, however, the German Missouri Synod was about to take a bold step forward. At the convention in St. Louis, the German Synod was to gain an English District.

The Merger Between the English and German Missouri Synods

In 1911, things were fairly calm in St. Louis. The city was still basking in the glory of the 1904 World's Fair, which made St. Louisans immensely proud of their city. Like the country, St. Louis was growing with an increase in business, industry, and transportation.

²⁹Henry C. Schwan was the third man to serve as President of the Missouri Synod (1878-1899). Unlike Walther and Pieper who had spent much of their ministry as theological professors, Schwan had served much of his ministry in the parish setting.

³⁰Mayer, p. 10.

³¹Ibid., p. 6.

The city's streets bustled with automobiles, horse and buggies, and trolley cars (over 300 miles of track were in use).³² This was the setting for the 1911 conventions of both the German and the English Missouri Synods. This was the city chosen for the merger of the two Lutheran church bodies.

Because Pfotenhauer was acting President at the 1911 convention, in the absence of Pieper, the merger between the English and German Missouri Synods actually did not take place during his term of office. However, Pfotenhauer did chair the convention, and one of the first orders of business was the merger. The German Synod met from 10-20 May at Holy Cross Lutheran Church.³³ The English Synod began its convention simultaneously at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. On Thursday, May 11, the German Synod voted to accept the Cleveland Articles of Union (see pages 14-15) with the following understanding:

As regards Point 1: The publications in question are subject to revision by the theological faculty at St. Louis, and the English District is to assume the financial responsibility of such publications in the same manner as is now done in similar instances by our German Districts.

As regards Point 4: The phrase: "With due regard to the principles of Christian love," embraces the following, viz., that new English congregations shall not be organized without previous conference with the congregations affected.³⁴

³² Harry M. Hagen, This Is Our . . . St. Louis (St. Louis: Knight Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 417-24.

³³ 1911 Proceedings, p. 1.

³⁴ The committee of the German Synod expressly declared that the English word "conference" and the German word "auseinandersetzung" do not imply that the permission of German congregations must be received. Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 256.

As regards Point 5: We hold that also such of our congregations as have become entirely English should remain in affiliation with the respective Districts, and we shall advise such congregations accordingly.

As regards Point 6: The (English) District, however,³⁵ is to have due regard to chapter III, par. 4, of our Constitution.

As regards Point 8: Charter and deed are to be examined. The Delegate Synod is to determine the future status of the institution.³⁶

A committee of Professors W. H. T. Dau and A. W. Meyer, Pastor H. B. Hemmeter, Mr. Th. F. Lamprecht and Mr. H. Thiemeyer took the German Synod's resolutions to the English Synod.³⁷ A joint committee met on Saturday, May 13 to go over the terms. The English Synod then resolved that the German Synod be notified officially of the vote in favor of District union since the Cleveland Articles of Union had not been changed essentially.³⁸

The union of the two church bodies was formally consummated on Monday, May 15, at 4:30 P.M.³⁹ The English Synod marched as a body from Our Redeemer Lutheran Church to Holy Cross where they were received at the door by the German Synod's committee and escorted to seats of honor. The English District was formally welcomed in English by the Rev. A. Biewend of the German Synod. To this, President Eckhardt of the English District responded:

³⁵Chapter III, Par. 4, of the Missouri Synod Constitution held: "The Delegate Synod holds triennial conventions. The District Synods hold annual conventions in the interval; however, each District meets at different times. There are no conventions of Districts every third year." Ibid.

³⁶1911 Proceedings, p. 33.

³⁷Ibid., p. 31.

³⁸Baepler, p. 256.

³⁹Ibid., p. 257.

Our final vote on this union proposition was not unanimous. A few votes were recorded in the negative. But these were cast by delegates who felt that they must refer the matter back to their congregations. And such were their final declarations that we have every reason to hope and trust that not one of our congregations will be lost to us.

Mr. President, I have the honor and pleasure to formally announce the final decision of our Synod as being favorable to District Union. And we have come here in a body to ratify, in this general meeting, the common resolution of both bodies.⁴⁰

The English addresses were followed by a German address spoken by the English District's First Vice-President, Rev. F. Kuegele. Pastor Kuegele gave a brief history of the English Missouri Synod and expressed his joy and thanks that both the English and the German Missouri Synods were now joined together.⁴¹ To this, the newly elected President Pfotenhauer responded:

Der heutige Tag ist ein Tag grosser Freude fuer die englische und deutsche Missourisynode. Nicht insofern, als wir uns heute zum erstenmal als Brueder begruessen und als Brueder zusammensitzen -- wir sind immer Brueder gewesen, Kinder ein und derselben Kirche --, sondern insofern ist der heutige Tag ein Tag grosser Freude fuer beide Synoden, als wir von heute an gemeinsam miteinander ein und derselben Weg gehen wollen, den wir fuer ueberaus ersprieselich halten fuer die Arbeit unserer lieben Kirche in diesem weiten und herrlichen Lande, das unser and unserer Kinder irdisches Vaterland ist.⁴²

⁴⁰ 1911 Proceedings, p. 36.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 37

⁴² "The present day is a day of great joy for the English and German Missouri Synods. Not in so far as we are for the first time today welcoming (one another) as brothers and sitting together as brothers -- we have always been brothers, children of one and the same church --, but in this respect the present day is a day of great joy for both synods, in that from today on we are able to go one and the same way in common with one another, which we hold (to be) extremely fruitful for the work of our beloved church in this broad and magnificent land, which is ours and our children's earthly fatherland." Ibid., p. 38. It should be noted that here Pfotenhauer recognizes that unity is not brought about by an ecclesiastical organization, but already existed by virtue of the common teaching.

Following the addresses, the entire convention joined in Luther's German rendering of the Te Deum Laudamus and the "Our Father." "Henceforth, then there is no longer an English Synod of Missouri, but an English District of the German Missouri Synod."⁴³

The English District during Pfothenhauer's Presidency

The English District became a very important part of the German Missouri Synod since its language was the language of the United States. Yet, the Germans were very reluctant to give up their 'Muttersprache'. During the Pfothenhauer presidency, English became the predominant language, but not by virtue of the English District's influence. The change was wrought in the course of world and national events.

At the 1911 synodical convention, a committee consisting of President Pfothenhauer, Professor Dau, English District President Eckhardt, and English District Vice-President Romoser had been appointed to facilitate a smooth merger transition.⁴⁴ It had been decided at the 1911 convention to publish an abridged version of the Synod's convention proceedings in English. The 1914 synodical convention maintained that position stating:

The English Report is not as yet to be as voluminous as the German. The agreement of 1911 is to hold good that at least brief minutes of transactions shall be read and printed.⁴⁵

⁴³ "At Home: The Convention of Synod," The Lutheran Witness 30 May 25, 1911):84-85.

⁴⁴ 1911 Proceedings, p. 40.

⁴⁵ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 29th Regular Meeting at Chicago, Illinois, May 6-16, 1914 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914), English minutes, p. 39.

The official language of Synod continued to be German. However, the 1914 convention did resolve to publish a new agenda in both German and English.⁴⁶

World War I had a profound effect on the Synod and its use of the German language. It was not until 1926, however, that the Synod resolved to allow the proceedings to be published complete in both German and English and the business of the synodical conventions to be conducted in both German and English. It was the English District congregation of Our Redeemer, St. Louis which presented the following memorial before the 1926 St. Louis Convention, which was adopted:

WHEREAS, English is the official as well as the business language of our country; and

WHEREAS, It repeatedly becomes necessary to produce, or place in evidence, the synodical proceedings, in which cases an abridged report of the proceedings, such as has been our wont to produce, will not serve the purpose and a German edition will not be understood; and

WHEREAS, Reliable statistics establish beyond a doubt that a substantial majority of the members of Synod today prefer the English language; and

WHEREAS, There are today a very large number of members, especially among our young people, who cannot read and understand the German language; and

WHEREAS, The fullest degree of good will and support on the part of these English-speaking and English-thinking members cannot be expected unless they are properly and sufficiently informed; finally

WHEREAS, Such full and complete information cannot be gleaned from an abridged edition of the synodical proceedings; therefore we respectfully submit the following resolution for your consideration and eventual adoption: --

Resolved, That our official proceedings be printed in the English and in the German languages in parallel issues.⁴⁷

⁴⁶The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 29th Regular Meeting at Chicago, Illinois, May 6-16, 1914 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914), German minutes, pp. 126-27.

⁴⁷The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 33rd Regular Meeting at St. Louis, Missouri, June 9-18, 1926 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1926), p. 149.

It was the Southern District of the Missouri Synod that memorialized the Synod to change the official language of the triennial conventions from German to English. However, the following resolution was adopted:

The conditions of Synod have not changed materially in the last three years. Our Church is still bilingual in the true sense of the word. We, therefore, recommend that both languages be used at synodical sessions. This includes: --

1. That we have a German-English service at the opening of synod.
2. That a summary of the President's report be given also in the English language;
3. That all motions and committee reports be presented Synod in both languages.⁴⁸

As English became the predominant language throughout the Synod, the English District was repeatedly urged to amalgamate with the Synod's geographical districts. In 1923, the Western District petitioned the Synod to take such steps as would "effect the amalgamation of all congregations now belonging to the English District with the respective Districts in the territory in which they are located." Whereupon the Synod passed the following resolution:

Since all Districts of Synod are becoming more and more English in their work, we do not deem it wise to reject said memorial outright, but believe this proposal should come from the English District and therefore ask it kindly to discuss this matter.⁴⁹

At the 1926 St. Louis Convention, the English District responded to the Synod as follows:

Pursuant to your honorable body's request that our English District give the matter of amalgamation earnest consideration, we beg leave to report that this had been done. At our convention in Cincinnati, in 1924, our District resolved that a committee be appointed

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 150-51.

⁴⁹ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 32nd Regular Meeting at Fort Wayne, Indiana, June 20-29, 1923 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), pp. 45-46.

to study the question of amalgamation earnestly and diligently and report its recommendation to our convention to be held in 1925. This committee was duly appointed and placed the following resolutions before our convention at Buffalo, N.Y., which was subsequently passed by unanimous vote: "After mature and serious study of the question of a dissolution of our District and amalgamation of our congregations with other Districts of our General Body we beg leave respectfully to reply that we cannot find in the premises a warrant for a proposal on our part for amalgamation."⁵⁰

The California and Nevada District presented a memorial calling for amalgamation at the 1926 convention. But, the Synod's Committee 13 referred the California and Nevada District's memorial to the foregoing resolution of the English District and the matter was dropped.⁵¹

The subject of the amalgamation of the English District did not come up again until the 1932 Milwaukee Convention of the Missouri Synod. Both the Northern Illinois District and the South Wisconsin District passed memorials regarding the dissolution of the English District.

Therefore, Synod adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Practically all the congregations of our Synod are now bilingual, with the English language predominating; and

WHEREAS, the amalgamation of the English District congregations with the respective synodical Districts in which they are located would result in closer fraternal relations; and

WHEREAS, Such merger would make for a more unified policy in the various endeavors of our church-work; and

WHEREAS, The proposed amalgamation would obviate the inconvenience to which the brethren of the English District are now subjected in attending District, conference, and board meetings and would at the same time materially reduce their expenditures for travel and the work of the various District boards; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod be requested to appoint a committee which is to draw up the reasons in favor of the amalgamation of the congregations of the English District with the respective synodical District in which they are located and to instruct this

⁵⁰ 1926 Proceedings, pp. 151-52.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 152-53.

committee to take up with the English District the question of amalgamation at its next convention.⁵²

President Pfotenhauer appointed a committee of O. H. Schmidt, F. H. Lindemann, E. T. Lams, Arth. F. Eickhoff, and Walter H. Loeber who attended the 1933 convention of the English District. However, the English District responded:

Inasmuch as the declarations of many congregations and pastors made to the assembled committee and its individual members have convinced us that the time for such action has not yet arrived, be it hereby resolved: --

1) That in our opinion the dissolution of our English District and the amalgamation of our congregations with other Districts would at this time be premature;

2) That we assure the Delegate Synod that we shall keep the matter in mind; and when in our opinion the time for such action has arrived, we shall not neglect so to inform the Delegate Synod.⁵³

In response to the persistent rejection of the Synod's request for dissolution by the English District, the 1935 Cleveland Convention passed the following resolution:

Whereas the reason for the formation and existence of a separate English District, namely, the language, no longer exists because practically all other Districts of Synod are carrying on their work almost exclusively in the English language and there now exist more than 1,400 congregations outside of the English District that work exclusively in English; and

Whereas an amalgamation will make for closer fraternal relations and contacts among our pastors and congregations and result in a more closely knit synodical body and firmer structure of the whole organization, tending toward consummation in higher degree of some of the aims for which Synod was organized and for which it conducts its work today, and also will make for the saving of much time and money; and

Whereas the matter of amalgamation has been before Synod and has been thoroughly discussed repeatedly ever since 1923;

⁵²The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 35th Regular Meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 15-24, 1932 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932, pp. 162-64.

⁵³The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 36th Regular Meeting at Cleveland, Ohio, June 19-28, 1935 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), pp. 198-99.

Therefore your Committee is of the opinion that the time for the amalgamation of the congregations of the English District with other Districts has fully arrived and that such amalgamation will be most expedient and salutary for both the English District and for other Districts of Synod.

Your Committee therefore recommends that the President of Synod appoint a committee to confer with duly appointed representatives of the English District and work out with them an equitable and profitable solution of the whole question to the end that the amalgamation, if possible, be accomplished by the next convention in 1938.⁵⁴

The English District never did dissolve and amalgamate with the geographical Districts of the Missouri Synod. Because President Pfothenhauer's records were destroyed, it is hard to say where he stood on this issue. He was most likely in favor of the amalgamation. However, President Pfothenhauer never pushed for things too hard, always maintaining the position "Let the Synod decide."⁵⁵ It might be said that the later persistent rejection of amalgamation by the English District was brought on by the District's pride and English self-identity, and this may have been in direct response to the Missouri Synod's earlier German parochial attitude.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 201.

⁵⁵Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981.

CHAPTER IV

A PRELUDE TO THE 1917 QUADRICENTENNIAL OF THE REFORMATION

One of the most influential factors which provided an impetus for Lutheran union in the twentieth century was the Quadricentennial of the Reformation in 1917. It not only served to bring about a renewed recognition of the Lutheran heritage and Lutheran theology, but also caused many in the twenty-one different Lutheran church bodies that existed in America to look around and reach out in the hope of attaining Lutheran unity. As preparations for the celebration were begun, many thought it only natural that all Lutherans celebrate together, regardless of existing differences in doctrine. Some saw the Quadricentennial as an occasion for all Lutherans in America to unite into one large American Lutheran church body. From this movement came the union of the Norwegian synods, the formation of the United Lutheran Church in America, the organization of the National Lutheran Council, the amalgamation of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States, and the intersynodical discussions between the Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, Missouri, and Wisconsin Synods.

Early Preparations by Other Lutherans

Preparations for the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation were begun as early as 1909 when the General Council took action to enlist the General Synod, the United Synod South, and other Lutheran bodies

in a joint celebration. However, it was not until September 1, 1914 that the first meeting of the General Committee representing the three Eastern bodies was held at Atlantic City. The President of the General Council, Dr. Theodore Schmauk, became chairman of the committee and headquarters were established in Philadelphia.¹

The General Committee of the Eastern Lutheran bodies was actually a Joint Committee comprised of smaller committees from the General Council, General Synod, and United Synod South. This Joint Committee was then divided into three sub-committees: Committee on Literature and Publicity, Committee on Public Meetings, and Committee on Finance. It was hoped by these Eastern Lutherans that, "the Lutheran Church in this country will make such a showing before herself and before the rest of the world as will open the eyes of many."² The Joint Committee set forth the following objectives:

A slogan -- To celebrate the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and to hasten the Transformation of the Twentieth.

This celebration should be constructive, with special emphasis on the spiritual. It should revitalize the whole church life, and powerfully influence our civic life.

We should be positive. Lay more stress on what Protestantism has done in four hundred years than on what was done badly or left undone in a thousand years before, or four hundred years since the Reformation by the Church.

Let us ever remember our present day needs and problems. The celebration thought and activities should shed light upon present and future church and world needs. Let us be forward-looking.

Lutherans will be more or less in the spotlight. Let them look well to their manners. Do not boast and brag, nor be obsequious.

¹O. H. Pannkoke, A Great Church . . . Finds Itself (Quitman, Ga.: Private Printing, 1966, p. 44.

²Abdel Ross Wentz, "The Plans for the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Reformation in 1917," The Lutheran 20 (January 6, 1916):1.

Let us avoid controversy as far as possible. At least, let us not take the initiative. Even disagreeable facts can be stated without animosity.

Always bear in mind that if we wish to influence our public life we must get our ideas before the public. Study how you may cooperate with the public press.

Plans have been laid intended to magnify the unity and the national character of the American Lutheran Church. Let us develop these plans with patience, energy and determination.³

While most other Lutheran synods planned to celebrate the Reformation Quadricentennial alone or only with those whom they were in fellowship, the Lutheran Society of New York made great plans for the celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary. The Lutheran Society was an organization of over 500 laymen from many different Lutheran synods in the Greater New York area: General Council, General Synod, Augustana, Ohio, Missouri, and Norwegian.⁴ The Society included several leading Missouri Synod lay leaders (Theodore H. Lamprecht for one) as well as several Missouri Synod clergymen (O. H. Pannkoke, W. S. Schoenfeld).⁵

It was Pastor William S. Schoenfeld of the Missouri Synod's Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City who encouraged the Lutheran Society to organize the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee in 1915. Pastor Otto Pannkoke of the Missouri Synod served as the Committee's Executive Secretary.⁶ The purpose of the Committee was "to

³"Preliminary Organization Plans," Tract of The Joint Lutheran Quadri-Centennial Jubilee Committee, Theodore Graebner papers, Box 60, File 2, Concordia Historical Institute. (Hereafter cited as C.H.I.)

⁴Pannkoke, p. 45.

⁵"New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee," Tract of the Lutheran Society, New York City: Lutheran Church General and Historical Material, Box 120.32, C.H.I.

⁶Pannkoke, p. 45.

enlist the nation's intellectual, educational, religious, political leadership appropriately to recognize the great influence on civilization of the Lutheran Reformation." It aimed at promoting a strictly civic celebration.⁷ Beginning in 1916, the Committee published a monthly Bulletin providing information regarding their celebration. The December 1916 issue states:

The committee aims to create general interest in the Reformation Anniversary. It does not wish to supersede denominational committees. It does not desire to use the Reformation Anniversary as a means to unite Protestantism. It does not aim to repress and minimize differences of viewpoint and interpretation that may exist today. In short it is not a propaganda, but a Celebration Committee.⁸

The Committee provided Reformation literature, speakers, slides, medals, and music for use at any public gathering, particularly the churches and Y.M.C.A.s of New York. In addition, a "mass meeting" was planned for October 31, 1917 as the climax to the anniversary year celebration.⁹

⁷Ibid., p. 50.

⁸The New York Reformation Anniversary Bulletin 1 (December 1916), New York: Lutheran Church General and Historical Material, Box 120.32, C.H.I.

⁹Ibid. It is difficult to ascertain how the officials of the Missouri Synod viewed the Lutheran Society of New York. Theodore Lamprecht was an important layman in the Missouri Synod who had served on the committee that negotiated the English-German Missouri Synod merger. Both Pannkoke and Schoenfeld were Missouri Synod clergymen. In his book, A Great Church . . . Finds Itself, Pannkoke indicates no official synodical criticism of either the Lutheran Society or the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee other than three articles in The Lutheran Witness which Pannkoke took as an attack. It was not until Pannkoke became Executive Secretary of the Lutheran Bureau that he ran into trouble with Missouri Synod officials. In the August 16, 1916 issue of The Lutheran Witness, Graebner published the first of three articles on the theme: "How can our celebration of the Reformation be pleasing to God?" in which he maintained that only a religious celebration can please God, not a civic celebration. However, nothing came down from the Synodical or District Presidents. Pannkoke, p. 54. It must be concluded that the officials of the Synod viewed the Lutheran Society's civic celebration as a matter of externals and not a matter of unionism.

Calls for Merger and Joint Celebration

Looking ahead to the celebration of the Quadricentennial of the Reformation, President Schette of the Ohio Synod proposed the holding of "free intersynodical conferences" and the formation of intersynodical committees of arbitration in 1912. By 1914, the Joint Synod of Ohio received favorable response from the Iowa Synod, the General Council, the General Synod, and the United Synod South. With this encouragement, the Ohio Synod proposed a "Federation of all Lutheran Synods of our land." This federation was not to be formed for the sake of unity alone. With the beginning of World War I, there were anti-German sentiments building in America, and the new federation would have provided a defense against unfair attacks on German Lutherans. The concept was received favorably, but because of disagreement over the organizational structure, neither the General Council nor the General Synod attended the preliminary meeting at Toledo, Ohio on April 14, 1915. The members of the Synodical Conference would not attend because doctrinal agreement had not been reached. Because of the poor turn out, a continuation committee was appointed. However nothing more was done and the proposed federation did not materialize.¹⁰

In 1914, an anonymous contributor submitted a five-point program for celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation to The Lutheran Witness, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Large gatherings and parades wherever feasible;
2. The raising of large sums of money for education, missions and charity;
3. The erection of monuments to Luther and his fellow-Reformers at

¹⁰ Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 285-91.

least at every Lutheran center of any importance:

4. The establishment of a Lutheran Press Bureau which is to familiarize the world with Lutheran doctrines and principles;
5. To unite the divided Lutheran church-bodies in America.

The anonymous contributor especially emphasized the last point, adding that the union should be based solely on the Lutheran Confessions. His closing sentence read:

Men and brethren, we want to celebrate this four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation in the most glorious manner possible. Let us therefore pray and labor for a united Lutheran Church in America.¹¹

By 1915, a similar call came from the Reformation Quadricentennial Committee of the Eastern Lutheran church bodies, suggesting a merger of all Lutheran synods in America into one body as the most suitable way of celebrating the occasion.¹² Within the next year, this same Committee began publishing a weekly news letter urging all Lutherans to celebrate the Reformation anniversary together.¹³

The Missouri Synod rejected all such calls for merger and joint celebration. Theodore Graebner, the co-editor of The Lutheran Witness, warned that the Quadricentennial could not be celebrated properly if unionism were practiced, non-Lutheran speakers engaged to address Lutheran gatherings, or controversy and polemics were avoided. He went on to add:

Our answer will be: If we should celebrate October 31, 1917, jointly with those with whom, for reasons of conscience, we may not gather in

¹¹"A Plea for a Fitting Celebration of the Fourth Centennial of the Reformation," The Lutheran Witness 33 (January 1, 1914):13.

¹²Martin Sommer, "Editorial - Church Union by Compromise," The Lutheran Witness 34 (September 21, 1915):299.

¹³Theodore Graebner, "Shall It Be a Denatured Jubilee?" The Lutheran Witness 35 (November 14, 1916):349-52.

joint worship on the preceding Sunday, we should be guilty not only of inconsistency, but of something a great deal worse.

We regret . . . these divisions in our dear Lutheran Church. But who is to blame for this state of affairs? The false teachers, certainly, but no less the great rank and file of good Christian laymen in those churches, who do not sufficiently interest themselves in church-affairs. . . . To ask us to ignore these differences, and to treat erring Churches as if they did not err, is asking the impossible. Unionism is the entering wedge for every kind of soul-destroying error . . .¹⁴

Martin Sommer, the other co-editor of The Lutheran Witness, responded by saying that a merger of all Lutheran synods into one body would be a most sorry celebration of the Reformation, for it would compromise the truth. He went on to add:

Compromise has never united church factions, but has ever been the source of new divisions. . . . The Lutheran, whether layman or preacher, who turns a deaf ear to the latitudinarian call for compromise, is the true friend of Lutheran unity.¹⁵

In the years just prior to the Quadricentennial Reformation celebration, the reaction to the calls for merger and joint worship by Missouri Synod pastors and professors in articles, sermons, and lectures were many. Yet, they echoed a united theme. On June 15, 1916, Pastor W. Broecker gave the following advice to a Lutheran men's club:

The very air we breathe is pregnant with the union germ. . . . The union waves are rolling exceptionally high among American Lutheran church-bodies. . . . I shall but emphasize that none but the union in which, by the grace of God, we stand, the union of unity, is the one and only safe Church. . . . On this foundation will Missouri hail with great acclaim a union of all American Lutheran bodies.¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Sommer, "Editorial," p. 299.

¹⁶W. Broecker, "The Missouri Synod and Church Union," The Lutheran Witness 35 (August 22, 1916):257.

Franz Pieper reiterated the same point: that Lutheran unity was highly desirable, but it would be tragic if union were not based on unity.¹⁷

The Reformation Quadricentennial and its proper celebration held a major place in the thoughts and actions of the people in the Missouri Synod. Although many of Missouri's points were well taken, they were often presented with polemical overtones. However, one must consider that polemics had long been an accepted practice (even though it was now becoming more and more undesirable) and Missourians were urged to speak out with the truth. At the 1917 Milwaukee Convention of the Missouri Synod, President Pfothenhauer devoted almost half of his presidential address to the Quadricentennial celebration and at one point encouraged the church-papers and publications to "evermore sound forth the clear note." The following is an English translation of a part of Pfothenhauer's President's Report:

Now our Synod, by the unmerited grace of God, is in full possession of the treasures of the Reformation. Therefore it is meet and right that we in this Jubilee year bring a special thank-offering to God with hearts and hands and voices, and that we also have Jubilee services in connection with this Convention. Of course, our celebration must be conducted with a proper manner. On the one hand, we may not in pride lift ourselves above others who have not been so highly favored as we. On the other hand, we must not aim at making a show of big numbers and at gaining more recognition in the world, and to that end make common cause with those who are not inwardly united with us. We recall how it was the three-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, in 1817, which gave occasion for undermining the Lutheran Church in the German countries, when Frederick William III, King of Prussia, brought about a union of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches. Also in our land voices are heard saying that on the occasion of this Jubilee there should be union; at any rate all synods having the name Lutheran should cooperate fraternally, irrespective of existing differences. God grant that our whole Synod and our individual congregations steadfastly resist all such temptations,

¹⁷Francis Pieper, "Zur Einigung," Lehre und Wehre 42 (April 1916): 145.

in order that our celebration may be a clear and ringing confession of the full and infallible truth of the divine Word, and that we be encouraged anew to retain undiminished the heritage of the fathers, to defend it against all attacks, and to deliver it intact to our children. If this is to be done, then our church-papers and other publications must evermore sound forth the clear note, that men may know what we believe and teach. Then our professors in our educational institutions must let the Scriptures be the only sun to illuminate their instructions. Then our pastors and teachers must quietly and faithfully put forth all diligence to train up in church and school a people rich in knowledge, established in the Scriptures, and rejoicing in the Savior. Then the parents must see that their homes are ruled in piety, and that their children shall become rooted and grounded in God's Word and Luther's doctrine.¹⁸

Missouri's Reformation Quadricentennial Preparations

It was at the 1914 Chicago Convention that the Missouri Synod began making plans for the four hundredth anniversary of the Reformation.

Here the Synod adopted the following resolutions:

1. Congregations will celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation by services either on the 31st of October or on the Sunday following, November 4, 1917. There should also be special children's services. Preparatory sermons leading up to the anniversary should be preached. Where feasible, a number of congregations should join in a service on a large scale. Academic celebrations of the anniversary should be held at all higher institutions of Synod. Synod at its next meeting should also provide for a special anniversary service.

Desirable publications: - A booklet in German and English for the children of all schools. - Suitable choir music. - An illustrated book in German and English, on the subject of the Reformation. The faculty of St. Louis will prepare the manuscript. - Programs which churches might follow in their festival services.

2. Congregations are asked to join in making liberal offerings to the Church Extension Fund. A large jubilee fund should be raised to express our gratitude towards God for the great blessings resulting from the Reformation.

¹⁸The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 30th Regular Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 20-29, 1917 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), p. 5. This address was delivered in German.

3. German and English tracts, booklets, etc., on the Reformation should be distributed freely among non-Lutherans.

All synodical districts are requested to appoint men from their midst who shall keep the activities of Romanists under close observation, and meet their public attacks on our doctrine and faith.

Souvenir medals shall be struck in remembrance of the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, similar to those made for the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary.¹⁹

Although the 1914 Delegate Synod had made plans for the Reformation Quadricentennial, no official committee had been appointed. Therefore, President Pfotenhauer announced in the December 28, 1915 issue of The Lutheran Witness:

The last Delegate Synod passed several resolutions relative to the proper celebration of the Reformation Jubilee in 1917. Special services are to be held, festival booklets and tracts are to be published and, partly, distributed gratis, a special jubilee offering for the Church Extension Fund is to be lifted, and souvenir medals are to be struck. (Syn. Report, 1914, 54.55)

Synod has appointed no committee to carry out these resolutions. The undersigned, therefore, hereby nominates the following brethren to act as a committee for this jubilee celebration: -

The Church Extension Board: Rev. H. Bartels, Teacher Th. Kuehnert, Mr. B. A. Schieferdecker; Prof. Th. Graebner; Revs. C. F. Drewes and Alf. Doerffler; Teacher L. H. Becker; Messrs. F. G. Haueisen and G. W. Lindhorst, all living at St. Louis.

Rev. Drewes is to be chairman, Mr. Becker recording secretary, and Mr. Kuehnert corresponding secretary.

This committee, in the near future, will submit its plans in a circular, which will be sent to all pastors.²⁰

All the preparations for the Missouri Synod's celebration of the Quadricentennial were carried out as planned. Only one thing detracted from the celebrations throughout the United States and Canada: World War I. Yet in spite of the war, the people of the Missouri Synod

¹⁹ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 29th Regular Meeting at Chicago, Illinois, May 6-16, 1914 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914), pp. 54-55.

²⁰ Frederick Pfotenhauer, "Reformation Jubilee in 1917," The Lutheran Witness 34 (December 28, 1915):404.

contributed \$344,895.24 to the special Jubilee Fund.²¹ Pannkoke summed up the Missouri Synod celebration in the following words:

The Missouri Synod celebration emphasized true doctrine as the distinguishing mark of the anniversary. It condemned any joint celebration with non-Missourians. It urged increased effort and zeal to spread the pure Gospel. In fact, the intense emotions roused by the occasion tended to increase markedly the importance of true doctrine, as well as the urgent need to guard it against every error and to make the divine command to share the truth by spreading it far and wide more urgent. Above all, separatism became the distinguishing mark of a God-pleasing celebration.²²

It is true that the members of the Missouri Synod were encouraged to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation only with those with whom they were in fellowship, that is, the members of the Synodical Conference.²³ This was based on the position that union can only take place where there is unity, agreement in doctrine and practice.

Pannkoke, the director of the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee, apparently took Theodore Graebner's articles which appeared in The Lutheran Witness as a personal attack on the actions of the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee, not only by Graebner, but also by the officials of the Missouri Synod. However, neither the District President nor the Synodical President had spoken against the New York Quadricentenary Committee.²⁴ Apparently, the mass meeting sponsored by the Lutheran Society of New York on October 31, 1917 was not considered a

²¹W. G. Polack, The Building of a Great Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 195.

²²Pannkoke, p. 49.

²³Carl S. Meyer, "Some Aspects of the Observance of the Reformation Quadricentennial by America's Lutherans," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 41 (May 1968):18.

²⁴Pannkoke, p. 54.

celebration by synodical officials, and participation in the Lutheran Society was considered a matter of externals. Yet, even at this time, there were individuals within the Synod who began taking issue with their church body's emphasis on pure doctrine; with the orthodoxy of their church body; with what they considered to be separatism.

The Quadricentennial Serves as an Impetus
for Lutheran Union Attempts

That the Quadricentennial of the Reformation served as an impetus for Lutheran union can be evidenced by the mergers and attempted mergers that took place within this period. The Missouri Synod attempted a merger with the members of the Synodical Conference on two occasions. Local pastors in the Northwest would engage in free conferences that would draw the Missouri Synod into intersynodical discussions with the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo Synods. Elsewhere, Missouri would witness the union of the Norwegian synods, the formation of the United Lutheran Church in America, the organization of the National Lutheran Council, the amalgamation of the Nebraska, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Synods into the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States, the formation of The American Lutheran Church, and the organization of the American Lutheran Conference.²⁵

Since the founding of the Synodical Conference in 1872, it had been hoped that the member synods would merge into one large confessional Lutheran body. In 1876, a plan had been worked out for merger, forming

²⁵Meyer, "Some Aspects of the Observance. . .," pp. 19-20.

state-synods with two joint seminaries. The plan was postponed because both the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods were fearful of being consumed by their larger sister, the Missouri Synod.²⁶ The plan was revived in 1878, but it was never implemented because of the division caused by the Predestinarian Controversy.²⁷ However, by 1914 the hope of merger within the Synodical Conference was again resuscitated.

The movement for merger actually began in 1913 among the laymen, and was referred to as the Laienbewegung. Under the leadership of August C. Frank of Racine, Wisconsin, a meeting of Missouri and Wisconsin Synod laymen was held in January of 1913 at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music in Milwaukee. To implement the merger of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, a committee of twelve was appointed. When a second meeting was held, more than two hundred laymen were present and the Milwaukee auditorium had to be used. The committee of twelve decided to submit a written proposal for union to all the congregations of both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. Each congregation was to send one or two delegates to the next meeting at St. John's Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, on March 9, 1913.

Between four and five hundred people met at St. John's with sixty different congregations being represented (half of which were from Milwaukee). Despite the objections of both Professor August Pieper and

²⁶ David Schmiel, "The History of the Relationship of the Wisconsin Synod to the Missouri Synod until 1925," (S.T.M. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1958), p. 30.

²⁷ Roy Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-five Years of Its Existence 1872-1897," (Th.D. Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946), pp. 43-60.

G. E. Bergemann of the Wisconsin Synod, the overwhelming support was for union. The Wisconsin Synod laymen prevailed upon their Synod to select a regular synodical committee which was to contact the Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod and negotiate a merger.

However, before doing this, the Wisconsin Synod felt obligated to make arrangements with the Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska Synods with whom they had formed a loose federation in 1902 called the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States. It took almost a year for the other synods of the general body to name committees, but eventually a joint committee was formed and a detailed program for the complete merger of the Synodical Conference was drafted. The plan now needed the ratification of the individual synods and districts of the general body. At its 1914 convention, the Wisconsin Synod ratified the plan.²⁸

Through the encouragement of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synod laymen and the official committee of the Wisconsin Synod, the Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod memorialized the 1914 Missouri Synod convention to begin merger proceedings. The 29th Delegate Synod of Missouri passed the following resolution:

- Organic union of synods within the Lutheran Synodical Conference . . . is deemed advisable. A committee shall:
- a) Consider ways and means of such union;
 - b) Receive proposals in that direction;
 - c) Confer with the synods concerned or their representatives;
 - d) If possible, join them in working out a plan of consolidation;
 - e) Report same back to our next Delegate Synod.

²⁸Schmiel, pp. 97-100.

The President is to appoint this committee. Synod of course, reserves the right to accept, reject, or amend the plan prepared by the committee.²⁹

A committee of eleven Missouri Synod pastors and laymen was appointed by President Pfotenhauer. This "union committee" met four times alone drawing up their own plan. On May 5, 1915, they met with a similar committee of the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States. Three sessions were held and both committees came to the conclusion that a closer union was desirable. Therefore, they drew up the following plan:

1. All synods forming the Synodical Conference shall disband.
2. The proposed new body shall be known as "The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America."
3. The thus reorganized Synodical Conference shall take charge of, and administer, all general missions.
4. This Synodical Conference shall take over the administration and maintenance of the publication concerns.
5. This Synodical Conference shall take over the administration and maintenance of the theological seminaries.
6. If a District or Districts in whose territory there is a preparatory school ("Gymnasium") should desire to take over the administration and maintenance of such school, the General Body shall give the control of that school over to such District or Districts.
7. All property of the present synods shall be transferred to the new body.
8. The General Body shall be divided into State or District Synods.³⁰

²⁹ 1914 Proceedings, p. 53.

³⁰ 1917 Proceedings, p. 75.

The next year, the Wisconsin Synod again responded favorably to the plan at their 1915 synodical convention.³¹ Unfortunately, the union never came about. Already in 1911, the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States had appointed a committee to explore the possibility of an actual merger of the four constituent synods who had banded together to form this loose federation. In 1913, this committee reported that an agreement had been reached. By 1915, they drew up a constitution.³² Because of these re-organization and merger efforts, the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States adopted the following resolution at their 1916 convention:

Inasmuch as our Synod is already divided into Districts, and the union in our General Body has prospered and the plan for the consolidation or amalgamation of all synods within the Synodical Conference tends toward general confusion, this plan is not acceptable to us.

An amendment was then added:

That our General Body consider this matter after a reorganization shall take place.³³

At the 1917 convention of the Missouri Synod, the following report was adopted:

Our Synod has been willing for decades to unite organically with such synods as confess the same faith with us, is willing today to do this, and hopes that with the gracious help of God this may be accomplished in the near future. We recommend the appointment of a committee that may be ready to act further as soon as this is agreeable to the Wisconsin Synod.³⁴

By 1919, the final ratification of the newly reorganized Wisconsin Synod took place. It adopted the name "Evangelical Lutheran Joint

³¹Schmiel, p. 101.

³²Wolf, p. 282.

³³1917 Proceedings, pp. 75-76.

³⁴Ibid., p. 76.

Synod of Wisconsin and Other States." Although this synod continued its membership in the Synodical Conference, it made no effort toward merger with the Missouri Synod.³⁵ Another attempt to realize the state-synod dream of Walther had failed. Dr. David Schmiel put it well:

One gets the impression that in 1915, when the Wisconsin Synod reacted favorably, she was only biding her time to see whether the plan to form the Joint Synod would be brought to completion. When it was successfully carried out, all thought of further negotiations with Missouri was abruptly cut off. The Wisconsin Synod was building its own empire, and Missouri would have to wait until this had been consolidated.³⁶

While Missouri was merging with the English Synod and discussing union with the Wisconsin Synod, the different Norwegian Lutheran groups were planning a merger of their own. Ever since its break with the Synodical Conference in 1883, the Norwegian Synod had continued fraternal relations with the Missouri Synod and members of the Synodical Conference.³⁷ The Norwegian Synod had suffered a split of almost one-third of its membership when the followers of F. A. Schmidt had insisted that the intuitu fidei phrase be adopted by 'the Synod'. This group left in 1887 and formed the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood which held as its major objective the union of all Norwegian groups. In 1890, the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood, the Conference of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod united to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Meanwhile, the Norwegian Synod continued to hold its own identity and maintained fraternal relations with

³⁵Wolf, pp. 282-83.

³⁶Schmiel, pp. 101-02.

³⁷S. C. Ylvisaker, "The Missouri Synod and the Norwegians," in W. H. T. Dau, ed., Ebenezer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. 271-72.

the Synodical Conference. Yet, the new United Church persistently made approaches to both the Norwegian Synod and the Hauge Synod for merger. Between 1906 and 1912, the three groups met and worked out a series of agreements.³⁸ The issue which caused the most problem was the doctrine of election. However, in 1912, the three Norwegian church bodies reached the "Madison Agreement" or Opgjoer. The issue concerning election was resolved by allowing for two different views in the same document, as can be seen in the Opgjoer's first paragraph:

The Union Committee of the Synod and the United Church, unanimously and without reservation, accept the doctrine of election which is set forth in Article XI of the Formula of Concord, the so-called First Form, and Pontoppidan's "Truth unto Godliness" ("Sanhed til Gudfrygtighed"), question 548, the so-called Second Form of Doctrine.³⁹

In August 1912, the Synodical Conference met in Saginaw, Michigan and sent a communication to the Norwegian Synod requesting specific changes to be made in the Opgjoer.⁴⁰ The Missouri Synod reacted with deep concern for her brethren in the Norwegian Synod. At the 1914 synodical convention, the following report was given:

We are greatly concerned about these brethren because they are considering a union with the United Church and the Hauge Synod on the basis of theses which do not fully agree with the doctrine taught in the Bible and the Book of Concord.

This grave matter will come up again at this year's meeting of the Synodical Conference.

Meanwhile, members of our Synod have privately pleaded with members of the old Norwegian Synod.⁴¹

³⁸Wolf, pp. 220-21.

³⁹William J. Schmelder, "The Predestinarian Controversy: Review and Reflection," Concordia Journal 1 (January 1975):29.

⁴⁰Ylvisaker, p. 273.

⁴¹1914 Proceedings, p. 53.

Within the Norwegian Synod opinions were by no means unanimous. A growing minority protested vigorously against union on the basis of the Opgjoer. When the Norwegian Synod voted on the agreement in 1912, there were only 12 dissenting votes. This minority increased to 106 in 1913 and in 1914 it increased to 173 out of 517 delegates at their convention. Of the clerical representatives at the 1914 Norwegian Synodical Convention, 137 voted in favor of the union while 97 voted against.⁴² In 1912, the Synodical Conference appointed a committee of W. H. T. Dau, F. Pieper, and Theo. Schlueter to confer with the Norwegian Synod concerning their proposed merger. In 1914 and 1916, this committee attempted to meet with officials of the Norwegian Synod, but all attempts ended in failure.⁴³ The leadership of the Norwegian Synod responded with bitter resentment to any concern shown by the Missouri Synod or the Synodical Conference.⁴⁴

Because the minority in the Norwegian Synod continued its determined opposition to a union on the basis of the Opgjoer, Professors J. N. Kildahl and L. W. Boe of the United Church and Professor C. K. Preus and Rev. I. B. Torrison of the Norwegian Synod met late in 1916 at Austin, Minnesota where they drew up the Austin Agreement. This document omitted the objectionable first paragraph of the original Opgjoer and made two other modifications. The union committee and the synods forming the

⁴²Theodore Graebner, "Editorial - The Norwegian Situation," The Lutheran Witness 34 (June 1, 1915):170.

⁴³H. M. Zorn, "Synodical Conference Convention," The Lutheran Witness 39 (September 14, 1920):297.

⁴⁴Ylvisaker, pp. 273-74.

merger declared that this revised Opgjoer was allowable, but it was added:

It is self-evident that the resolution quoted above must not be interpreted in such a manner that 'Opejoer' as the basis of union between the three contracting bodies thereby is abbreviated or changed.⁴⁵

With this agreement, the union movement won over many of the vocal minority. By 1917, the three Norwegian groups had drawn up a constitution which was ratified that same year and the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America was formed.

In his Presidential Report to the 1917 Missouri Synod Convention, President Pfothenauer stated: "The status in the Norwegian Synod has become more and more grave."⁴⁶ The Missouri Synod was deeply concerned about their Norwegian brethren, concerned that they would compromise their faith. The Norwegian Synod's merger on the basis of the compromising Opgjoer meant the end of fraternal relations. Theodore Graebner wrote in The Lutheran Witness:

The report on the Milwaukee convention contains the distressing news that the separation of the Norwegians from the Synodical Conference must be accepted as a fact. The most patient and unwearied efforts of the Synodical Conference committee, appointed to avert a breach with the Norwegian Synod, failed to secure for them even a hearing. This is most deplorable, and the tidings of it must sadden our people everywhere. So hearty have been our relations of fellowship with the Norwegian Synod in the past that the prospect of a breach, threatened through the union of the Norwegian Synod with other Norwegian bodies on the basis which permits truth and error to stand side by side, caused the Synodical Conference to appoint a committee of men known for their ability and sound judgment to confer with the Norwegian Synod. Our efforts failed, the Norwegian Synod could not be reached, and its leaders have the heavy responsibility of thwarting labors for the continuation of an ancient friendship. Their attitude is reflected in the official organs of the Norwegian

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 275.

⁴⁶ 1917 Proceedings, p. 8.

Merger, which now breathe a spirit of distinct animosity against our body. As a result, a sentiment of unfriendliness to the Synodical Conference is very probably being created also where it has not existed in the past. These are conditions unfavorable to Lutheran union which must be recognized.⁴⁷

A small minority in the Norwegian Synod could not go along with either the Opgjoer or the Austin Agreement and in 1918 formed the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (later to be changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod). It numbered between thirty and forty pastors and about the same number of congregations. At the 1920 convention of the Synodical Conference, the "Little Norwegian Synod" was accepted into membership while fellowship was officially broken with those who joined in the Norwegian merger.⁴⁸ The Little Norwegian Synod worked closely with the Missouri Synod, sending its students and one professor to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.⁴⁹

While negotiations for union had been carried on for some time among the Eastern Lutheran synods,⁵⁰ it cannot be denied that the Quadri-centennial of the Reformation played an important role in the 1918 merger of the General Council, the General Synod and the United Synod South forming the United Lutheran Church in America. The Joint Reformation Committee

⁴⁷Theodore Graebner, "Editorial - Prospects for Lutheran Church Union," The Lutheran Witness 39 (September 14, 1920):294.

⁴⁸Ylvisaker, p. 276.

⁴⁹The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 32nd Regular Meeting at Fort Wayne, Indiana, June 20-29, 1923 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), pp. 83-84.

⁵⁰Steady negotiations had been conducted since the First General Conference in 1898. Wolff, p. 259.

of the three Eastern Lutheran bodies had provided the extra push and the needed publicity.⁵¹

As with the Norwegian merger, the Missouri Synod took issue with the ULCA union. Because some members of the ULCA held joint worship services with Reformed churches (unionism), allowed lodge membership,⁵² taught that the Bible contained discrepancies and denied verbal inspiration, Missouri held that this merger was a union without unity.⁵³ Yet, Missourians were not without praise where they felt it was due. In an editorial in The Lutheran Witness, Martin Sommer gave much credit to Dr. G. W. Sandt, editor of The Lutheran, for speaking out against unionism and indifference to doctrine.⁵⁴

With the coming of the Quadricentennial of the Reformation and union movements going on all about, the Iowa Synod offered to engage in a series of free general conferences with all synods, especially with Missouri and Wisconsin.⁵⁵ Apparently, the Missouri Synod considered this proposal. The Synod's 1914 convention authorized President Pfothenauer to appoint a committee which was to consider the advisability of inter-synodical conferences and report to the 1917 convention.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Meyer, "Some Aspects of the Observance . . .," pp. 19-20.

⁵² Martin Sommer, "Editorial - The United Lutheran Church (Merger)," The Lutheran Witness 38 (August 19, 1919):267.

⁵³ Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement'," Concordia Theological Monthly 32 (July 1961):423.

⁵⁴ Martin Sommer, "Editorial - The United Church," The Lutheran Witness 38 (April 1, 1919):107.

⁵⁵ J. L. Neve and Willard D. Allbeck, History of the Lutheran Church in America, 3rd ed. (Burlington, Ia: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1934), p. 211.

⁵⁶ 1914 Proceedings, p. 53.

However, much was to happen before the 1917 Delegate Synod. Beginning in 1915, Pastor H. Boettcher (of the Minnesota Synod) suggested to the Sibley County (Minnesota) Pastoral Conference that it meet with the neighboring pastors of the Ohio Synod to discuss the doctrinal differences between the Synodical Conference and its former brethren. The discussions were to be based solely on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, disregarding the past controversies. Only pastors were allowed. Theological professors were to be excluded because it was felt that they would be too concerned with technicalities as had been the case in the intersynodical discussions between 1903 and 1906. On July 28, 1915, the first meeting was held at Gaylord, Minnesota. Only one Ohio Synod pastor was present, but the group reached agreement in rebus et phrasibus on the doctrine of election.⁵⁷

On November 9-10, 1915, the conference was moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. Here a substantial group of Ohio Synod pastors took part in a meeting with the Synodical Conference men of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The doctrine of predestination was discussed extensively and agreement was reached with regard to which statements in the old controversy were correct and which were misleading and ambiguous. Within the next few months the word spread, and on January 5-6, 1916, two hundred fifty pastors from the Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa and Ohio Synods met in St. Paul. Again, agreement was reached and a committee made up of members from all

⁵⁷Neve and Allbeck, pp. 240-41.

four synods⁵⁸ was called to draw up Leitsaetze which were called Zur Einigung or the "St. Paul Theses." By May, the Leitsaetze were completed and on May 3-4 at Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota they were signed by seventy-five pastors from all four synods. The theses were then circulated throughout the different church bodies. By 1917 the list of signatures contained 545 names which divided up as follows: Iowa, 170; Missouri, 161; Minnesota, 81; Ohio, 66; Wisconsin, 47; Michigan, 16; Nebraska, 3; Ev. Synod in Minnesota, 1.⁵⁹ The following English translation of Zur Einigung is provided (the German original is given as Appendix E):

Toward Unity

Propositions, which have been accepted at the intersynodical conferences in Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Paul, Minnesota, on 9. and 10. November 1915 and 5. and 6. January 1916.

Preliminary remarks. It was agreed from the start to disregard the discussion of the history. To begin with, the discussion of the doctrine of conversion was taken up.

1. The conversion of a person is a work of God the Holy Ghost alone.

2. The cause of the salvation of man is God's grace and Christ's doing alone, the cause of the damning is alone the fault of man, namely his unbelief. Both of these are kept clearly in Holy Scripture and we must leave these teachings standing next to each other and believe (them). Concerning the question, how it is that under this same grace one part of mankind is converted and saved and the other is not, we stand here before a secret that cannot possibly be satisfactorily explained to us human beings and also (an explanation) is not necessary.

3. We recognize universally and without reservation the doctrine of election unto grace as it is laid out in the 11th Article of the Formula of Concord.

⁵⁸Because the Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Nebraska Synods were part of a loose federation and were soon to merge, they are here considered to be one body.

⁵⁹John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud, Minn.: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970), p. 253.

4. Because the people at the conference recognize that the 11th Article of the Formula of Concord is the pure and correct teaching of the Word of God and the Lutheran Church concerning the election and salvation of the children of God, they see it as unnecessary for unity to bring out new and further going statements of doctrine on this article of faith.

5. In the 11th Article of the Formula of Concord, we see the merciful providence of God or the election of the children of God, that the eternal God has supplied, ordered, and elected on the basis of the redemption of Christ all those to whom He, from grace because of Christ, calls through the Gospel, brings to faith, sanctifies, preserves and eternally makes saved in the correct faith, willing (them) to such calling, enlightening, sanctifying and preserving in faith and to eternal salvation already from the laying of the foundation of the World out of grace because of Christ.

6. The view that God saves one over the other or that He elects one over the other is not found in Holy Scripture nor in the Lutheran Confessions. This view leads to the false presumption that God either does not extend His grace in Christ at all over a large portion of mankind as He does over others or in moderation. Because of this, one should avoid this view.

7. The view that God elects in consideration of faith is found neither in Holy Scripture nor in the Lutheran Confessions. What later church teachers have understood under this expression or have not understood is a historical question and not an article of faith, and one cannot demand from a Christian that he make a judgment over this historical question. According to what you have said, this expression can easily lead to a false view that the foreseen faith is the cause of God's merciful election. For this reason, this view should be avoided.

8. On the one side, we condemn the following:

a) The teaching that not God's mercy and Christ's gain alone are the cause of our election, but rather also in us there is a cause at hand through which God was moved to choose us for eternal life.

b) The teaching that God has ordained to election or takes into consideration the good conduct of man or depends on the good conduct of man or depends on something the person is, does and receives from himself or out of his own natural power.

c) The teaching that indissoluble, binding faith is brought totally or partly with the choice of the Christian or it bases itself on man's decision, power or ability. Compare this with Formula of Concord, Article 2, Par. 52.61.

d) The teaching that this faith is the result of one's own imparting through the calling of grace and therefore the unregenerated man's indwelling and inherent capacity or power can determine him for grace.

9. On the other side we condemn the following:

a) The teaching that God, in his election of grace, voluntarily or unmotivatedly handles, in that He designates a certain voluntary number of individuals and determines them for conversion and salvation, skipping over all others.

b) The teaching that there are two different wills of grace in God: one that is revealed in Scripture in the general order of redemption, and one that differs from this and is unknown to us, which only concerns the chosen and brings these chosen an inner love and a more powerful calling from God and brings them also a bigger grace than those that remain in unbelief and in spoilage.

c) The teaching that if God takes away the resistance from those that are saved in their conversion, but does not take the resistance away from those that go wrong, then this has its purpose in God and in a different holy will by the election.

d) The teaching that the believer can and should have an absolute certainty of his election and his salvation instead of a certainty of faith created from God's promise.

Observation. To the will of the flesh this certainty of faith surrounds the creation of salvation with fear and shaking and the warning from decay.

3) Summary: all views and teachings about election that directly or indirectly come in conflict with Scripture and all views which do not want to give the opportunity of salvation to all people or all views which in some way or another limit God's Word, which says that God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, in whose merciful and gracious will all have their origin and election to eternal life.

10. Since during the church controversies in the past expressions and words have come forth -- having written to the concerned parties with validity or without validity -- so these (words) have come forth from others as being a denial of the Confessions or as being directed for that purpose, thus we ourselves have united all expressions which these sentences, which have already been accepted, speak against in order to repudiate, and respectfully after the same to correct.⁶⁰

On May 9-10, the intersynodical pastor's conference of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area decided to send letters to the Synods of Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin and Iowa calling for official action. The following letter was recorded in the Proceedings of the 1917 Missouri Synod Convention:

We pastors of the Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, and Missouri Synods, assembled for an intersynodical conference at St. Paul, Minn., should like to submit to Synod the result of our discussions on controverted doctrine in a number of conferences, and enclose documents for this purpose. We should like to suggest that Synod appoint a committee to examine these documents in conjunction with similar committees from the other synods, or that Synod take any other feasible steps to bring about complete unity of doctrine in the several synods.

⁶⁰"Zur Einigung," William Frederick Arndt Papers, Supplement I, Box 16, File 10, C.H.I.

A committee was appointed to review the materials and it submitted the following report to the 1917 Delegate Synod:

Your Committee recognizes the efforts which have been put forth privately by members of our Synod, the Iowa Synod, and the Ohio Synod, as having a laudable and worthy object. The documents which were given your Committee for inspection clearly show that the discussions have not been without fruit.

It is very evident that there exists an earnest and proper desire to remove in a God-pleasing manner the doctrinal differences separating the several Lutheran synods.

On the other hand, your Committee has gained the conviction that these efforts have reached such proportions that they can no longer be considered a private matter . . .

We therefore recommend to Synod that it carry out the suggestion of the communication submitted, and elect a committee which shall examine these documents, be prepared to treat with similar committees representing other Lutheran synods, and offer advice where these efforts are being put forth within our circles.

The report was adopted by the convention and the following committee was elected by ballot: Prof. Mezger, Pastor J. G. F. Kleinhans and Pastor O. L. Hohenstein.⁶¹ As the Missouri Synod approached the Quadricentennial of the Reformation, it too was involved in unity discussions. In the case of both the Laienbewegung and the intersynodical conferences, neither the Missouri Synod as a body nor any of its members had a part in the instigation of these unity movements. Yet, once the unity attempt was brought to the attention of the Synod as a whole, the Missourians responded favorably and were ready and willing to strive for unity.

⁶¹1917 Proceedings, p. 77. This was the first time the Synod had elected a committee for intersynodical conferences. Prior to this the Synod's representation had been conducted on an individual basis.

CHAPTER V

WORLD WAR I

The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 was received with stunned surprise throughout the United States. America's immediate reaction was a declaration of neutrality.¹ Yet, the United States, with a good many of its citizens claiming English and French ancestry, continued to maintain close economic ties with the Allied powers. America asserted the right to maintain overseas trade while holding Germany to a strict accountability for submarine attacks on American ships. Germany's only means of cutting off the flow of American munitions which enabled her enemies to go on fighting was submarine warfare directed against all cargo ships, regardless of nationality. The sinking of the "Lusitania" in 1915 called forth the first American protest and an increasingly pro-Ally faction vehemently criticized President Wilson for his neutrality position and stirred up anti-German sentiment in America.² However, in the 1916 presidential election, both President Wilson and the Republican candidate, Charles Hughes, pledged neutrality. Even after his re-election and as late as January 22, 1917, President Wilson continued to call for "peace without victory." However, within nine days

¹Foster Rhea Dulles, The United States Since 1865 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 238.

²Ibid., pp. 249-50.

Germany announced that all merchant ships, armed or unarmed, would be sunk on sight in the war zone. On February 3, 1917, the President broke off diplomatic relations with Germany.³ After the sinking of the "Algonquin" and three other American ships, the discovery of a proposed alliance between Germany, Japan and Mexico, and the first Russian revolution which overthrew the autocratic government of the czars, Americans, more than ever, identified the Allied cause with democracy. On April 6, 1917, Good Friday, the United States declared itself at war with Germany.⁴

Missouri's Reaction To The War

Between the outbreak of the war in Europe in August 1914 and the entry of the United States in April 1917, the Missouri Synod issued a continuous demand for rigid United States neutrality. This demand held both positive and negative aspects: positively, it supported the position of the United States President on neutrality and involved the outlining of principles on which it should be built; negatively it involved criticizing national policies and practices that seemed to go against the requirements of neutrality. However, even with its continuous stress on neutrality, the Missouri Synod often seemed to give more support to Germany (probably because of its own German heritage and in order to counter America's increasing Allied support).⁵

Missouri Synod periodicals pronounced the war as a judgment of God upon the nations which had become too proud in their materialism: Germany

³Ibid., pp. 252-53.

⁴Ibid., pp. 253-54.

⁵Frederick Nohl, "The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Reacts to United States Anti-Germanism During World War I," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 35 (July 1962):53.

as "immeasurably puffed up with the pride of its learning and culture," France as "a nation in the last stages of decay,"⁶ and England for its opium trade in China.⁷ Yet, during the war's early years, Theodore Graebner defended the Kaiser and General von Hindenburg.⁸ When the "Lusitania" was sunk, causing widespread demands for American retribution, members of the Synod were urged to remain calm and wait until all the facts were available before calling for action.⁹

During this period, several of the professors on the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis faculty supported the American Neutrality League. Probably the most zealous member was Frederick Bente, who appeared before the Foreign Relations Committee of the U. S. Senate on February 3, 1915 to assure the United States government that the American Neutrality League was neither "pro-German nor pro-Allied, but simply pro-American." Bente was also granted an interview with President Wilson. After the sinking of the "Lusitania," the faculty of Concordia Seminary sent the following note to Woodrow Wilson:

To the President of the United States. We, the members of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., believe that, under the prevailing conditions of general disregard for International Law by all the European belligerents (first on the part of the Allies, and then, by way of retaliation, on the part of the Germans). (sic) The Lusitania Case, viewed, as it ought to be, not as a disconnected incident, but in its historical context as a link in a chain of

⁶Neil M. Johnson, "The Patriotism and Anti-Prussianism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod 1914-1918," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 39 (October 1966):99.

⁷Nohl, p. 53.

⁸"Editorial," The Lutheran Witness 33 (December 15, 1914):207, and 34 (August 10, 1915):253.

⁹Ibid., 34 (May 18, 1915):150-52.

events, is not a sufficient reason for breaking off our friendly relations with Germany, much less for plunging our country into the horrors of war. Francis Pieper, L. Fuerbringer, F. Bente, G. Mezger, W. Dau, E. Krause, E. Pardieck, T. Graebner.¹⁰

In setting forth its views on the war, the Synod often found itself criticizing what was considered to be the "hypocrisy" of the United States' neutrality position -- particularly the sale of armaments and supplies to the Allies. It was held that the arms trade was immoral, not on the basis of who received the goods, but because such trade led to murder.¹¹ The Synod's English District passed a resolution asking the President of the United States to embargo the sale and shipment of war supplies to all the nations of war.¹² Professors Pieper, Bente and Dau sent a dispatch to President Wilson, protesting against what they considered a sacrifice of American rights and abdication of American responsibilities in permitting the sale of munitions.¹³

Between 1914 and 1917, the Free Church of Saxony continued to receive moral and financial support from the Missouri Synod. In this period, \$40,000 was contributed to the sister body in Saxony, including about \$21,000 for the relief of war-sufferers. However, this aid was discontinued upon American's declaration of war against Germany.¹⁴

It is most apparent that the April 6, 1917 declaration of war

¹⁰Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), pp. 235-37.

¹¹"Editorial," The Lutheran Witness 35 (February 22, 1916):49-50.

¹²Ibid., 34 (July 13, 1915):215.

¹³Meyer, Log Cabin, p. 238.

¹⁴Johnson, pp. 100-101.

caught the Missouri Synod totally off guard. The 1917 volume of The Lutheran Witness contained very few articles about the war and its influence on the Synod. In fact, it was not until the end of the year that the editors began to respond. President Pfothenhauer did not find it necessary to create a special "Board of Counsel in matters pertaining to effects which the war and issues arising from the war have had upon our church work," until the spring of 1918.¹⁵ From Good Friday, 1917, until well after the Armistice in November 1918, the Missouri Synod found itself on the defensive.¹⁶

With respect to the war, Der Lutheraner conceded that Congress had acted for the whole nation and that every citizen was now involved. Yet, it added that "the State, not the Church, conducts the war."¹⁷ On June 20, 1917, at the Synod's convention in Milwaukee, Frederick Pfothenhauer stated in his Presidential Address:

With respect to the war, we Christians must use all diligence to have our judgments fashioned by the Word of God which gives us sufficient instruction in this regard. Then we shall remain sober-minded, humble ourselves before God, and repent; then we shall also possess our souls in patience, and calmly commit the issue of the battle to Him who ordereth all things according to His will, and who hath determined for all nations of men dwelling on earth their times and the bounds of their habitations. That the present war should above all remind us of the nearness of the Day of Judgment Christ clearly shows . . .¹⁸

During the first months of the war, the Synod approached the issue with great caution, maintaining a strict separation between Church and State. When a circular was issued by the Treasury Department in May

¹⁵Nohl, p. 55.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Johnson, pp. 101.

¹⁸The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 30th Regular Meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 20-29, 1917 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), pp. 3-4. This address was given in German.

1917 which urged active support of the churches in the first Liberty Bond drive, Missouri Synod publications decried the action as a subversion of the separation of church and state, as well as a subversion of religious freedom.¹⁹ However, American anti-German sentiment would soon change this position.

Anti-German Sentiment and Missouri's Reaction

Had the Missouri Synod sensed the impending difficulties that were to follow the initial shots fired in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, it undoubtedly would have taken action to prevent potential sources of dispute with its fellow American citizens. Unfortunately, no one in the Synod had the needed insight.

As early as 1915, the Missouri Synod as a whole, its congregations and their members were under attack for being pro-German and therefore unpatriotic. Frederick Nohl has given six reasons for this reaction:

1. The Synod's perpetuation of the German language, though understandable, almost inevitably identified it with the enemy -- at least in the minds of many. Furthermore, some members continued to talk about "German" Lutheran schools and congregations, hardly a policy calculated to win friends in a period of crisis.
2. . . . the unwillingness of some members, rightly or wrongly, to give in to the demands of wartime pressures. There were those, for example, who insisted on retaining the German language despite the inflamed public opinion. Again, there were a few members who were outrightly disloyal, and whose words and actions caused trouble for whole congregations.
3. Thirdly, some United States citizens could not forget the sympathy that many in the Lutheran Church had shown for Germany during the neutrality period.
4. Certain Missouri Synod doctrinal emphases also helped contribute to public misunderstanding and abuse. For example, the Synod

¹⁹Johnson, pp. 102-03.

strongly urged the separation of church and state. . . . The Synod also opposed unionistic practices, especially where its clergy were concerned. Many Missouri Synod pastors, therefore, refused to participate in patriotic church services and programs involving also pastors of other denominations. The public often viewed such refusal as an insult to the United States.

5. A fifth troublemaker for the Missouri Synod was the widespread public confusion on two matters involving identity. One of these concerned Prussian Lutheranism and its supposed connection with and control of United States Lutheranism. The other dealt with the question of who was and who was not a Lutheran. Some Germans, including a few whose actions had made them highly unpopular, were considered Lutherans even though they actually were not.

6. Finally, the war hysteria gave some "professional" anti-Lutherans a chance to vent their opposition and antagonism. Some of these persons were motivated by denominational jealousy, others by outright opposition to religion of any kind.²⁰

Besides the attacks in newspapers and magazines across the country, the Missouri Synod also had to deal with anti-language legislation and personal attacks against congregations and pastors. On July 12, 1917, the Nebraska Council of Defense lodged the first overt charge of disloyalty against the Lutheran Church. It was charged that the church's "conspicuous representatives" refused to take part in various patriotic activities and discouraged the American cause by failing to organize war-relief work. In setting forth a defense, the Missouri Synod appointed a committee that met with committees from virtually every other Lutheran church body in America. This joint committee presented a rebuttal to the Nebraska Council of Defense on July 24. When it was shown that the Lutheran Church adhered to the Augsburg Confession which "in express terms commands loyalty to the government," the Council retracted its charges.²¹ With anti-language legislation being passed in numerous states, over one

²⁰Nohl, pp. 63-65.

²¹Johnson, p. 103.

hundred of Synod's parochial day schools were forced to close during the war years.²² Because they continued to use German, a Lincoln, Nebraska, parish school was burned to the ground and a Schumm, Ohio, school was dynamited.²³ Actions of mob violence occurred against several congregations of the Missouri Synod.²⁴

The response of the Missouri Synod to anti-German attacks was always defensive and after-the-fact, but it did come forth. When the American press labeled the Lutheran Church in America an arm of the German State Church, claiming that Lutheran pastors took an oath of loyalty to the Kaiser, the Missouri Synod responded in her periodicals and early in 1918 issued a tract titled "TESTIMONY AND PROOF Bearing on the Relation of the American Lutheran Church to the German Emperor." The widely circulated pamphlet showed that there was no connection between the German and United States churches and made much of the fact that the Kaiser was not even Lutheran. Charges of disloyalty moved Missouri Synod leaders to action in other ways as well. When the Third Liberty Loan was announced in 1918, Synod urged its congregations to establish committees to supervise bond sales.²⁵ Furthermore, the Missouri Synod took the offensive by encouraging its congregations to engage in patriotic activities. In the Spring of 1918, President Pfotenhauer issued a policy statement on the war

²² Ibid., p. 110.

²³ "Editorial," The Lutheran Witness 37 (October 29, 1918):349.

²⁴ Everette Meier and Herbert T. Mayer, "The Process of Americanization," in Moving Frontiers, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 374.

²⁵ Nohl, pp. 60-61.

in both German and English, urging congregations to support their government:

We owe it to our Church to take such steps in the support of our Government as are prescribed to all corporations. Such participation is not a commingling of the affairs of Church and State, and it can be tendered with good conscience. Our Government has entered into the war, and asks that her citizens furnish the necessary means. There is but one case in which the Word of God would deny to the citizen of a country active participation in a war, and that is, if one were convinced that a particular war were unjust. But when this conviction does not obtain, indeed, when one is unable to form a competently comprehensive opinion, one must accept the verdict of the Government, and cheerfully obey its orders, leaving to the Government the responsibility for the war.²⁶

While in 1917, The Lutheran Witness denounced those who stated that the war was a moral crusade, by 1918 it maintained that this was a just war and allowed statements like "our dearly beloved country is at the present time engaged in a righteous war."²⁷ As the war went on, the Synod constantly felt a need to justify itself before the United States public.

The War and the Quadricentennial Celebration

America's entry into World War I took away some of the emphasis which was to be placed on the Quadricentennial celebration, especially any tendencies toward a glorification of the German dimension. This was true not only for the Missouri Synod, but for American Lutherans as a whole.²⁸ For the Missouri Synod, both the war and the Jubilee had to be considered side by side, and so much of the joy that would have colored

²⁶Johnson, p. 108.

²⁷The Lutheran Witness 36 (June 12, 1917):173-75 and 37 (May 28, 1918):120-21.

²⁸Fred W. Meuser, "Facing the Twentieth Century," in The Lutherans in North America, E. Clifford Nelson, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 394-95.

the Quadricentennial of the Reformation was taken away. In his 1917 Presidential Address, Frederick Pfotenhauer stated:

Our Synod meets this year under very extraordinary conditions. In the world a terrible war is raging, in which nearly all the nations of the earth are engaged, so that streams of blood are flowing daily, and thousands, yes, millions, of human beings are being cut down by the sword, or by famine and pestilence. And in the Church preparations are being made for a grand Jubilee, to wit, the Four hundredth Anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation of the Church by Dr. Martin Luther. Both the World War and the Church Jubilee affect us deeply, since we are both citizens of our land and members of the Church . . .

Accordingly, since we Christians may not grow weary in our Church-work under the stress of war, it is also fitting that we, as members of the Church, celebrate the Jubilee of the Reformation, even while our country is experiencing the misery and terrors of war.²⁹

Thus, the Synod's Jubilee celebration went on as scheduled, albeit without much of the enthusiasm that had been expected in its planning. Yet, afterward, as the Missouri Synod was receiving anti-German attacks, some within the Synod felt that maybe the American Lutheran churches had been too "boastful and vain" in celebrating the Reformation Quadricentennial.³⁰ During the Quadricentennial, the American press made much of the statistic that there were seventy million Lutherans in the world and that forty million of them were in Germany. This publicity supported those who associated Prussian Lutheranism with American Lutheranism. The Synod's publications countered by stating that the figure of seventy million Lutherans was grossly exaggerated; that Germany contained only seventeen million Lutheran communicants and that the great majority of Lutheran preachers in Germany were so far off doctrinally that they could not be ordained in any Lutheran synod in the United States.³¹

²⁹ 1917 Proceedings, pp. 3-4.

³⁰ Johnson, p. 111.

³¹ Ibid.

For all the anticipation and planning that went into the Jubilee celebration, and for all that the planning of the Quadricentennial of the Reformation played in uniting American Lutheran bodies, it is rather sad and ironic that the actual celebration was not a more joyous occasion.

The War and the Language Transition

The anti-German attitude in America during World War I had a profound effect on the Missouri Synod's use of the German language. Although it did not bring about a total transformation to the English language, the war did hasten the transformation. At its 1917 Milwaukee Convention, the Missouri Synod adopted a new constitution which dropped the word "German" from the Synod's official title. The Synod was now officially called "The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States,"³² During the early months of America's involvement in the war, Der Lutheraner was used less-frequently as a "sounding board" on the war issue, and an increased attention was given to the Synod's English language organ, The Lutheran Witness.³³ By the end of 1917 the American Publicity Bureau launched an unofficial, monthly periodical in English called the American Lutheran. In its first issue, dated January 1918, the American Lutheran explained that its objectives were to make the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church better known and help correct misunderstandings concerning the Church's stand on the war and other issues. Yet, it was also hoped that this publication would help make the Synod more conscious

³²1917 Proceedings, p. 43.

³³Johnson, p. 105.

of its obligation to evangelize among the non-German, English-speaking portion of the American populace.³⁴

With the printing of the American Lutheran, there began a movement to Americanize the Missouri Synod from within, and the anti-German pressure in the United States helped the movement gain momentum. Synodical leaders responded by showing that much of the anti-German language legislation was unreasonable, but they advised for change where needed.³⁵ Because of the anti-German pressure and the reluctant approval from synodical leadership, changes began to occur throughout the Missouri Synod. By June 1918, English was to be the only language used in Nebraska Lutheran schools. Congregations which were previously bilingual often dropped their German service, while those using only German added an English service. Congregation, District, and the synodical constitutions which restricted services and transactions to German were changed to allow for the use of English. Congregations translated their names into English and dropped the word "German" where it appeared. It can be seen that war-inspired pressures did much to condense into less than two years what would have undoubtedly taken much longer.³⁶

Despite the pressures and the rapid changes occurring throughout the Synod, there were still those who were reluctant to give up the German language. Some feared that a vital Lutheranism could not exist without German. Others believed that to change from German to English was to interfere with God's plan for the Lutheran Church. Still others contended

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 105-06. The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau was not an official organization of the Missouri Synod. *Infra*, p. 157.

³⁵ Nohl, p. 58.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

that the use of English would make the Lutheran Church more susceptible to liberalism and would destroy the beauty and inspiration of church services.³⁷

Although not a rabid proponent of this viewpoint, President Frederick Pfotenhauer was one who wished to retain the German language; mainly because seventy-five percent of the Missouri Synod parishioners still understood the Gospel better in that language. Dr. Pfotenhauer also feared that the loss of the German language could mean the loss of the Missouri synod and even the loss of the Gospel in this country. While Theodore Graebner had been steadily pushing for a greater acceptance of the English language in the Missouri Synod through The Lutheran Witness, President Pfotenhauer disagreed and expressed his personal feelings to Graebner in a letter. The original German letter is provided here so that the reader can appreciate Pfotenhauer in the language with which he was most comfortable (a translation is provided as Appendix F):

Sie ersuchten mich in St. Louis mich ueber Ihren Artikel, "Opportunity" auszusprechen. Ich tue es gern und zwar der Freimuetigkeit, die man einem verehrten Freunde und zumal einem Mitchristen gegeneuber gebrauchen darf. Was Sie von unserer Gelegenheit in Bezug auf das Englische schreiben, so stimme ich demselben im allgemeinen bei; doch hatten wir diese grosse Gelegenheit bereits vor dem Kriege, und unsere Synode war daran, diese Aufgabe immer besser zu loesen und die Schaetze unserer Kirche vermoege des englischen Gefaesses auszuteilen. Ob die Gelegenheit so gross bleibt, wissen wir nicht. Wenn das Wueten gegen die deutsche Sprache weiter um sich greift, und unser Volk sich wenig darum kuemmert, dass ihm das Gefaess genommen wird, aus dem es noch am bequemsten vor einigen wochen das Wasser des Lebens trinken konnte, so mag Gott das Evangelium noch rarer in unserm Lande machen, als es bislang war. Die Zukunft wird es erst zeigen, wie wir aus deisem Feuer hervorgehen werden.

Was Sie in Bezug auf die deutsche Sprache schreiben, kann ich nicht teilen. Es mag ja sein, dass sie hierzulande schneller abnimmt infolge des Krieges; doch sollte man das nicht so bestimmt behaupten. Jedenfalls war bis zum Ausbruch des Krieges 75% unserer kirchlichen Arbeit deutsch, weil die Leute eben in dieser Sprache das Evangelium besser berstanden als in der englischen Sprache. Das hat sich nicht

³⁷ Ibid.

durch den Krieg geaendert. Daher kann ich es nicht als eine geringfuegige Sache ansehen, wenn ploetzlich die Sprache genommen wird. Da wird der Lauf des Evangeliums gehindert. Viele Christen fangen an zu seufzen wider unsere Obrigkeit, und das ist ihr gewiss nicht gut. Man sollte deswegen es auch nicht als Patriotismus ruehmen und als edle Tat hinstellen, wenn eine Gemeinde unter Druck oder gar ohne Not ploetzlich die Sprache aendert. Was P. Polack zum Beispiel ueber Evansville berichtet, verhaelt sich anders. Mir schreibt P. Heinicke, dass seine Gemeinde vergewaltigt sei. Ein Drittel koenne gar kein Englisch verstehen und ein zweites Drittel nur wenig.

Auch kann ich mich nicht dazu verstehen, dass wir kurzer Hand das Deutsche in den Schulen preisgeben. Mir steht fest, dass dann auch unserer Gemeindeschulen schnell reduziert werden. Gott gebraucht eben allerlei aeussere Umstaende, um uns Menschen das Evangelium zu schenken. Schon der Ort meiner Geburt ist da bedeutsam. Mark Twain wollte ja freilich daraus beweisen, dass alle Leute die in Italien geboren werden katholisch werden und in Japan heidnisch, usw., dass alle Religion Humbug sei.

Faellt das Deutsche in den Schulen, so werden sich die Farmer bedanken, ihre Kinder 2-6 Meilen durch Schnee und Eis zu schicken. Die Public School steht vor der Tuer. Die Lehrere ist ein unschuldiges Fraeulein. Warum das Kind nicht dahin senden? Der Pastor kann schon fuer die Religion sorgen. In den Staedten wird man aus Sparsamkeitsrueckeichten die Schulen eingehen lassen.

Kurz, ich kann nicht erkennen, dass sich durch den Krieg ploetzlich die Lage in unserer Synode geaendert hat. Und wie man es als eine Kalamitaet angesehen haette, wenn man vor dem Kriege kurzerhand alles umgekraempelt haette, so ist es auch eine Kalamitaet, wenn es jetzt geschieht. Daraus folgt aber, dass wie es nicht beguenstigen sollen, sondern nur, wo es sein muss, der Not weichen, und Gott herzlich bitten, dass er bald wieder Frieden sende, damit wir uns weiter erbauen koennen, und dann auch die Sprachenfrage evangelisch loesen. In mein Herz zieht ein nameloser Jammer ein, wenn ich vor meinem Geiste alle unsere Gemeinden Revue passieren lasse und sie daraug pruefe, was sie von geislicher sic Nahrung empfangen, wenn ihnen ploetzlich die Sprache genommen wird, und es tut mir leid, dass der Witness die Sprachen frage zu siner Art patriotischen Issue gemacht hat.

Im Uebringen wollen wir uns in dieser traurigen Zeit damit troesten, dass der Herr seine Kirche leitet und fuehrt und unaufhoerlich baut. Die Tage unserer Synode moegen gezaehlt sein. Das Reich Christi waechst bis zur seligen Vollendung.³⁸

Because President Pfothenhaer had been born in Germany, he was very reluctant to give up his native language, and he believed that the

³⁸ Letter from Frederick Pfothenhauer to Theodore Graebner dated June 14, 1918, Theodore Graebner papers, Box 122, File 6, Concordia Historical Institute.

majority in the Synod felt the same. From this letter we see that it would have hurt Dr. Pfotenhauer terribly to have the German language taken away, and he was saddened when people within the Missouri Synod tried to make it into an issue of patriotism. As time went on Pfotenhaer would continue to hold to this position. Yet, the Synod would change.

The Missouri Synod's Board for Army and Navy

Although the Missouri Synod had been slow in responding to many of the changes necessitated by World War I, this German enclave had the foresight to respond quickly with respect to the care for the spiritual needs of Missouri Synod service men. By the end of the war, 30,066 Missouri Synod parishioners would be serving in America's army or navy.³⁹ Yet, already at the June 1917 synodical convention the delegates directed President Pfotenhauer to appoint an Army and Navy Board to care for Missouri Synod service men.⁴⁰ Like many such committees, all the men chosen were located in one city, and in this instance it was Chicago. The choice of Chicago was undoubtedly due to the fact that "the windy city" was where Pfotenhauer lived and where he established his presidential office. Pfotenhauer made it a point to attend almost every meeting of the Army and Navy Board. The committee consisted of Pastor Carl Eissfeldt (chairman), Pastor F. C. Streufert (secretary), and Mr. Fred Wolff (treasurer) and they set to work early in July 1917. Pastor F. J. Wenchel and Pastor D. H. Steffens, with parishes located in Washington, D.

³⁹The Lutheran Witness 37 (November 26, 1918):369.

⁴⁰1917 Proceedings, p. 35.

C., were chosen as the government liasons.⁴¹

In the midst of rising anti-German pressure, the Army and Navy Board conducted its first sessions and recorded its first minutes in German. And as incredible as that may seem, it even proposed to deal with a government at war against Germany under the title, "Evangelische Lutherische Missionsbehoerde fuer Heer und Flotte." Fortunately, Pastor Wenchel in Washington had the good sense to request a change, and the name was altered to "Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy," and subsequent minutes were recorded in English.⁴²

As the Board began its planning, it soon faced a problem with respect to the Synod's doctrinal position. Because of the short supply of regularly commissioned military chaplains, the government assigned certain volunteer clergy as full-time camp pastors who were assigned to specific camps. Yet, in assigning these camp pastors and in dealing with the multitude of American denominations, government officials decided that all Protestants must work through either the Federal Council of Churches or the Y.M.C.A. It soon became clear that the government might give Lutherans special consideration as a group, but it was unlikely to recognize distinctions among them. In view of its policy on unionism, the Missouri Synod officials had to make some practical decisions.⁴³

⁴¹Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union: Documents from the Army and Navy Board, 1917 and 1918," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 41 (February 1968):49.

⁴²Minutes of the Board for Army and Navy, July 13, 1917 and July 19, 1917, C.H.I.

⁴³Alan Graebner, pp. 51-52.

The first mention of any possible cooperation with Lutherans outside the Synodical Conference came at the meeting of the Army and Navy Board on October 12, 1917:

Praeses Pfothenhauer presented a telegram sent by Dr. Schmauck (President of the General Council) in which he requested us to send a representative to New York, to take part in a meeting held by various Lutheran Church Bodies. . . . Resolved to ask the Rev. George Schmidt of Brooklyn, New York . . . to represent this Board at said meeting.⁴⁴

After several meetings, at which Pastor Schmidt was in attendance, the Army and Navy Board drew up a five point agreement for relations with what was to be called the National Lutheran Commission for Soldier and Sailor Welfare:

1. The Synodical Conference will co-operate with the National Lutheran Commission in every way possible;
2. Pay their share of all general expenses;
3. Co-operate completely with the National Lutheran Commission or its representatives in dealing with the government, camp and cantonment commandants, the Federal Council of Churches, the Y.M.C.A., etc.
4. Have their appointees as camp pastors sanctioned by this Commission;
5. But the Synodical Conference reserves the right to minister to the spiritual needs of the men from their congregations through their own representatives wherever it is possible to do so.⁴⁵

At the November 14, 1917 meeting of the Army and Navy Board the reasons for the Synod's cooperation were set forth:

⁴⁴Minutes of the Board for Army and Navy, October 12, 1917.

⁴⁵"Relation of Synodical Conference to National Lutheran Commission," The Lutheran Witness 37 (July 9, 1918):219. Although the work of the Board represented the Synodical Conference, the Wisconsin Synod was the only other member with representatives on Missouri's Army and Navy Board.

A few weeks ago the Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy was requested to attend a meeting of the various Lutheran Church bodies of this country to consider Soldiers' and Sailors' welfare. The vast importance of this work made it imperative to have this Board represented at said meeting. It was pointed out that if the Lutheran Church as such intended to minister effectively to the needs of their boys it would be absolutely necessary to present a united front with the government as well as with other church bodies. . . .

After careful and prayerful consideration of the entire situation we deemed it a necessity to co-operate with the National Lutheran Association and we agreed to join in this movement provided satisfactory arrangements could be made; arrangements which would not necessitate unionistic work on our part. . . .

This new body was then organized as the "National Lutheran Association for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare" with offices in New York. Rev. Arth. Brunn of our body was named as member of the Executive

Under selfsame conditions mentioned in the above this Board is cooperating with the "Lutheran Brotherhood of America." Their object and purpose being to erect barracks within the camps and on the battlefield. Thus a grand opportunity will be offered us for public worship with our boys as also a place of recreation.⁴⁶

This action by the Army and Navy Board upset several Missourians who perceived it as unionism. Chief of these was Theodore Graebner who wrote letters to both President Pfothenauer and the Board's secretary, Pastor Streufert. Dr. Pfothenauer responded to Graebner:

Your copy received. I thank God that in the editors at St. Louis we have such an excellent safety catch for our Synod. Our Board for Army and Navy is in a difficult position and sincerely strives to carry through our principles. I often attend their meetings.

I have told them that in possible connections with the Y.M.C.A., Brotherhood, and so forth, we must limit ourselves to externals only. If any kind of mixed service is demanded of us, we may in no case join, even if we could then serve our boys very economically. Our boys may not (after all) come back from the camps spiritually infected and God does not demand from us more than we can do in good conscience.

When Pastor Streufert sent me the proceedings of the Brotherhood I was startled and at the same time that I sent him a critique, I requested him to call a meeting to include our vice presidents and representatives from the Wisconsin Synod.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Board for Army and Navy, November 14, 1917.

⁴⁷ Letter from Frederick Pfothenauer to Theodore Graebner dated

In his letter to Pastor Streufert, Graebner made reference to articles that had appeared in The Lutheran of December 6 and the Lutheran Companion of November 24 which claimed that the National Lutheran Commission was a joint missionary work of all Lutheran synods, including the Missouri Synod. Professor Graebner went on to say:

The second question is: Whether syncretism or not, can this arrangement be announced in a manner which will not prove the entering wedge of unionism? I say it cannot. The peril is imminent, and what the results will certainly be I know from my experiences in the Norwegian Synod. . .

I do rest assured that your board is "not unionistic in spirit." Knowing the men on it I will say that I believe none of them capable of betraying the synod.⁴⁸

The letter apparently had an effect on Pastor Streufert because on December 20, 1917, the Army and Navy Board resolved to sever all relations with the National Lutheran Commission and the Lutheran Brotherhood of America. This action, in turn, upset not only the National Lutheran Commission, but the New York Pastoral Conference of the Missouri Synod as well. Early in January 1918, the New York Pastoral Conference held a "mass meeting" to protest the Chicago Board's action. When the Army and Navy Board recorded this action in its January 14, 1918 minutes it also reported the support of its own position by the Texas District Conference and the Cleveland District Conference.⁴⁹

To settle the problem, the St. Louis seminary faculty was called upon to render a Gutachten. At a meeting attended by President Pfotenhauer,

December 8, 1917. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 123, File 7, C.H.I.
Translated by Alan Graebner, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Letter from Theodore Graebner to F. C. Streufert dated December 12, 1917, Theodore Graebner papers, Box 123, File 7, C.H.I.

⁴⁹ Minutes of the Board for Army and Navy, January 14, 1918.

the Army and Navy Board, the seminary faculty, Vice Presidents H. P. Eckhardt and J. Hilgendorf as well as George Schmidt and Paul Lindemann⁵⁰ from the New York Conference, Prof. F. Bente made the concluding motion which passed:

We do not consider it improper if our Board for Army and Navy in Chicago designates one or more who would attend the meetings of the Executive of the National Lutheran Commission in the interest of the work of our Synod for our soldiers.⁵¹

When the Army and Navy Board met on January 21, 1918, they passed the following resolutions:

1. That we can cooperate with the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers and Sailors Welfare in matters external, pertaining to representation with the government, each matter to be mutually discussed.
2. That we agree to have our camp pastors accredited by the representatives of the National Lutheran Commission . . .
3. That we are willing to discuss with the National Lutheran Commission . . . matters external, pertaining to arrangement of time and place of worship within the camp.
4. If other questions of an external nature should arise, we are willing to discuss them.
5. Resolved that Rev. Lindemann represent this Board according to lines laid down in these resolutions.⁵²

Paul Lindemann refused the position, however, and Carl Eissfeldt, the Board's chairman, resigned. The most likely reason for both of these actions was that Rev. Arthur Brunn had been disregarded, and both men believed the Missouri Synod should have stuck to its original five points of agreement with the National Lutheran Commission. Eissfeldt was

⁵⁰Paul Lindemann had just become editor of the newly founded American Lutheran.

⁵¹Alan Graebner, p. 57.

⁵²Minutes of the Army and Navy Board, January 21, 1918.

replaced by W. C. Kohn, director of Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, who, like Streufert, felt negatively toward Missouri's relations with the National Lutheran Commission.⁵³

Because of this turn of events, the New York Pastoral Conference met again to discuss the Missouri Synod's involvement with the National Lutheran Commission, and passed the following resolutions:

1. That a Board be appointed to take charge of chaplaincy work among our Lutheran boys in the camps along the Atlantic Coast, in a territory running from Buffalo south on a line to the Gulf.
2. That this Board consist, for the first, of the Mission Board of the Atlantic District . . .
3. This Board will cooperate in external matters with the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers and Sailors Welfare.

RESOLVED to take desk-room with the National Lutheran Commission in . . . New York, and to offer to pay our fair share of the office expenses.

RESOLVED to notify all Camp Pastors now working under the supervision of the Chicago Board in our territory, of our action, and in case they decide to do their work under the direction of the Eastern Board, to offer to accredit them and, if they so desire, to extend to them a call.⁵⁴

In the face of such bold action, President Pfotenbauer and three Vice-Presidents of Synod went to New York where a meeting was held February 26, 1918 with about one hundred pastors in attendance. At the meeting a compromise was reached and it was decided to allow the New York Board to continue and to stick to the original five points of agreement with the National Lutheran Commission, with the understanding that work be conducted only in matters external. However, the Army and Navy Board

⁵³ Alan Graebner, p. 57.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Army and Navy Board, February 18, 1918.

located in Chicago retained the power to issue calls and the power of the purse. That various power plays were involved is quite obvious and friction between the Chicago and the Eastern Boards continued well after the February 26th meeting.⁵⁵

Matters became worse when, in the summer of 1918, the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers and Sailors Welfare paved the way for the formation of the National Lutheran Council. The formation of the Council seemed to many in the Missouri Synod proof of their suspicions toward the National Lutheran Commission. The Army and Navy Board reacted by conducting all government business through its original Washington liasons, Pastors Steffens and Wenchel. Dr. Knubel of the National Lutheran Commission took this as an abrogation of Missouri's original five-point agreement. To this Director Kohn, chairman of the Army and Navy Board, replied:

Evidently the understanding of the N.L.C. is that the N.L.C. is to be the exclusive representative before the Federal Officials and with the National War Time Committee of the Federal Council of Churches in all matters affecting the work to be done with and for the Lutheran boys under the Flag by either chaplains or camp pastors; while our understanding was and is that, we were to be considered co-ordinate bodies, seeking harmonious and also joint action whenever deemed necessary and as mutually agreed, for which reason we agreed to have our representative, Pastor Brunn, sit with the N.L.C. not as a constituent member, but merely as a consultative associate.

We did not, therefore, consider it a violation of our agreement either to retain Pastors Steffens and Wenchel as our Washington representatives, nor to have them take action even in reference to our camp pastors and the chaplains. . . .

And now let us say that, as the N.L.C. has made complaints against our Board and the men working with and under it, so we too might have made complaints against the N.L.C. for acts violative of the

⁵⁵ Alan Graebner, p. 59.

agreement. . . . Because of this condition of things we consider the present agreement with its five points inadequate and unsatisfactory.

In response to this action of the Chicago based Army and Navy Board, the Eastern Board again raised protests. Both Pastor Schoenfeld (associated with the New York Lutheran Society and New York Quadricentenary Committee) and Rev. Paul Lindemann wrote lengthy letters to Professor Kohn. While Schoenfeld's letter was friendly in tone, requesting cooperation with the National Lutheran Commission so that the Missouri Synod could have proper representation before the government, Paul Lindemann appeared to be almost threatening:

. . . We hoped that the spirit of distrust prevalent among the members of the Western Board against the members of the National Lutheran Commission would in the course of time disappear. This has not been the case. . . . The men of the Commission feel that they are not trusted and that there never has been out West a real desire for co-operation, nor even a desire to recognize the work of the National Lutheran Commission. On the other hand, the Chicago Board has always feared that the Commission was trying to push it aside and to place it into a subordinate position. . . . I am not inclined to conjure up any spooks, but there is not only among our laity, but also among our clergy a very violent spirit of resentment against the policy which our Synodical Conference is pursuing at the present time. . . . I am personally most deeply concerned lest a breach should occur in our synod and it is not an idle fear that such a breach is possible. . . . I have . . . found a general ferment of dissatisfaction, and the remarkable part of it is that this sentiment is not confined to the "verloren Osten," but that the orthodox West is also filled with it. . . . I would long since have thrown up this thankless job if I had not feared that it might lead to the resignation of the whole Eastern Department and this in turn would lead to the airing of matters which would have led to all sorts of complications. . . . You may contend that I am seeing things in too black a light, but my fears are not mine only, but have been expressed by dozens of men who have been consulted during the last two weeks.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Letter from W. C. Kohn to Dr. Knubel dated September 13, 1918, Theodore Graebner papers, Box 123, File 7, C.H.K.

⁵⁷ Letter from Paul Lindemann to W. C. Kohn dated October 4, 1918 and letter from Wm. Schoenfeld to W. C. Kohn dated October 15, 1918. Ibid.

Before responding to Lindemann and Schoenfeld, Kohn sent both letters to Theodore Graebner for advice. Graebner replied:

I talked the matter over with Prof. [Ludwig] F[uerbringer] this morning and we agree that you ought to make a stand for our Scriptural principles even if a break should come, yes, even if there should be a split. Better have that now than later, when through such agencies as the Lutheran Bureau, the Lutheran Survey, Brotherhood Literature, etc., etc., our Synod has been poisoned in head and members. . . . Do you know that on the Board of Airy Seminary (Gen. Council) there are six or seven Freemasons? . . . No, there can be no union with such people, who besides, never fail to rail at our "Pharisaic holier-than-thou attitude," our "Calvinism" etc. . . . You cannot possibly lose out even if the matter should be brought before . . . the Delegate Synod. I believe however that there will be precious few who will dare to take the plunge. Even if there were hundreds, better be rid of them now lest we have the same situation soon that obtains in the Norwegian Synod. . . . The Norwegians have taught us a lesson. There the large pro-Missouri faction did not dare to stand separate; they temporized and temporized, fearing an open break, and the end of it is that a mere handful are left. . . . And only six years ago that was a strong, faithful Lutheran body.⁵⁸

Professor Kohn wrote to Paul Lindemann:

. . . I believe I have not deserved such a slur from the hands of a person, whom I have always treated with the utmost courtesy, as the contents of my letters have always had the stamp of brotherly love and forbearance. . . .

Our Board has heard of no conference, which is dissatisfied with our principles, neither in the East nor in the Middle States, nor in the West, but have heard very favorable reports from Synodical conventions and pastoral district conferences. . . .

Consider furthermore, that we are servants, to whom the Synodical Conference has entrusted the care for the spiritual welfare of their boys. This trust involves that we adhere to the religious principles of this body which we are representing. If we as a Board cast aside such principles, we, you and I, would commit a crime which would be treason to our Church in the vilest sense of the word. . . .

Therefore, it was resolved that the entire Church Board for Army and Navy has a conference with the Eastern Department at a place to be selected. . . . In this meeting shall be discussed the principles laid down in the letters of pastors Lindemann and Schoenfeldt

⁵⁸Letter from Theodore Graebner to W. C. Kohn dated October 31, 1918. Ibid.

to our Board, and the principles in general involved in our relation with the N.L.C.

Until such conference has been held, and until we in our own midst have agreed upon our own principles, no action can be taken with the N.L.C., but they will be asked to wait until this conference has taken place.⁵⁹

At a meeting with the Eastern Missouri Synod pastors and representatives of the National Lutheran Commission in November the Army and Navy Board set forth the following principles:

First -- that we consider the original agreement abrogated, as being inadequate and unsatisfactory, according to our letter of September 13, 1918.

Second -- that it is not our purpose to sever all connections and cooperation with National Lutheran Commission.

Third -- that we are willing, as an independent body, to cooperate in externals with National Lutheran Commission in concrete cases whenever and wherever National Lutheran Commission and Army and Navy Board may deem it expedient. Joint action may be proposed by either party.⁶⁰

Further cooperation with the National Lutheran Commission actually became a mute issue after November 11, 1918 when the Armistice ended the war and the major emphasis of Lutheran cooperation was transferred to the National Lutheran Council. Tension was alleviated between the Eastern and Western Boards when the 1920 convention of the Missouri Synod dissolved its Army and Navy Board.⁶¹

⁵⁹Letter from W. C. Kohn to Paul Lindemann dated October 27, 1918. Ibid.

⁶⁰Minutes of the Army and Navy Board, November 21, 1918.

⁶¹The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 31st Regular Meeting at Detroit, Michigan, June 16-25, 1920. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), pp. 51-52.

The struggle that occurred between the Missouri Synod's Army and Navy Board and the National Lutheran Commission was a struggle over principles. The Missouri Synod officials were willing to cooperate, but on their terms of cooperation only in matters of concrete externals. The other Lutheran leaders in the National Lutheran Commission (that is, Dr. Schmauck and Dr. Knubel) preferred a more open-ended cooperation, for which Missouri's original five-point agreement allowed. The Missouri Synod appeared quite content with the original five point agreement until articles appeared in other synods' organs associating the work of the National Lutheran Commission with that of a joint mission endeavor. This produced a severe reaction on the part of Missouri Synod officials, which in turn produced a severe reaction on the part of Eastern Missouri Synod pastors. Unfortunately, Missouri Synod officials could not establish a consistent, stable policy to use in their dealings with the National Lutheran Commission (a policy that was necessary for dealings with the United States government). Probably the major problem was the fact that the Missouri Synod's Board for Army and Navy was located in Chicago, while all of the camps and the National Lutheran Commission were located on the East Coast.

It is interesting to note that the more "progressive" Eastern Missourians tried to force the Synod into a more open-ended position on cooperation with the National Lutheran Commission through power-plays and what might even be considered rebellion. Fortunately, a split in the Missouri Synod did not occur at this time. However, a dissatisfied minority can be seen -- dissatisfied not only with the parochial German attitude of many of the Missouri Synod officials, but also with the Synod's

principles, the doctrinal position, which prevented the Missouri Synod from total cooperation and eventual union with the other Lutheran Church bodies.

The National Lutheran Council

The National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare, organized in 1917, originally involved seven Lutheran church bodies. However, by 1918 it had grown to include twelve bodies. The Synodical Conference maintained "an external cooperation." The cooperation that was achieved by these church bodies led to the suggestion that a permanent "national council or committee representing the entire Lutheran Church so far as possible" be created. The result was a meeting of presidents and representatives of "various Lutheran Synods" at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, July 17, 1918. It was agreed that such a council should be created and a set of purposes, duties and functions were outlined at a second meeting at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 17, 1918. On September 6, 1918, the National Lutheran Council came into being at a meeting held in Chicago. The Council contained representatives from the General Synod, the General Council (both of which joined the United Synod South to form the United Lutheran Church in America), the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Iowa Synod, the Augustana Synod, the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church and the Danish Lutheran Church. The presidents and representatives of the bodies cooperating in the National Lutheran Council met from March 11-13, 1919, at which time they drew up the so-called "Chicago Theses" of 1919 in an effort to achieve doctrinal unity.

However, the Chicago Theses of the National Lutheran Council were never officially adopted.⁶²

The Missouri Synod refused to join the National Lutheran Council because doctrinal agreement had not first been reached. President Pfothenhauer had been invited to attend the initial meeting in Harrisburg, but declined the invitation. Instead, Pastor Steffens from Washington, D. C. attended and reported to Dr. Pfothenhauer. With regard to the National Lutheran Council, President Pfothenhauer wrote to Theodore Graebner:

Concerning the National Council, I can share with you the following. I received an invitation to go to Harrisburg and was pressured from many different sides to send representatives to the assembly. And yet, I strived against this and in the end informed our Washington Committee that they could go to Harrisburg as guests if they believed it would be profitable. But, it should be explained by the committee that they do not represent me, but rather they are only guests. I am writing to Dr. Knubel that I must unfortunately not accept this invitation. Steffens reported from the assembly in Harrisburg and wrote that they wanted to organize. He also shared with me a constitution which should be accepted in Pittsburgh. I sent him a telegram immediately and also wrote him a letter. I wrote to him to tell the men that they cannot count on us. President Brandt and Director Kohn also hold my position and took part in the consultation. I then received more information about the assembly in Chicago, but I was troubled no further. . . . I do not believe that there will be further attempts to pull us into this union. It does not hurt that we are becoming isolated, as long as we have God's Word on our side. It all depends on whether we obtain His strength to bear this isolation.⁶³

As the other Lutheran church bodies grew closer together, the Missouri Synod realized that it was growing more and more isolated. One

⁶²Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 292-301.

⁶³Letter from Frederick Pfothenhauer to Theodore Graebner dated September 21, 1918, Theodore Graebner papers, Box 123, File 7, C.H.I. Translated by this writer.

can detect from President Pfothenhauer's letter a note of fear and sorrow over that fact. Yet, this isolation was a matter of conviction based on the truth of God's Word, which Pfothenhauer believed should not be compromised at any cost.

From this letter, one can also detect a reluctance on the part of President Pfothenhauer to deal personally with representatives from other Lutheran church bodies. In some respects, he viewed such negotiations as troublesome. However, he was willing to have the Missouri Synod represented under the status of "guests" and readily delegated this responsibility to men within the area of the meeting. In making decisions on such matters as participation in the National Lutheran Council, Pfothenhauer sought the advice of other leading Missouri Synod officials. In the decision regarding the Synod's refusal to participate in the National Lutheran Council, Pfothenhauer made every attempt to act in the best interests of the Missouri Synod. Despite his reluctance to even join in the negotiations, Pfothenhauer stood on the principle that union could take place only where there was unity.

Some Concluding Comments on the War's Effects

The entry of the United States into World War I brought on rapid changes for the Missouri Synod and American Lutheranism. For the Missouri Synod, the war accelerated its transition to the English language. Yet, maybe even more important, the war broke down the ethnic ties to a land that American Lutherans had idealized for many reasons -- to which they now realized they had very little in common. For members of the Missouri Synod, this meant a greater support for the United States as a country and the American people as a whole (not just the German immigrants).

This was a major step in the continuing Americanization of the Missouri Synod. Yet, it would take the Synod more than fifty years beyond this point in history to understand what Americanization really means. For many American Lutherans, Americanization was misconstrued to mean not only a change of language, national identity and mission outlook, but also a change in doctrinal understanding, a compromising and relativizing of confessional principles.

A major part of American Lutheranism saw the war as an opportunity to unite behind a common cause, that is, the care of Lutheran servicemen and the presenting of an united front before the government. Unfortunately, doctrine played little part in this cause. For that reason, the Missouri Synod could not join in the American Lutheran product of World War I -- the National Lutheran Council. Because the Missouri Synod was not as Americanized as many of the other Lutheran bodies (and here one must also include the relativizing aspect), the Missouri Synod continued to stand firmly on its confessional position. Lutheran union could only be based on Lutheran unity, agreement in doctrine and practice.

CHAPTER VI

THE INTERSYNODICAL CONFERENCES

In Chapter IV¹ the beginning of the Intersynodical Movement was discussed. The first conferences were held in 1915 by Synodical Conference pastors in Sibley County, Minnesota. They were soon moved to St. Paul where theses were drafted on conversion and election. Following the May 3-4, 1916 meetings at Trinity Lutheran Church, where seventy-five pastors from four different synods signed the "St. Paul Theses," the document was circulated throughout the United States and eventually signed by over 545 Lutheran pastors. In addition, meetings in St. Paul continued. By this time, synodical officials had become interested. In June 1916, President Pfotenhauer was in St. Paul attending Missouri Synod pastoral conferences. Concerning these meetings, Pfotenhauer wrote the following to his daughter Martha:

Dear Matzel, We have very much work here, one pastoral conference after the other. We are discussing the intersynodical conferences and often attack each other sharply, but things are clearing up, thank God!²

The pastors involved in the intersynodical discussions petitioned the various synods (Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Iowa) to appoint committees

¹Supra, pp. 76-81.

²Letter from Frederick Pfotenhauer to Martha Pfotenhauer dated June 25, 1916, Pfotenhauer papers, Box 1, File 4, Concordia Historical Institute. Transcribed and translated from the original German by Erich B. Allwardt, September 29, 1979.

and begin official discussions. Thus, at Missouri's 1917 Delegate Synod, Prof. Mezger, Pastor J. G. F. Kleinhans and Pastor O. L. Hohenstein were elected as the Missouri Synod Intersynodical Committee. It was the first time Synod had elected a committee for intersynodical discussions.

This was the beginning of the Intersynodical Movement. Like the Laienbewegung, the Intersynodical Movement met with some official opposition. Both movements were instigated by individuals who did not represent the officialdom of their church bodies. Whereas the Laienbewegung involved laymen in opposition to pastors, the Intersynodical Movement involved pastors in opposition to theological professors. Before the Intersynodical Movement had run its course, it would cover fourteen years, and like the Laienbewegung, it too would end in failure.³

Early Discussions of the Intersynodical Committee

Even though the Intersynodical Movement had begun with opposition to theological professors, members of seminary faculties were permitted on the official Intersynodical Committee. However, parish pastors were still in the majority. In addition, the movement continued to avoid the status controversiae (the controversy of the recent past), basing all of the discussions on the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions alone.⁴

³John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud, Minn.: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970), p. 253.

⁴Fred W. Meuser, The Formation of the American Lutheran Church (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1958), pp. 249-50.

Amidst the rumbles of war and the inner strife over Missouri Synod's ministry to its service men, discussions began involving the Intersynodical Committees of the Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa and Ohio Synods. Between 1918 and 1920, several discussions were held concerning the doctrines of conversion and election. On the basis of these discussions, ten theses were prepared on the doctrine of conversion.⁵ These theses were published and submitted to all the District Presidents of the Missouri Synod for inspection and discussion. In view of the work that had been conducted up to this point by the Intersynodical Committee, the 1920 Missouri Synod Convention resolved:

WHEREAS . . . unity in the doctrine of election - has not yet been achieved, Synod resolved furthermore -

1. To declare itself ready together with our sister Synod of Wisconsin to continue the doctrinal discussions with the Iowa and Ohio Synods.
2. That the present committee, consisting of Prof. Geo. Mezger, Pastors Otto L. Hohenstein and J. G. F. Kleinhans, continue to represent our Synod at the conferences.

In conclusion Synod also expressed the hope that the Lord of the Church . . . would continue to vouchsafe His blessings on these conferences, and recommended them to the intercessory prayers of its members, in order that the praiseworthy aim of complete doctrinal union, and God willing, of peaceful cooperation of said synods may be achieved.⁶

Between the years 1920 and 1923, the Intersynodical Committees met three to four times annually.⁷ In 1922, theses and antitheses on

⁵Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 251.

⁶The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 31st Regular Meeting in Detroit, Michigan, on June 16-25, 1920 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), pp. 83-84.

⁷The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 32nd Regular Meeting in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on June 20-29, 1923 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), p. 83.

election were made public and many hoped that the Synodical Conference and the other German Lutheran synods would soon establish fellowship.⁸

Yet, protest was lodged against the theses on election from within the Missouri Synod. Therefore, the Synod resolved to appoint a committee to test the theses set forth by the Intersynodical Committee and submit a full report to the 1926 Missouri Synod convention. All objections from members of the Synod were to be sent to this group. The committee appointed to examine the theses and antitheses on the doctrines of conversion and election consisted of Profs. R. C. Neitzel and Th. Engelder of the Synod's Springfield Seminary, and Pastor Paul Schultz. In addition, the 1923 Missouri Synod convention resolved:

1. To continue the discussions and to that end again elect an Intersynodical Committee;
2. To express its joy over the fact that these earnest efforts to get together with the other Lutheran synods are being made. Synod hopes that by God's grace complete unity of faith will be achieved.⁹

In 1923, Prof. Mezger went to Germany to head the seminary of the Saechsische Freikirche at Berlin and was replaced on the Missouri Synod Intersynodical Committee by Prof. Theodroe Graebner.¹⁰ In addition, Pastor Otto Hohenstein was replaced by Prof. W. Arndt.¹¹ From 1923

⁸ Meuser, p. 250.

⁹ 1923 Proceedings, p. 83.

¹⁰ Koehler, p. 254. Because Graebner was on the committee responsible for the building of the Synod's new seminary campus in Clayton, Mo., as well as teaching at Concordia Seminary and serving as editor for The Lutheran Witness, he was reluctant to serve on the Intersynodical Committee. However, President Pfotenhauer made a special appeal and Graebner agreed. Letter from Theodore Graebner to Rev. J. G. F. Kleinhans dated October 9, 1923. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 113, File 2, C.H.I.

¹¹ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 33rd

on, professors would be in the majority on Missouri's Intersynodical Committee.

Trouble Arise That Hamper Agreement

In addition to new representation on the Intersynodical Committee, other changes took place as well. Between 1923 and 1926, the Buffalo Synod joined the discussions. Also, since basic agreement had already been reached on the doctrines of conversion and election, the Committee discussed other points that had been at issue since 1880 and drafted theses on the following: the Scriptures, the Lutheran Symbols, Church-fellowship, the Church, the Spiritual Priesthood, the Office of the Ministry, the Antichrist, Chiliasm, Sunday, and Open Questions.¹²

Problems first started to surface in the Fall of 1923. Dr. Stub, President of the Norwegian Synod, wrote an article in the August 22 issue of Luthersk Tidende claiming that the theses of the Intersynodical Committee on election and conversion were in complete agreement with the Norwegian Opgjoer. This statement was not devastating in itself because many Missiouians, particularly Graebner, still believed that:

The theses of the Committee agree in no way with the Opgjoer, but rather they condemn it as a document which bases itself partly on human fundamentals and brings about a teaching against Scripture as well as the Confessions.¹³

Regular Meeting at St. Louis, Missouri, on June 9-18, 1926 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1926), p. 136.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Letter from Theodore Graebner to Frederick Pfotenhauer dated September 12, 1923. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 113, File 2, C.H.I. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe. Throughout the Intersynodical Discussions it was Graebner who kept President Pfotenhauer informed. He sent him regular reports of the meetings, as well as any other pertinent information.

However, a major setback in the discussions took place when Dr. R. C. H. Lenski of the Ohio Synod set forth a doctrinal position that differed from the Intersynodical Theses on conversion and election. Lenski was editor of the Ohio Synod's official German organ, Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, and beginning in the Fall of 1923 through the Spring of 1924 he published a series of articles which basically resurrected the old Predestinarian Controversy. To this, Theodore Graebner responded to Dr. Lenski by way of personal letter:

The series has been regarded with various degrees of apprehension. Some of us would emphasize that such expressions of dissent should be recorded with the Synodical Committee, and not published in the church papers. . . . Others look upon your articles as a restatement of what they call "the old Ohio position." Still others believe that these articles were written for the deliberate purpose of throwing a monkey-wrench into the union movement. I am stating all this objectively. All seem to agree that our official papers should not discuss these theses while negotiations are still under way. . . . I can say that upon first and second reading my impression is that we shall not be able to get together on theses carrying this interpretation of the doctrines of Election and Conversion.¹⁴

After the Spring 1924 meetings of the Intersynodical Committee, Graebner reported the following to President Pfotenhauer:

Our Missouri Committee, on the first day of the Committee's sitting, has demanded that the Ohioaners take a position on the Lenski articles. On the second day we received three sentences as an answer: 1) We regret that etc; 2) We promise to consult with Lenski. We remain, as before, with the Theses; 3) The members of the Synodical Conference are begged not to reply openly. We then replied for all representatives of the Synodical Conference: 1) We regret only the "that" and not the "what" of the above spoken articles will be condemned; 2) We request an expression of your opinion concerning the false doctrine and the contents of the series of articles . . .

Other than that, we accomplished a number of things, - the position on Scripture and Unionism, and in future meetings we will discuss the Ministry, Chiliasm, Sunday, Antichrist, and out of these should be made theses.

¹⁴Letter from Theodore Graebner to Dr. R. C. H. Lenski dated February 2, 1924. Ibid. This letter was written in English.

On the one side this Lenski thing has convinced me that in our position on conversion and election we do not bring a synergistic view, but a genuinely Lutheran position and I hope the Springfielders agree. On the other side I do not see how the Ohioaners can succeed in clarifying and bringing together the disturbance brought on by Lenski and what the leaders of Ohio state.

. . . Not our response, but Lenski's articles have disrupted our striving for unity and this disturbs us the most.¹⁵

During the summer of 1924 (July 15 in Chicago and July 29 and 30 in Dubuque), the Intersynodical Committee met again and completed the supposedly "final copy" of the Intersynodical Theses. Unfortunately, because of other commitments, neither Profs. Graebner nor Arndt could attend. In their absence, Pastor Kleinhans signed for the whole committee. However, when both Graebner and Arndt received copies of the document, they found they could not agree with the statement on the Ministry because it had been "rewritten with the view of the Wisconsinites." Under the influence of the Wisconsin Synod's Prof. John Philipp Kohler, the document had made no distinction between the office of Bishop (Seelsorger, Pastoren) and other kinds of ministry (teacher, lay leader). Graebner sent a letter to President Pfotenhauer, with a copy to Arndt, asking: "Was nun tun? . . . Was raten Sie?" (What do we do now? . . . What do you advise?)¹⁶ In his response, Pfotenhauer stated that he could not understand how "Pastor Kleinhans would have dared to represent us alone out there . . ." and went on to advise:

You should decidedly refuse to sign both rows of theses, instead you should request another assembly. The first row of theses you

¹⁵Letter from Theodore Graebner to F. Pfotenhauer dated May 11, 1924. Ibid., Box 113, File 3, C.H.I. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

¹⁶Letter from Theodore Graebner to F. Pfotenhauer dated August 13, 1924. William Arndt papers, Supplement I, Box 16, File 10, C.H.I. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

could not sign in view of Dr. Lenski's criticism and the fact that some opposition has arisen in our own Synod. The second row of theses also shows many faults.¹⁷

On September 1, 1924, the Missouri Synod's Intersynodical Committee sent the following telegram to Dr. C. C. Hein, President of the Ohio Synod:

Missouri Synod Committee regrets necessity of withholding unanimous consent from second series of union theses. While criticism of points there treated involves no differences with Ohio Synod it will be necessary to revise portions which have not received sufficient discussion. Further meeting should result in perfect agreement. On first set of theses we are anxiously awaiting Synod's stand on Lenski articles. (signed) Arndt, Kleinhans, Graebner.¹⁹

The fall 1924 meeting of the Intersynodical Conference was to be held November 20-21 at the Hotel Atlantic in Chicago, Illinois. However, so that differences on the doctrine of the Ministry could be straightened out, the Committee members from the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods were to meet the day before, November 19.¹⁹ Apparently, the thesis on the Ministry was rewritten and some compromise was reached. Yet, in his report to President Pfotenhauer, Graebner acknowledged that differences remained:

This is the difference that remains between us and the Wisconsinites: the office of the ministry in the congregation is a form of the common office of the public preaching of the Word. Christ had founded this, but not each office of the ministry. It is not denied that this should exist until the end of the world and is the highest office. Also, we see that we have rightly understood Wisconsin by (their use of) the term "congregation," that is Wisconsin

¹⁷ Letter from F. Pfotenhauer to Theodore Graebner dated August 15, 1925. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 113, File 5, C.H.I. Translated by Meta Wohlrahe.

¹⁸ Western Union Telegram to Dr. C. C. Hein dated September 1, 1924. William Arndt papers, Supplement I, Box 16, File 10, C.H.I.

¹⁹ Notice to all Intersynodical Committee members from Secretary A. C. Haase, dated October 13, 1924. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 113, File 3, C.H.I.

(specifically Wauwatosa) is speaking about the term "Ortsgemeinde" which they see as a certain kind of congregation.

As the Fall meeting of the Intersynodical Conference went on, agreement was reached on Chiliasm, Open Questions, and the Antichrist.²⁰

By Spring 1925, the revised text of the complete Intersynodical Theses (also referred to as the Chicago Theses) were finished and signed by all the members of the Intersynodical Committee. Yet, Graebner subscribed with reservations, as he told Theodore Engelder of the Missouri Synod's committee to examine the Theses:

The revised text of the Chicago Theses is at this time probably in the hands of your committee. Permit me to say that my own subscription to these theses has been made with two reservations which I announced to the committee at its last session in Chicago, and concerning which they know that I will make this notification to you.

1. In view of Dr. Mezger's letter to Prof. Arndt, I do not believe that the set of theses on "Allgemeine Gnadenwille" should have been printed. Dr. Mezger does not regard these theses as sufficiently clear to eliminate all misunderstanding and on this ground objects to their being made part of the union document.

2. Under D-III,9 ('Kirchengemeinschaft') the conditions of church union are so clearly stated that misunderstanding seems to be impossible. However, the manner in which Dr. Hein defended participation of the Ohio Synod in joint activities with other Lutherans made very clear that his definition of the terms involved in this paragraph differs from our definition of these same terms. The discussion involved issues as the National Lutheran Council, Eisenach Conference, and others. I do not feel that we are really agreed on the essential conditions of church fellowship. . . . Hence, while I cannot withhold my vote from this thesis as a true and accurate statement of our Lutheran doctrine, it is plain to me that many terms in this thesis need definition before it can be regarded as an expression of true unity.²¹

²⁰Letter from Theodore Graebner to Frederick Pfothner dated December 4, 1924. Ibid. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

²¹Letter from Theodore Graebner to Theodore Engelder dated May 19, 1925. Ibid., Box 111, File 4. A copy can also be found in the William Arndt papers, Supplement I, Box 16, File 10.

It seems that the Lenski issue had been dropped but not forgotten. No official action was ever taken by the Ohio Synod. And while Dr. Lenski was not re-elected editor of the Ohio Synod's official German organ, his ill-health was offered as an explanation.²² Meanwhile, a general pastoral conference of the "Little Norwegian Synod" examined the Intersynodical Theses and found them deficient in the areas of conversion and election:

We respectfully request the committee to revise its statements so that a comparison favorable to the Norwegian agreement, "Opgjoer," will be made impossible. We believe that Dr. H. G. Stub's use of the theses at the annual meeting of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America in 1923 is unjustifiable, but the wording of the paragraphs in question gave him an opportunity to misues them as he did.²³

A further problem had been brewing since the Fall of 1924. Pastors Brauer, Koester and Danitscheck had served Missouri Synod congregations in the Synod's Kansas District, but had been suspended at the 1920 National Delegate Synod because they had charged the St. Louis Seminary faculty with false doctrine in the area of justifying faith. Since that time they had applied to the Kansas District of the Ohio Synod for admission as pastors. Already in October of 1924, Graebner had written to President Hein:

I should like to acquaint you with the facts in the case before your

²²Letter from Theodore Graebner to Rev. H. Moellering dated March 21, 1925. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 119, File 1, C.H.I.

²³Report to Missouri's committee appointed to receive criticism on the Intersynodical Theses from the General Pastoral Conference of the Norwegian Synod, dated August 25, 1925, William Arndt papers, Supplement II, Box 15, File 10, C.H.I.

body recognizes people who in spite of repeated attempts on our part refused to be reconciled with us.²⁴

Even though the Missouri Synod objected, President Heuer of Ohio's Kansas District accepted the three ex-Missouri Synod pastors.²⁵

Hoping to settle the differences between the Missouri Synod and the Ohio Synod, the Intersynodical Committee urged Graebner to visit President Hein in person. In response to Graebner's request, Dr. Hein wrote:

Yes, I expect to be in Columbus, September 5 and will be very glad to meet you. . . .

There is another thing I would like to discuss with you. It had been my intention to ask our Intersynodical Committee to discuss it but I forgot all about it. Let me put it in the form of a question, to wit: What is the difference between our Synodical Theses and the Norwegian Opgjoer? I have read "Lehre und Wehre," April, 1925, page 118. If the presentation is correct it seems to me that the difference could be easily adjusted.²⁶

After his meeting with Dr. Hein, Graebner made a complete report to President Pfoth, Professor Arndt and Pastor Kleinhans. With regard to fellowship, Dr. Hein had stated, "that in matters purely external we may cooperate with representatives of other church bodies without becoming guilty of unionistic practice." This included the National Lutheran Council, the Lutheran Foreign Mission Conference, the Lutheran

²⁴Letter from Theodore Graebner to C. C. Hein dated October 29, 1924. Theodore Graebner papers, Box 113, File 3, C.H.I.

²⁵Letter from Theodore Graebner to W. Arndt dated September 7, 1925. Ibid., Box 111, File 5.

²⁶Letter from C. C. Hein to Theodore Graebner dated August 25, 1925. Ibid., Box 113, File 5. In asking this question of Graebner, Hein had already been negotiating with Dr. Stub and the Norwegian Synod without mentioning anything to the members of the Missouri Synod. However, Graebner did know about the talks because he had read the report of the Norwegian Synod. Graebner knew Norwegian from teaching at the Norwegian Synod's college in Red Wing, Minnesota prior to 1911.

Educational Conference and the Lutheran Student Conference. Yet, Hein assured Graebner that since Ohio and Iowa expected to unite by 1926 and because Iowa had withdrawn from the National Lutheran Council, the new body will have to formulate its own policy with regard to the N.L.C. Hein did assure Graebner that the Ohio Synod would pull out of the Lutheran Brotherhood of America. With regard to Ohio's relationship to the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, Graebner wrote:

The idea of a federation as described in my report was not new to me. I read about it in a report of Dr. Stub to his Synod. I warned Dr. Hein against an attempt to have a middle-of-the-road group of Lutherans (Ohio, Iowa, Scandinavians) federated against Missouri on the one side and the Merger on the other. I told him that Missouri could not make any distinction between 90 per cent and 40 per cent Lutherans but would have to treat all alike. Also said [sic] that our Intersynodical Committee would like to look in when his theses laying down the principles of Stub's federation are discussed, but that we had no invitation and would certainly not crowd ourselves into the meeting. Dr. Hein said that possibly it might be best for those at present interested to come to an agreement first and then invite others. To this I made no reply. I think it is pertinent, however, to ask what value we should attach to our entire Intersynodical Committee work when before it is completed Ohio enters into negotiations, on a separate basis, for union with the Scandinavians. Federation implying recognition of Christian fellowship is surely church union in its essential sense. . . . I told Dr. Hein that some of us are under the impression that Ohio was losing faith in union with Missouri and is therefore negotiating with the Norwegians and Swedes. He replied that this was a false assumption.²⁷

In response to Graebner's report, President Pfotenhauer wrote:

I read your letter of September 7 with great interest. From your conference with Dr. Hein it proceeds that if it would come so far as [our] accepting [the Intersynodical Theses] we would come into great trouble with the Ohioaners with respect to practice.

The main hinderance against union [Vereinigung] lay with Dr. Lenski who brought up the theses on conversion openly in the church newspaper of the Ohioaners and who also defends the old synergistic standpoint. Because Dr. Lenski is one of the most refined, open

²⁷Letter from Theodore Graebner to W. Arndt dated September 7, 1925. Ibid., Box 111, File 5.

teachers of the Ohio Synod, we cannot rest content as long as this criticism stands. On this point Dr. Hein has also resigned [himself] and has not given out what he has promised you. Lenski's criticism would have scorned a fraternization and we would betray the church of God if it would come to setting these articles aside and we would remain quiet. In light of the situation, we can figure that the members of our Synod will want the theses on conversion clarified still more.

May God help your committee, the committee in Springfield, and our Synod so that we give honor to truth alone and so that we do not have to worry about any consequences.²⁸

At the meeting between President Hein and Graebner, Hein had also assured Graebner that he would reverse the decision of the Ohio Synod's Kansas District in accepting the three ousted Missouri Synod clergymen. However, nothing was done, and the three pastors continued to serve Ohio Synod congregations. In December 1925, Graebner wrote to President Pfothenauer, requesting that a formal complaint be filed.²⁹ Pfothenauer responded:

President Heuer (of Ohio's Kansas District) has just handed the three pastors the hand of faith and naturally the taking in by the Ohio Synod will follow. President Heuer will not let himself be hindered by President Hein, nor by a possible protest on our side. . . . One can only protest, especially when it concerns itself with a doctrine, when one stands on the same ground in the doctrine. A protest on our side would certainly mean an accepting of the Ohio Synod. . . . Protest would not be in order and it would lead to nothing. The Ohioaners and the Iowaners take people from our group who explain that they do not agree with us but rather agree with them, and we let this happen. Should a union take place between our synods sometime later, then certainly this transaction of President Heuer's must be, like other things, put in order.

²⁸Letter from Frederick Pfothenauer to Theodore Graebner dated September 9, 1925, Ibid., Box 111, File 4. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe. It is interesting to note that Pfothenauer is more concerned with the Lenski articles than any other doctrinal or practical difference with the Ohio Synod. This may well be the result of Pfothenauer's long association with the Predestinarian Controversy.

²⁹Letter from Graebner to Pfothenauer dated December 22, 1925. Ibid., Box 113, File 4. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

The Intersynodical Committee members of our Synod should take no notice of this occurrence, at least not officially and should say nothing about it in their reports to our Synod. Their job is with the representatives of the other synods to take action over the official position of the doctrine.³⁰

Another major turn of events took place on November 18, 1925 when a meeting of the presidents, theological professors and other representatives from the Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo and Norwegian Synods took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At the end of a one day session (lasting from 9 A.M. to 10 P.M.) the group reached agreement on what is known as the Minneapolis Theses and a "fraternal relationship" was established. Graebner wrote to President Pfotenhauer about this on December 28, 1925:

Does it not seem as if also this incident, an event of no little importance and with a bearing on American Lutheran relations generally, should be given incidental mention in the report of the Intersynodical Committee to Synod?³¹

In response, President Pfotenhauer wrote:

While on the one side we cannot prevent this from the synods, that they accept each other on both sides, on the other side this does indeed strike us strange that Ohio and Iowa unite with synods that have totally broken with us while both Ohio and Iowa are negotiating with us toward an understanding. This same thing has happened further in Germany. Right now President Hein is the man that has united Free Churches over there with the exclusion of our Free Church.

I have read the instruction of our Synod on the Intersynodical Committee again and I believe that your committee should concern itself with this occurrence in its report to the Synod, which you point out in your letter. This occurrence is an official occurrence which touches the whole Ohio Synod. The job of our committee is not

³⁰ Letter from Pfotenhauer to Graebner dated December 25, 1925. Ibid. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

³¹ Letter from Graebner to Pfotenhauer dated December 28, 1925. Ibid., Box 111, File 5. This is one of the few times that Graebner wrote to Pfotenhauer in English and in this letter he seems almost angry.

to negotiate over doctrine but rather to examine whether we can meet with an understanding with Ohio and Iowa.³²

Shortly thereafter a letter was sent to President Hein which most likely was written by President Pfotenhauer.³³ The letter thanks Dr. Hein for the report on the workings of his synod, particularly with relation to several non-Lutheran organizations (this is most likely in reference to the report delivered by Theodore Graebner). It then goes on to state:

Now, another thing that lies close to my heart. It concerns the unity of the Ohio Synod with the Norwegians. In our last assembly in St. Paul, the members of the Intersynodical Committees had not spoken much about this, although you gave us the opportunity. The time was simply short. The Theses you have written [the Minneapolis Theses] are, in my view, totally correct. It is only questionable to me if they go far enough. I would rather see it that the Norwegians would simply take on the Chicago Theses, although these are long. I fear that the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship would bring about mistrust between our synods. The [Little'] Norwegians are in a brotherhood of faith with us, and their opposers are our opposers. Please do not take this as if I want to somehow make orders for you. My interest is simply this, that the beautiful hope which we have brought up in the past few years may be fulfilled, namely that despite all hinderances Ohio and Missouri will give each other their hands as brothers.

Now, may God send His Holy Spirit on all those who work toward unity so that also here His will may take place.³⁴

³²Letter from Pfotenhauer to Graebner dated December 30, 1925. Ibid. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

³³The letter is a carbon copy without date or signature and is found in the Arndt files. A note is clipped on stating "must be from Pfotenhauer." This letter was not written with a German typewriter and past letters of Pfotenhauer had been written with one. However, Pfotenhauer's last letter to Graebner was written from an English typewriter (no umlauts). More significant are the similarities between the closing on Pfotenhauer's last letter to Graebner and the closing on the letter to Hein: "Es gruesst Sie bruederlich" and "Es gruesst in aller Hochachtung." If this letter is indeed from Pfotenhauer it is significant because it is one of the few letters from Pfotenhauer to another synodical president and the only one known to be instigated by him without prior correspondence.

³⁴Letter (carbon copy) unsigned to C. C. Hein with no date. Wm. Arndt papers, Supplement I, Box 16, File 10, C.H.I. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

Just prior to the June 19-28, 1926 Missouri Synod Convention, Theodore Graebner submitted his resignation from the Intersynodical Committee giving the following reasons:

The attitude of the senior members of the faculty who either urge the complete rejection of the first set of theses as a basis of future action or at least have not raised their voice against such rejection fills me with alarm since nothing is so calculated to revive the rumor that our theological leaders do not want church peace.

The fact that a set of theses to which very little objection indeed has been raised in our midst and which in the opinion of men well-indoctrinated and sufficiently equipped mentally are, not perfect, indeed, but a masterful statement of the doctrines involved, -- that such theses should be so unsparingly condemned with utter disregard of the future usefulness of their chief author, Dr. Mezger, is deplorable. . . .

In view of the attitude taken by the senior members of the faculty in discussing these preliminaries for the establishment of better harmony in the Lutheran Church, the author of this memorandum feels himself compelled to decline renomination for the Intersynodical Committee.³⁵

The result was that Theodore Engelder of the Springfield faculty was elected to replace Theodore Graebner. The Intersynodical Committee then presented the following report to the 1926 Delegate Synod:

We believe that the sentences now before Synod cover all doctrinal questions which have been under controversy among the participating synods. Whether the theses are adequate in all points, Synod will have to decide on the basis of the report made by the committee elected to examine the theses.

The question now arises whether the adoption of these theses on the part of the participating synods can be followed without more

³⁵"Intersynodical Matter, Memorandum - June 15, 1926," Theodore Graebner papers, Box 111, File 4, C.H.I. It is quite apparent that Graebner was upset at the total disregard for the "blood, sweat, and tears" that had gone into the Intersynodical Theses. For all of his polemical discharges in The Lutheran Witness, Graebner sincerely wanted Lutheran unity and was more discouraged by the disregard of his peers in the Missouri Synod than by the inconsistencies shown by officials in other Lutheran bodies. One must also remember that it was the "senior faculty members" who had been through the Predestinarian Controversy from its earliest days and this may well have produced a skeptical and critical attitude.

ado. . . . In the present instance, however, we fear that further obstacles must be removed, since, for example, touching the article of church-fellowship a different conception evidently obtains in the synods concerned. At all events a different practise is followed. Still we ought to endeavor, by continued discussion, to attain unity also in those points where difference still exist.

We would therefore recommend not to break off negotiations . . . but to continue them. . . .³⁶

The committee elected by the Synod to examine the Intersynodical Theses found several doctrinal problems and submitted to the 1926 Convention a long list of corrections that needed to be made.³⁷ The Delegate Synod then adopted a report submitted by the Committee on Intersynodical Matters which expressed joy over the fact that the Intersynodical Discussions were held, but noted that doctrinal agreement had not as yet been reached. For this reason, the Intersynodical Theses could not be adopted in their present form. The report also noted that leaders and Districts of the Ohio Synod had publicly voiced their disagreement with the Theses. The Synod, therefore, recommended that the Theses be exhaustively discussed everywhere. Furthermore, the Synod instructed the Intersynodical Committee to continue discussions and reappointed the same reviewing committee. Both committees were to report to the next convention.³⁸

The Road to Rejection

The period from 1926 to the rejection of the Intersynodical Theses in 1929 is not as detailed as the period from 1923 to 1926. This is mainly due to the fact that it is not as replete with private

³⁶1926 Proceedings, pp. 136-37.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 137-40.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 140-41.

correspondence.³⁹ It appears that the Missouri Synod, for the most part, took a "wait and see" attitude. While discussions of the Intersynodical Committee continued, no change was made in the Intersynodical Theses. In 1926, the Iowa Synod adopted the sections of the Intersynodical Theses on conversion and election. However, Ohio, like Missouri, deferred action. The Ohio Synod claimed that the reason for putting off acceptance of the document was because of dissension among some of its members and because no official English translation had been provided.⁴⁰ Yet, Ohio, particularly its President, Dr. Hein, had plans for building a "middle way" Lutheran empire between the position of the United Lutheran Church and the Synodical Conference. Like Missouri, Hein was unwilling to budge on his approach to Lutheran unity.⁴¹ Buffalo, on the other hand, was the only synod to accept all of the Intersynodical Theses and did so in 1929.⁴²

Probably one of the major reasons why the Ohio Synod did not continue to devote much energy to the Intersynodical Discussions was because of the snag that had developed in its own union discussions with the Iowa and Buffalo Synods. As mentioned earlier, the Iowa Synod had accepted only the theses on conversion and election in the Intersynodical Theses. They did not accept the entire document because of its statement

³⁹The Concordia Historical Institute has no files on Theodore Engelder, and Arndt has very few records during this period. Few men kept as extensive records as did Theodore Graebner, who no longer served on the Intersynodical Committee at this time.

⁴⁰Meuser, p. 251.

⁴¹Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 328.

⁴²Meuser, p. 251.

on Scripture. Beginning at this time there was a sharp reaction within the Iowa Synod to what some of its members considered to be a notably conservative position on Scripture. A similar statement on Scripture had been set forth in the Minneapolis Theses, and in April 1926, the statement on Scripture in the proposed constitution for the merger of the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods was changed to conform to the Minneapolis Theses statement. The major change in the new constitution unqualifiedly identified all Scripture as "inerrant." This again aroused a reaction from within the Iowa Synod where the unqualified use of the word "inerrant" with respect to Scripture was rejected.⁴³ In August 1926, the Iowa Synod revised the proposed constitution so that the key terms "inspired and inerrant" were separated:

(The recommended article for the merged church's constitution:)
The Synod accepts all the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the only source, norm, and guide of faith.

(The Iowa Revision:)
The Synod accepts all the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired Word of God and the only inerrant source, norm, and guide of faith and life.⁴⁴

Both the Ohio and Buffalo Synods found the rewording unsatisfactory and two years of intense discussion followed. In 1928, the Iowa

⁴³Wolf, pp. 330-31.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 331. This understanding is often referred to as "Functional inerrancy." Scripture is considered to be inspired in only a causative (efficacious) sense and inerrant only in that it is a correct norm and guide for Christian life. It can then be maintained that Scripture contains errors in many of its historical accounts. For a comparison of all the documents, Wolf gives the Intersynodical Theses (pp. 361-69), the Minneapolis Theses (pp. 340-42), and the merger documents between the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods (pp. 329-38).

Synod issued a restatement of its position on the inspiration of Scripture:

In view of the present situation we deem it necessary that Synod adopt a clear and unequivocal declaration concerning the inspiration and the inerrancy of the Scriptures, as we now have it, and the true sense of its own confessional paragraph. . . . Synod to-day as always confesses the old Lutheran doctrine concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, as this doctrine again and again had been presented in its publications.

This statement reassured the Ohio Synod, and the merger movement proceeded.⁴⁵

Still, one more reason why the Ohio Synod did not pursue further the Intersynodical Discussions as energetically as it had is because of its growing dissatisfaction toward the Missouri Synod and Missouri's approach toward Lutheran unity. It was much easier to compromise on doctrine and reach agreement in one day (as had happened on November 18, 1925 with the Norwegians), than to struggle for over ten years for complete doctrinal concord. Furthermore, President Hein did not like Missouri's all-or-nothing attitude. In a letter to K. Ermisch, Hein stated:

Its whole attitude in the mission fields in every section of the country shows plainly that in spite of the work of the Intersynodical Committee, Missouri will not recognize us and all these things go to show that there is hardly any possibility of coming to an agreement.⁴⁶

Missouri, in turn, had grown very dissatisfied with the Ohio Synod for saying one thing and doing another; for trying to play both ends against the middle; for not being as concerned about the truth of Lutheran doctrine as they were. Thus, in 1929, the Intersynodical Theses

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 332-33.

⁴⁶ Meuser, p. 251.

were no longer to serve as a document for Lutheran unity because they were rejected by the Missouri Synod.

In preparing the synodical delegates for what he undoubtedly believed they must do, President Pfotenhauer spent a good part of his Presidential Address at the 1929 Delegate Synod on the union issue:

Next year, on June 25, we shall celebrate the quadricentennial of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession to the Emperor and his empire, as well as the 350th anniversary of the first publication of the whole body of confessional writings of our Church known as the Book of Concord. . . .

In thus contending for the truth of God in their confessions, our fathers thought not only of themselves, but also of their posterity. . . .

The confessional writings of our Church are the legacy which we have inherited from our fathers. . . . The fathers of our Lutheran Church prized purity of teaching as their greatest treasure. Their one fear was that they might in some way adulterate the truth. Their one purpose was to spread the truth by faithful instruction in pulpit and school. Alas, how many who call themselves Lutherans prove themselves unworthy of the fathers! In large territories of the Lutheran Church purity of teaching is held in but low regard, and a spirit of indifference can calmly see one Scriptural doctrine after the other is thrown overboard. . . .

Our Fathers, however, did not only rejoice in the glory of the Lord that had risen upon them, they also were ready to prove the genuineness of their faith by supporting their confession with readiness to suffer shame, persecution, yes, even death for the sake of the truth. . . .

In this attitude of our fathers, my dear brethren, there lies a solemn admonition to the Church of the present day. And how we do need that admonition! The universal tendency of our times is to "get together." Isolation in church life is regarded as intolerable. Those who keep themselves separate for the sake of truth are denounced as bigots. The well-being and prosperity of the Church is sought in the merger of church-bodies even at the cost of truth. Sad to say, this destructive virus of unionism has infected also many Lutheran circles. This modern striving after external union despite spiritual disunion brings to one's mind the words of God spoken to Israel by the prophet Isaiah: "Say ye not, a confederacy to all them to whom the people shall say, a confederacy; neither fear ye their fear nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread."

God grant that the remembrance of the great events in the history of our Church may be to us all a call of admonition and encouragement not to seek the well-being of the Church in all manner of unions at

the expense of truth, but rather to let it be our great care to hold fast for ourselves and our children our rich inheritance as embodied in our Lutheran Confessions.⁴⁷

At the 1929 Missouri Synod convention, the Intersynodical Committee reported that the theses were before the Synod for adoption or rejection. The Committee went on to say:

We consider the question whether the theses can be adopted to be distinct from the question whether we can enter into fraternal relations with the synods with which we have been conferring. The latter is at present excluded by the connection in which, sad to say, these synods have entered and the fraternal relations which they maintain with Lutherans who are not faithful to the confessions. The theses are a matter by themselves, and Synod ought to take action on them.⁴⁸

The Intersynodical Committee wished to keep the question of accepting the Theses apart from a decision on fellowship because they now felt these were two separate issues, especially since the Ohio Synod had declared itself in fellowship with the Norwegian Lutheran Church.⁴⁹

⁴⁷The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 34th Regular Meeting at River Forest, Illinois, on June 19-28, 1929 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), pp. 6-8. Both Theodore Graebner and W. G. Polack told Dr. August Suelflow that when Dr. Mezger was sent to Germany to serve as President of the Saechsische Freikirche Seminary in Berlin, he was assured by President Pfothenhauer that he would be recalled when it came time for the Synod to vote on the Intersynodical Theses (the articles on conversion and election having been drafted by Mezger). However, in 1929, Pfothenhauer did not recall Mezger for fear that his presence would win their acceptance. Interview with Dr. August Suelflow, February 10, 1982, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁸1929 Proceedings, p. 110. Undoubtedly, because the Committee members had worked long and hard on the Theses, they hated to see their work come to naught.

⁴⁹Meuser, p. 241. Officials of the Missouri Synod were upset at the fellowship between the Ohio and Norwegian Synods because the Norwegians continued to hold to the Madison Agreement or Opgjoer which held two different positions on the doctrine of election in the same document. Possibly another reason for Missouri's negative attitude toward Ohio and Norwegian fellowship was the fact that until May 15, 1928, F. A. Schmidt,

The report of the Missouri committee appointed to examine the Intersynodical Theses advised the 1929 convention to reject these theses as a possible basis for union with the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, "since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate." The committee went on to state:

At times they do not touch upon the point 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 unobjectionable from the view of pure doctrine. It would be better to discard them as a failure. It now seems to your Committee a matter of wisdom to desist from intersynodical conferences. By entering into a closer relationship with the adherents of the Norwegian 'Opgjoer', the opponents have given evidence that they do not hold our position in the doctrine of conversion and election. . . . It ought now also to be apparent that the manner of conducting these conferences, to wit, the exclusion of all historical matters, is wrong. As a result the opponents hardly understand each other.⁵⁰

The Synod's Committee on Intersynodical Matters considered the reports from the various other committees and recommended the following to the Convention:

1. We acknowledge with heartiest thanks toward God that some progress in the presentation of doctrine on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions has been made. The diligent and faithful work of our representatives . . . is to be acknowledged with gratitude. . . .
2. We recommend, however, that Synod do not accept the theses in their present form, for the following reasons:

the instigator of the Predestinarian Controversy, was still alive and a member of the Norwegian Synod. Erwin L. Lueker, Lutheran Cyclopedia, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 70.

⁵⁰1929 Proceedings, pp. 110-12. It is significant to note that synodical officials were more than willing to acknowledge that the result of their efforts toward unity were a failure. This was the general attitude throughout the Synod at this time. Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981.

a. Because many serious objections have been raised by members of Synod, which . . . should be carefully considered . . .

b. Because the omission of all historical data in working out the theses was evidently not conducive to a full understanding on the part of the colloquents. We must begin with the 'status controversiae.'

3. We further recommend that Synod declare its readiness to deal also in the future with the synods concerned, provided that latest historical development, namely the move toward a closer union between the Ohio and Iowa, on the one hand, and the party of the Norwegian 'Opgjoer', on the other, be taken up first and adjusted according to the Word of God. The President of Synod shall appoint a committee, which in this case shall lead the discussions.

4. In any event we recommend that Synod elect a committee which, beginning with the 'status controversiae', are to present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple manner. . . .

5. We finally recommend that Synod instruct the editorial staffs of the various periodicals . . . the various District synods and conferences . . . to be urged to choose topics treating with the Scriptural doctrines in question during the next years.

This report was adopted.⁵¹

The leaders of the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods were bitterly disappointed and deeply offended by Missouri's action. In June, 1930, President Hein wrote to O. H. Pannkoke:

This is something that I shall never forget and as far as I am concerned nothing will be done any more to get closer to Missouri.⁵²

Yet, what these leaders did not see was how they had offended Missouri previously by saying one thing and doing another. The Missouri Synod

⁵¹1929 Proceedings, pp. 112-13. In taking this action, the Synod did not want to break off unity discussions. It merely acknowledged that the approach of the Intersynodical Discussions (avoiding the status controversiae) had ended in futility. It was hoped that by confronting the history of the controversies in future discussions, the different groups could come to a better understanding and definition of terms.

⁵²Meuser, p. 251.

did not take this action out of spite. Rather, it strongly believed that words should be put into practice.

Missouri's New Approach to Lutheran Unity

Immediately after the 1929 Synodical Convention, President Pfothenauer appointed a committee of Dr. F. Pieper, Prof. W. Wenger, Rev. E. A. Mayer, Rev. L. A. Heerboth, and Dr. Th. Engelder to formulate theses "which present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple manner."⁵³ These theses would be the basis for future intersynodical discussions. The "Brief Statement" was published in the May 1931 issue of the Concordia Theological Monthly, as well as being issued in pamphlet form to all the pastors of the Synod. The Brief Statement treated all primary matters of Christian faith with special emphasis on election, conversion, the doctrine of the Church, and plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. At the 1932 synodical convention, President Pfothenauer recommended these theses and the convention adopted them "as a brief Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod."⁵⁴

The Intersynodical Movement had ended a failure. And although the Missouri Synod was the church body which rejected the Intersynodical Theses, the Synod had been consistent in its dealings with the Ohio, Iowa,

⁵³1929 Proceedings, pp. 112-13.

⁵⁴The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 35th Regular Meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on June 15-24, 1932 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), pp. 154-55. Dr. Francis Pieper played the leading role in the formulation of the Brief Statement. In the morning hours of June 3, 1931, after an illness which had incapacitated him for four months, Dr. Pieper died. Theodore Graebner, "Francis August Otto Pieper," The Lutheran Witness 50 (June 9, 1931):197-98.

and Buffalo Synods.⁵⁵ The Theses were rejected because of certain actions on the part of the other synods. It appears that President Pfothenhauer may have been somewhat reluctant toward the Intersynodical Movement at the beginning (the letter to his daughter dated June 25, 1916), yet after the 1917 synodical convention he fully supported the conferences. It was not until after 1928 (when Pfothenhauer refused to recall Mezger) that he showed any sign of reluctance toward the entire movement. Although Pfothenhauer did not involve himself directly in the doctrinal discussions, he corresponded regularly with the Synod's representatives, offering advice and direction. As a whole, the Missouri Synod was sincere in its striving for Lutheran unity, true unity based on agreement in doctrine and practice.

During the course of the Intersynodical Conferences, a disagreement over the doctrine of the ministry arose between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. Nevertheless, fellowship between the two bodies continued. It must be remembered, however, that no member of either the Missouri or the Wisconsin Synods made public their disagreements at this time. Any differences that existed were evangelically discussed in private and settled to the apparent satisfaction of both church bodies.

⁵⁵ During the years of the Intersynodical Conferences, no member of the Missouri Synod publicly criticized the position of the other church bodies. Neither did the Missouri Synod engage in union discussions that were objectionable to the other church bodies.

CHAPTER VII

MISSOURI'S CONTINUING UNITY ATTEMPTS

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church

While the Missouri Synod was engaging in intersynodical conferences with members of the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods, it also began discussions with the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church of America. The Finnish National Lutheran Church was a small body of Finnish immigrants scattered throughout the East and Northern Midwest. The church body was founded in 1898 and maintained a separate identity from the other American Finnish Lutheran groups because of doctrinal differences. On January 17, 1923, the President of the Finnish National Church, K. E. Salonen, wrote to the Missouri Synod's First Vice-President, F. Brandt:

At the last annual meeting of our Church, I was authorized to begin negotiations with your Synod with the view of joining with you. For this reason I wrote last October to the President of the Synodical Conference, Rev. C. Gausewitz, Milwaukee, Wis., but have not got any answer from him. . . .

Our primary reason for wishing to join with you is to gain the membership of a real Lutheran brotherhood and the strength which comes from numbers. In these days of unbelief we need brotherly help in fighting under the banner of Christ.¹

Vice-President Brandt was extremely pleased by this overture and responded:

¹Letter from K. E. Salonen to F. Brandt dated January 17, 1923. National Evangelical Lutheran Church papers, Box 4, File - "Missouri Synod Relations 1924-1947," Concordia Historical Institute. (Hereafter cited as C.H.I.)

We are really anxious to be united with everyone who stands for every doctrine of the word of God and for truly Lutheran, that is, scriptural, life and practice.²

Brandt further stated that he would write President Pfotenhauer and encouraged President Salonen to do the same.

In writing to President Pfotenhauer, President Salonen requested that negotiations be conducted in English. In addition, he intimated that his body was not only seeking membership in "a real Lutheran brotherhood, " but also needed help "in arranging anew a Theological Seminary." President Salonen considered joining the seminary of the Finnish National Church with one of the Missouri Synod seminaries.³ Pfotenhauer acted quickly and had District President H. Daib of the Missouri Synod's North Wisconsin District set up the first meeting, which was held on Tuesday, February 20, 1923 in the St. James Hotel, Ironwood, Michigan.⁴

The meeting in Ironwood began with a letter from Dr. Pfotenhauer who expressed his support for the negotiations. President K. E. Salonen of Ironwood, Michigan, and Rev. G. A. Aho of Jersey City, New Jersey, represented the Finnish Lutheran church body while District President H. Daib, and Pastors O. Hattstaedt, A. S. Lucas, and A. G. Sommer represented the Missouri Synod. It was mutually accepted that unity of doctrine and

²Letter from Frederick Brandt to K. E. Salonen dated January 22, 1923, Ibid.

³Letter from K. E. Salonen to F. Pfotenhauer dated January 31, 1923. Ibid.

⁴Letter from H. Daib to K. E. Salonen dated February 5, 1923. Ibid.

practice is the basis of a true union. The Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Symbols were to be the common basis for union. After a general discussion of several doctrines including the verbal inspiration of Scripture, Conversion, Law and Gospel, Election and others it was found that complete agreement existed in these matters. The Finnish pastors acknowledged Dr. F. Pieper's book, Unsere Stellung in Lehre und Praxis, as the chief source of their information concerning the Missouri Synod. One area where agreement was not reached was woman's suffrage. Although all agreed as to man's position in the home and the church, the representatives of the Finnish synod explained that in their church-body the women are permitted to vote and to represent the church at synodical gatherings (this was not accepted in the Missouri Synod until 1969). This was based on their understanding of Galatians 3:28. However, women were not permitted to hold the office of the ministry. In discussing the form of affiliation, two possibilities were considered: to become a district of the Missouri Synod or to unite as a synod with the Synodical Conference. The Finnish representatives preferred the former.⁵

With basic agreement having been reached, President Pfothenhauer appointed District President Daib and Professor Dau as Missouri Synod representatives to the Finnish Synod's 1923 convention.⁶ A meeting was

⁵Finnish Ev. Lutheran National Church of America and the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, Minutes of a Meeting of Representatives, February 20, 1923. Ibid.

⁶Letter from H. Daib to K. E. Salonen dated March 7, 1923. Ibid.

also set up between President Pfothenauer and President Salonen on April 12, 1923 at Dr. Pfothenauer's house in Chicago, Illinois.⁷

Apparently there was another joint meeting of representatives from the Finnish Synod and the Missouri Synod on June 3, 1923. The Missouri representatives reported the following to their 1923 Delegate Synod:

1. The discussion which took place at the pastoral conference at Ironwood, Mich., on June 3, 1923, showed that we agreed in the principle doctrines.
2. However, we also found that in a practical question, namely, in regard to woman suffrage in the Church, there was a divergent polity in the two conferring synods, and that this question related to the correct understanding and strict application of certain Bible-texts.
3. Inasmuch as both parties bow to the Word of God, it is our opinion that the discussion of this question, as well as the deliberation regarding official fraternal recognition of each other by the conferring parties and regarding an eventual union, should be continued; and that the Finnish National Church should appoint a committee for this purpose, which is to continue the conference with the committee of the Missouri Synod.
4. As regards the statement in the official letter of President Salonen to our President, Dr. F. Pfothenauer, concerning the training of Finnish students, we declare that, if requested, we as a committee are ready to recommend to our Synod to make the necessary arrangements at one of our schools for admitting students from the Finnish National Church under the same conditions with our own students.

The Missouri Synod's 1923 Ft. Wayne Convention then resolved:

1. To approve the action of President Pfothenauer.
2. To express its heartfelt joy at the results achieved by the conferences and at the unity in the chief doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions as reported by the committee;
3. To continue the discussions with the Finnish National Church in the hope that complete unity may be achieved between the two synods in all matters, also in the practical questions on woman suffrage;

⁷Letter from H. Daib to K. E. Salonen dated March 26, 1923. Ibid.

4. To grant students from the Finnish Church the same educational privileges enjoyed by our own students.⁸

The Missouri committee in charge of Finnish relations notified all the Missouri Synod pastors residing in the vicinity of pastors of the Finnish National Church, requesting them to enter into more intimate relations. However, distance and language often proved to be a major barrier (many of the Finnish pastors spoke only their native tongue). Yet, many connections were made with discussions conducted by pastors of both church-bodies. The Missouri committee met with the Finnish committee in September 1923. However, discussions proved futile because of the language barrier. The major point at issue between the two synods continued to be woman's suffrage. Yet, negotiations did continue by mail with the English language being the common medium.

In June, 1924, discussions ended abruptly with the following resolution from the Finnish National Church:

1. That negotiations for the union with the Synod of Missouri be discontinued and the negotiations dropped.
2. The ceasing of negotiations for union is not to be construed as a severing of friendly relations between these congregations.⁹

The 1924 convention of the Finnish National Church was not only considering the possible union with the Missouri Synod. This was also the

⁸The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 32nd Regular Meeting at Ft. Wayne, Indiana, on June 20-29, 1923 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), pp. 84-85. It is interesting to note that the report from Missouri's Finnish committee was willing to acknowledge the difference over woman's suffrage as a matter of polity and not a matter of doctrine per se.

⁹The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 33rd Regular Meeting at St. Louis, Missouri, on June 9-18, 1926 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1926), pp. 141-42.

twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Finnish group's founding. Although there was much support for amalgamation among the church-body's officials, opposition emerged from the rank and file who feared the loss of their identity.¹⁰ Yet, Missouri officials made a major mistake by appointing no representative to the Finnish Synod's 1924 convention. That no Missouri Synod official was present to congratulate the small Finnish body on its silver anniversary and represent the position of the Missouri Synod on the union is almost inexcusable.

However, the Missouri Synod committee soon reestablished negotiations with the Finnish group and the 1926 Delegate Synod of the Missouri Synod resolved:

. . . to continue on our part a committee for further negotiations with the Finnish Ev. Luth. National Church of America, so that under God's blessing complete unity between the two synods may be achieved.¹¹

Friendly relations with the Finnish National Church continued as their students attended Missouri's educational institutions. In 1929 the Synod voted the Finnish body an annual subsidy of \$1,200 for the support of Finnish pastors, and the 1938 Delegate Synod directed that an instructor in the Finnish language be placed at the Synodical Seminary at Springfield, Illinois.¹² By 1940, Prof. A. Monto was serving as

¹⁰Carbon copy of letter to the Finnish Committee of the Missouri Synod without signature dated May 26, 1931. National Evangelical Lutheran Church papers, Box 4, File - "Missouri Synod Relations 1924-47," C.H.I.

¹¹1926 Proceedings, pp. 141-42.

¹²Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 341.

Finnish instructor at the Springfield Seminary.¹³

Apparently, President Pfothenauer felt some regret over the "slip-up" concerning the Finnish National Church's 1924 convention. After 1926, he served on Missouri's Finnish Relations Committee personally. Even after Missouri's 1935, when Dr. Pfothenauer no longer served as president of the Missouri Synod (although he was given the title "Honorary President"), he did continue to work on Missouri's Finnish Committee.¹⁴ In addition, Pfothenauer made sure that the Missouri Synod was represented at every convention of the Finnish Synod.¹⁵

Missouri's Merger Attempt with the Members of the
Synodical Conference, 1932-1935

After the failure of the Intersynodical Discussions, the Missouri Synod officials turned themselves toward a problem that had emerged within the Synodical Conference over the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry. Ever since 1924, when the theses on the Church and Ministry had been drafted for the Intersynodical Theses, there had been disagreement between Missouri and Wisconsin Synods.¹⁶ However, in April

¹³The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, The Lutheran Annual (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1940), p. 117.

¹⁴Letter from H. Daib to G. A. Aho dated June 8, 1937. National Ev. Luth. Church papers, Box 4, File - "Missouri Synod Communications 1923-1944," C.H.I.

¹⁵Report of Missouri Synod's Finnish Relation Committee, June, 1935. Ibid. It was not until 1964 that the Finnish National Church merged with the Missouri Synod.

¹⁶This was a disagreement that continued for the most part only between the two synod's seminary faculties and especially stirred by Prof. August Pieper of the Wisconsin Synod. Among the pastors of both synods no disagreement was noticeable. Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981. Interview with Dr. Lewis Spitz, Sr., December 15, 1981.

1932, the faculties of the Missouri Synod seminaries and the Wisconsin Synod seminary at Thiensville met at Thiensville, Wisconsin, to discuss the points at issue. Concerning this meeting, Theodore Graebner wrote in The Lutheran Witness:

The question of agreement between the faculties of Concordia Seminary and of the Wisconsin Synod's faculty at Thiensville, Wisconsin, regarding the doctrine of the ministry and of the Church has threatened to disturb amicable relations between our own Synod and Wisconsin for a number of years. The College of Presidents therefore was greatly pleased to receive a report on the theses of agreement which had been adopted by both faculties in April of this year. Professor Graebner reported for the faculty. There is not yet an official translation of the articles, but the importance of the matter will justify the following unauthorized translation, made for the benefit of the readers of the Lutheran Witness.

1. God's will and ordinance, revealed in the Scriptures, is realized when Christians who live in the same place enter into external relations in order to perform jointly the duties of their spiritual priesthood.

2. It is furthermore the will and ordinance of God, revealed in the Scriptures, that such local congregations have shepherds and teachers who on behalf of them, and in their midst, administer the office of the Word.

3. It is likewise according to the divine will and ordinance, revealed to us in the Scriptures, when Christian congregations give evidence of their spiritual union with other congregations and perform the task of the Kingdom jointly with them, also outside of their own circles, as is done, for instance, among us through the voluntary form of synodical organization.

4. Since every Christian has the keys of the kingdom of heaven, a judgment expressed in accordance with God's will by one or more Christians acting in any manner conjointly is valid also in heaven. But we recognize, on the basis of Scripture, God's will and ordinance that proceedings of discipline inaugurated against a sinning brother must not be regarded as brought to a conclusion unless the local congregation has taken action. Properly conducted, the congregational and synodical discipline cannot conflict, for a congregation pronounces exclusion from the congregation and not from the synod, and the synod pronounces exclusion from the synod, not from the local congregation.

NOTE -- The term excommunication according to ecclesiastical usage is limited by us to the exclusion from the local congregation.¹⁷

In the field, pastors of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods enjoyed close fraternal relations, and with the agreement of the synods' seminary faculties, several pastors in Wisconsin believed the way was cleared for total merger. At the Missouri Synod's 1932 convention, several Missouri Synod congregations located in Wisconsin petitioned the Synod to initiate efforts to bring about a union of the various synods of the Synodical Conference, stating:

The following considerations prompted us to make this petition:

1. All member synods of the Synodical Conference have expressed themselves in favor of such a union by adopting the constitution, which includes under "Purpose and Object" "the uniting of all Lutheran synods of America into one orthodox American Lutheran Church." (Synodical Handbook, p. 147.)
2. Such a union would end much of the rivalry and friction now existing in some localities between members of sister synods.
3. It would further effect a saving of money and manpower in many places which could and should be used in some other place for the advancing of God's kingdom here on earth.
4. Such a union would make it possible to bring the young people's work, e.g., the Walther league, under the direct and immediate control of the synod.
5. Language need not form a barrier to such a union since the Slovak Synod and the Norwegian Synod might well continue to function as extraterritorial Districts.¹⁸

¹⁷Theodore Graebner, "Agreement with Thiensville Faculty," The Lutheran Witness 51 (June 21, 1932):224.

¹⁸The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 35th Regular Meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on June 15-24, 1932 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), pp. 164-65.

The memorial was received favorably and the following resolutions were passed:

Resolved, That the President of our Synod be requested to appoint a Committee on organic Union, which is to investigate the feasibility and possibility of the organic union of the synods constituting the Synodical Conference of North America and to make recommendations on this matter to the Synod at its next convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of our Synod be requested to inform the other synods of the Synodical Conference of the appointment of our Committee on Organic Union and to notify them that our committee would stand ready to confer with similar committees appointed by other synods and, if possible, to formulate some plan by which an organic union could be effected, which plan, however, must be submitted to all the constituent synods for ratification.¹⁹

Following the 1932 convention, President Pfotenhauer appointed a Committee on Organic Union consisting of Carl Schinnerer, H. A. Mayer, W. O. Wallschlaeger and H. Strasen.²⁰

However, before negotiations could even begin, Professor August Pieper, the President of the Wisconsin Synod seminary at Thiensville and brother of Francis Pieper, published an article in the October issue of the seminary's Quartalschrift setting forth his old position on the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry and basically nullifying the Thiensville Theses. Concerning this matter, President Pfotenhauer wrote to the St. Louis and Springfield seminary faculties:

Professor Pieper has again published his old position on the Church and Ministry in an article of the Quarterly.

This also has not remained hidden. Faith-Life²¹ brings attention

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 165-66.

²⁰The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 36th Regular Meeting at Cleveland, Ohio, on June 19-28, 1935 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), p. 219.

²¹Faith - Life is the official organ of the Protestant Conference published since 1928. The Protestant Conference was comprised of

to his article and our brothers in North Wisconsin are again alarmed in relation to a synodical report of a district of the Wisconsin Synod. This thing will probably be brought up at the Council of Presidents in St. Louis on the 15th and 16th of February.

We must take notice of the remarks of Dr. Pieper and turn ourselves to the faculty at Thiensville which is responsible for Pieper's article. We stand again at an old point and it will probably be necessary to negotiate with the Wisconsin Synod in Summer. It is a crying shame "Jammer" .²²

In reaction to August Pieper's article, Professor W. Arndt wrote him a personal letter. The Concordia Seminary faculty felt it best to deal with Pieper personally instead of going public in one of the Missouri Synod's official organs. It did not surprise the Missouri Synod professors that Pieper had written as he did. But they were "astounded that the other members of the faculty at Thiensville have not protested this passage." It was hoped that Pieper would respond to Arndt's letter and clarify the situation.²³

However, Pieper responded with a long, caustic letter further defending his position (the letter is six pages long, and only an excerpt can be given here):

. . . Still today you stand by your original position which holds that only the so called local congregation is ordained by God and

some 34 pastors and teachers of the Wisconsin Synod who were suspended or withdrew because they supported the historical and exegetical emphasis of what was known as Wauwatosa theology from the Wisconsin Synod's former seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Chief of its theologians, who was suspended in 1927, was Prof. John Philipp Koehler. Erwin L. Lueker, ed. Lutheran Cyclopedia, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 641.

²²Letter from F. Pfotenhauer to W. Arndt dated January 9, 1933. William Arndt papers, Supplement I, Box 14, File 5, C.H.I. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

²³Letter from W. Arndt to F. Pfotenhauer dated January 19, 1933. Ibid. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe.

that only the church in this true meaning, that this institution is capable and called to be stewards of the treasures of the kingdom of heaven, while the church in every other outer form (Synod, Synodical Conference, etc.) is not connected with the stewardship of the Word . . . that each assembly of Christians that is not assembled in the form of a local congregation or parish, such an assembly is purely a human assembly and institution and contains only human rights and human duties.

If you want to, as you did in your theses, name God's will and order, we have nothing against this as long as you express this in each thesis in the same way, in the same meaning and also as long as you group each Christian assembly "in which there is gathering together" of Christians, also if they are in some outer form like a synod.

But as soon as you set aside the so called local congregation as the outer institution of the Church, making it the only godly appointment and in so doing making the church as such the only authorization and the only one called for the handling of the Gospel, the sacraments, the law, the discipline, and as soon as this is spoken to the congregation of the saints (der Heiligen) in a free standing assembly and if you name this as human, we say: We will not go along with it! If we agreed with this we would have to cross out Matt. 18:20 and demolish the freedom of the congregation of the saints (der Heiligen). The church, that is the congregation of the sanctified, has all the freedom and godly right to come together in any means or number as long as the law of love is not hurt.

The Church is nothing other than the congregation of the saints. God gives us all the right to recognition and the right to speak.²⁴

²⁴Letter from A. Pieper to W. Arndt dated March 2, 1933. Ibid. Translated by Meta Wohlrabe. The emphasis (the underlining) is in the original. The Missouri Synod believed that Scripture speaks of the Church in only two ways: the one Church which embraces all true believers of all places (Matt. 16:18; John 10:16) which is invisible and the local congregation (1 Cor. 16:19; 1:2; Acts 8:1). Because the local congregation contains true believers, it holds the office of the keys (John 20:23) and must administer the means of grace (John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16). The local congregation is obligated to call a qualified person for the administration of the means of grace (Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2). This is divinely mandated. If a group of congregations wish to join together in a synod, this is a human arrangement and contains no divine mandate. Certain Wisconsin Synod officials believed that any gathering of Christians, no matter how large, maintained all the rights and mandates of the local congregation. Therefore a synod has the right to extend calls, administer the sacraments and exercise church discipline.

Arndt then wrote to Pieper asking if he still held to the Thiensville Theses. By November 1933, Arndt had still not received a reply. Therefore, he wrote to Professor J. P. Meyer of the Thiensville faculty explaining the situation, asking for advice, and asking if the Thiensville faculty still held to the Theses.²⁵ This last question wounded Prof. Meyer who felt that Arndt doubted the honesty of the Thiensville faculty. Meyer assured Arndt that the faculty still agreed to the Theses and said that the matter of Pieper was turned over to the Wisconsin Synod's newly elected president, John Brenner.²⁶ By November 23, 1933, the Missouri Synod's Council of Presidents had met and Dr. Pfotenhauer had reported that he had met with President Brenner. It was stated that President Brenner would make Pieper aware that he had not responded to the question of the Missouri Synod's seminary faculty. It was then decided:

. . . that no further steps are to be taken until President Brenner has carried out his plan and . . . the faculty of Thiensville has come together and written something about this.²⁷

Meanwhile, after considerable correspondence, Missouri Synod's Committee on Organic Union met for a one-day session at Milwaukee on August 15, 1933. Here various phases of organic union were discussed and a tentative plan was adopted which would serve as a basis for deliberations with similar committees of the other synods. They then requested

²⁵ Letter from W. Arndt to J. P. Meyer dated November 3, 1933.
Ibid.

²⁶ Letter from J. P. Meyer to W. Arndt dated November 16, 1933.
Ibid.

²⁷ Letter from W. Arndt to H. Daib dated November 23, 1933. Ibid.

the other synods of the synodical Conference to submit the names of their representatives. Unfortunately, only the little Norwegian Synod responded and they were reluctant toward merger. In addition, there is no record of August Pieper ever responding to the question of whether he still subscribed to the Thiensville Theses. In view of the negative response, the Committee on Organic Union made the following report to the 1935 Missouri Synod convention:

Since the Committee on Organic Union reports that the Slovak and Norwegian brethren feel that the present language conditions do not permit organic union on their part, and since the Wisconsin brethren are to decide the matter at their convention in August, your Committee recommends that Synod's Committee on Organic Union continue to function until the Wisconsin brethren have taken definite action in August.²⁸

The Joint Synod of Wisconsin tabled the report of the Committee on Amalgamation at its 1935 convention. At the Wisconsin Synod's 1937 convention Wisconsin failed to take further action.²⁹ Wisconsin apparently felt that if the matter was ignored long enough it would go away. As in the past, the members of the Synodical Conference, with the exception of the Missouri Synod, wished to maintain their own independent identity.

The attempt to merge the synods of the Synodical Conference ended in failure. This was due, in part, to the reluctance of the other members of the Synodical Conference to give up their independent identity. Yet, the October, 1932 article of August Pieper undoubtedly played a part. President Pfoth and the members of the Missouri Synod sought a peaceful solution to the problem (refusing to go public). But, there is no evidence that a solution was found. By 1935, the administration of

²⁸1946 Proceedings, p. 219.

²⁹Baepler, p. 340.

the Missouri Synod would change, and it appears that the matter "slipped into the cracks." If, in fact, a solution was never reached, there develops what may be considered an inconsistency in both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synod's unity principles. Despite open disagreement over doctrine (like F. A. Schmidt in 1880 and R. C. H. Lenski in 1923, August Pieper had gone public), church fellowship continued. It is this writer's opinion that Pfotenhauer was consistent in applying Lutheran unity principles because he tried every avenue in an attempt at reaching a God-pleasing settlement. Whether President Brenner of the Wisconsin Synod succeeded in obtaining Pieper's subscription to the Thiensville Theses is not known. More research is needed in order to establish whether or not the public disagreement of August Pieper was ever settled.

Missouri's Relation to Lutherans outside
the Synodical Conference

During the years that intersynodical discussions between Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa and Buffalo were conducted, the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods were engaged in their own negotiations toward a merger. By 1930, the final draft of a constitution was worked out and in August, 1930, the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods formed the American Lutheran Church.³⁰

In addition to their own merger negotiations, the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods had been negotiating with the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran

³⁰ E. Clifford Nelson, ed. The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 447-49.

Church, and the Lutheran Free Church. In 1925, the synods of Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo, with the Norwegian Lutheran Church, drew up an agreement called the Minneapolis Theses. Between 1925 and 1930, the Augustana Synod, the united Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Free Church gave their endorsement to the Minneapolis Theses and on October 31, 1930, the American Lutheran Conference was established. The American Lutheran Conference sought fellowship and cooperation following a "middle way" position between the United Lutheran Church of America and the Synodical Conference.³¹ By 1931, American Lutherans were divided into three major groups with a communicant membership as follows: the United Lutheran Church in America - 1, 384, 975, the American Lutheran Conference - 1,368,830, the Synodical Conference - 1,332,421.³²

Between 1930 and 1935, the Missouri Synod had no official discussions or relations with either the American Lutheran Church or the United Lutheran Church in America. Although the Missouri Synod had expressed a desire to continue discussions with the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods at its 1929 convention, it took no action to initiate these discussions. The final conventions of the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods in 1930 completely ignored the question of relations with the Missouri Synod.³³ Concerning the Intersynodical Theses and discussions with the other church-bodies, President Pfoth wrote:

³¹Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 338-40.

³²Theodore Graebner, "Editorial - Lutheran Statistics for 1931," The Lutheran Witness 51 (June 7, 1932):201

³³Fred W. Meuser, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud, Minn.: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970), p. 253.

It would be enough if the Intersynodical Theses could be sent to the pastors of the former Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods. We have negotiated with these and therefore it is not necessary that we deliver a last word.³⁴

Calls for Lutheran unity were issued from the various periodicals of members in the American Lutheran Conference as well as the United Lutheran Church. Yet, these calls maintained that agreement in doctrine already existed between all Lutherans in America. The only thing standing in the way of complete union was matters of practice, church polity, and national descent. To statements such as these Missouri responded in print, showing differences in doctrine and practice.³⁵

However, in 1935, the Missouri Synod was to encounter several changes. In January, 1935, President Pfotenhauer received a letter from Dr. F. H. Knubel, President of the United Lutheran Church in America:

In accordance with the instructions of the United Lutheran Church in America, I am sending you herewith a declaration unanimously adopted by our 1934 convention at Savannah, Ga. May I ask that you will convey it to the body of which you are the chosen leader, in such manner as commends itself to you.

The commission which I was instructed to name has been appointed and will be prepared to fulfill the responsibility laid upon it.

Will you kindly acknowledge the receipt of this communication, merely so that I may be sure it has not gone astray in the mail.

³⁴ Letter from F. Pfotenhauer to L. Fuerbringer dated July 18, 1931. Frederick Pfotenhauer papers, Box 1, File 4, C.H.I. Translated by this writer.

³⁵ Prof. John Fritz reports one such call for unity appearing in the Lutheran Standard in an editorial, "Lutheran Unity," The Lutheran Witness 50 (November 24, 1931):399-400. Theodore Graebner tells of several such instances in The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935). Both Fritz and Graebner show how the Missouri Synod disagreed with the other Lutheran church-bodies.

Should you wish to confer with me personally, I shall gladly make any arrangement that is mutually possible and agreeable.³⁶

To this, Dr. Pfothenhaer responded:

Esteemed Doctor: This acknowledges the receipt of your letter of January 10th and enclosure concerning relationships between the now separated Lutheran church groups in America.

Our synod will convene June 19th, 1935, in Cleveland. I will submit your communication to our church body for earnest deliberations.

May the Holy Ghost guide all in this important matter.³⁷

Apparently, Pfothenhauer received a similar communication from Dr. C. C. Hein, President of the American Lutheran Church. With the election of a new President at the 1935 Cleveland Convention and with invitations from both the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America, the Missouri Synod passed the following resolution:

1. WHEREAS, The American Lutheran Church has addressed a communication to our Synod, seeking to establish "pulpit and altar fellowship," and has appointed a committee to confer with us to that end; and
2. WHEREAS, The United Lutheran Church in America has addressed to us its Declaration on Lutheran Church Relationships, adopted by its convention at Savannah, Ga., 1934, inviting us to confer with them "with a view to the establishment of closer relationships" between the two bodies through a commission already appointed by them; and
3. WHEREAS, The Inner Mission Board of the United Lutheran Church in America, in accord with a resolution of the Savannah Convention, requested our President to name a representative to a conference of Inner Mission leaders of the General Lutheran Bodies of America, "with a view to, and for the purpose of, coordinating, wherever possible or desirable, the Inner Mission work of the Lutheran Church in America"; and

³⁶Letter from F. H. Knubel to F. Pfothenhauer dated January 10, 1935. F. H. Knubel papers, Archives of the Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁷Letter from F. Pfothenhauer to F. H. Knubel dated January 19, 1935. Ibid.

4. WHEREAS, In view of the cooperative movements taking place within the Lutheran bodies we may expect similar approaches toward union from time to time; and

5. WHEREAS, Our Synod has always recognized the duty and desirability of "the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4, 3-6; 1 Cor. 1, 10) and a united defense against schism and sectarianism" (Handbook, p. 1); and

6. WHEREAS, God-pleasing, scriptural external union and cooperation is based upon internal unity, oneness in faith confession, doctrine, and practice; therefore be it

7. 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;

8. Resolved, That a standing committee of five, to be known as the Committee on Lutheran Church Union, be appointed by the Chair to conduct these conferences;

9. Resolved, That the terms of the members of this committee be three years, successors being appointed by the Chair on the expiration of each term at least two members succeeding themselves.

On the floor of Synod this amendment was made:

10. Resolved, That this committee confer with the other members of the Synodical Conference and keep them informed in this matter.³⁸

In 1935, Missouri was again ready to begin discussions toward Lutheran unity with Lutherans outside the Synodical Conference.³⁹

³⁸ 1935 Proceedings, p. 221.

³⁹ For a brief analysis of interchurch relations between 1935 and 1960 see Alfred O. Fuerbringer and Martin H. Franzmann, "A Quarter-Century of interchurch Relations: 1935-1960," Concordia Theological Monthly 12 (January 1961):5-14.

CHAPTER VIII

THE 1935 CLEVELAND CONVENTION

When Wall Street crashed, October 29, 1929, the occurrence did not have the same immediate, traumatic effect on the rural Midwest as it had on the industrialized, metropolitan East Coast. However, by 1931, the depression was felt throughout the country. Not only did businesses fail and banks close, but farmers suffered crop failures, many even lost their farms, laborers were unemployed, and those fortunate enough to keep their jobs had their wages cut.¹ Because the Missouri Synod was a predominately Midwestern church body, it too did not feel the full impact of the Great Depression until well into 1932 when the Synod's debt grew to over one million dollars. Even though the salaries of synodical employees were cut by twenty-five percent, the deficit continued to grow. By 1933, the banks refused to lend the Synod money without acceptable collateral and the Synod's Board of Directors appealed to the members for loans.² The sad financial situation of the Synod brought forth criticism against the church-body's administration and stirred a movement that called for change.

¹Theodore Graebner, "The Business Depression: a Few Reflections," The Lutheran Witness 50 (November 24, 1931):307-08.

²Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 307-08.

However, finances were not the only part of the movement that desired to change the Missouri Synod. Many were dissatisfied with the home-mission approach of their church which still focused on German immigrants; the parochial German attitude of their Synod which still clung to a language that was alien to their country; the mind set of their leaders who were confronting a changing society with what were considered to be antiquated ideas. This was a new generation which desired to make the Missouri Synod a vital force in American society. It was a movement to Americanize the Missouri Synod.

The Push for Americanization

Although there had been those who were discontent with the actions of the officials within the Missouri Synod, that is, some within the New York Lutheran Society and the Eastern Army and Navy Board, this discontent had not been published throughout the Synod and was not organized into what can be considered a movement for drastic change.

The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau was organized in 1914 by Missouri Synod pastors and laymen who lived in New York, some of whom had participated in the Lutheran Society. It had been formed in order to promote Lutheranism in a positive way in the face of American anti-Germanism. In January 1918, the Bureau began publishing the American Lutheran under the editorial guidance of Pastor Paul Lindemann, carrying the slogan "A Changeless Christ for a Changing World."³ The publication offered pastors good ideas on evangelism and the managing of finances

³Erwin L. Lueker, ed., Lutheran Cyclopedia, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), pp. 28-29. Supra, pp. 92-93.

within the congregation and was viewed as a great help by pastors throughout the Missouri Synod.⁴

However, in 1934 a group of pastors and professors connected with the American Lutheran were growing more and more discontent with the way the Missouri Synod was being run and devised a plan to bring about change. This group included Paul Lindemann, editor of the American Lutheran and pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, Professor E. J. Friedrich of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Pastor O. P. Kretzmann of Valparaiso University, and Pastor O. A. F. Geiseman of River Forest, Illinois. The following reason was given for the plan:

There can be no doubt that our Church is not measuring up to the needs of the day. In spite of the fact that four years of depression have passed by and the affairs of the Church are in a desperate condition, no corrective measures have been proposed except those of salary cutting and curtailment of work. Our branch of the Church seems to be marking time, hoping for the return of conditions which never will return. There is no doubt that the Church needs serious self-examination as to the methods it is employing in the work of the Lord. There must be the elimination of outlived methods and a complete reconstruction of the program to fit a changing age. There can be no rebuilding unless there is a clear knowledge of the defects from which we are suffering.

It seems useless to hope for official action regarding constructive changes. Official action toward rectification of our organizational weaknesses can be brought about evidently only by pressure from below, through the insistence of conferences, congregations, pastors, and groups of laymen. Information as to where our weaknesses lie is a crying necessity. The editor of the American Lutheran is convinced that our financial situation never will be solved unless we have a definite church policy based upon an intelligent survey of the whole modern situation.

In order to instigate a heart-searching survey of present conditions, which we hope will lead up to a rectification of the ill-considered methods according to which we have been functioning, the editor proposes to the board of directors that the American Lutheran

⁴Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981 and with Dr. Lewis Spitz, Sr., December 15, 1981.

undertake a campaign of information which will insist not only upon a complete analysis of the present situation, but also upon measures which will enable us to function more efficiently in the future.

The plan called for changes in the Synod's home mission policy (particularly the linguistic and nationalistic ties), changes in education (the Missouri Synod had a surplus of ministerial candidates and a change was demanded for quality instead of quantity), changes in financial planning ("much money has been poured into hopeless places"), and a change in the local congregational life ("a cultivation of the spirit of worship" and meeting the needs of a media crazed age). It was proposed that the American Lutheran run articles from October 1934 until May or June 1935, calling for these changes. It was also planned to offer special retreats for pastors and lay leaders. In conclusion, the plan stated:

The above naturally offers only a sketchy outline of what the editor has in mind. He believes that the Church must be shaken out of its apathy and that first of all it must be brought to a startled recognition of its previous shortcomings and then to an aggressive attempt at rectification. Perhaps the directive influence towards the rehabilitation of our church life should come from above, but we feel that at the present time this directive influence will not be exerted unless it is compelled by sentiment from the rank and file. It is the creation of this sentiment that we have in mind. To this end the above is submitted to you [the Board of Directors for the American Lutheran] for your attention.⁵

Somehow Pastor Lawrence (Lorry) Meyer, the Synod's Director of Publicity, received a copy of this plan. Concerning the plan, Meyer wrote to Pastor Paul Schulz of Springfield, Illinois:

In Chicago I had a meeting with Geiseman. The whole thing has become very serious. I do believe that a meeting with the group is not only advisable but imperative unless we want to sit idly by and

⁵"Plan for the American Lutheran covering the issues from October, 1934 to May or June, 1935. For the information of the Board of Directors. Not for publication." Lorry B. Meyer papers, Box 1, File 1, Concordia Historical Institute. (Hereafter cited as C.H.I.)

see something done which, I am sure, will cause untold, if not irreparable harm. There are developments in the case which even you, who have taken a very negative position, haven't dreamed of. There is much more to it than merely high churchism. In fact, high churchism is not an issue but something much more dangerous than that, I fear.⁶

After Meyer met with Professor Friedrich and Pastor Geiseman to find out more about this "plan" and to arrange a meeting between those involved with the "plan" and synodical officials, he received the following letter from Paul Lindemann:

From both Professor Friedrich and Pastor Geiseman I have heard that you are very much exercised over a plan which the American Lutheran has in mind for presentation during the coming months. This plan must inadvertently have gotten into your hands, although there was no element of secrecy attached to it. From the information which I have received from both Friedrich and Geiseman it looks as though you had an altogether warped idea of the situation.

Your attitude seems to indicate that a fire has broken out in Synod and that the synodical fire department will have to be summoned to put out the blaze. You also seem to be under the impression that our campaign of education is a personal attack directed against officials of Synod. I don't see how you could possibly put such a construction on the plan as outlined.

It is very difficult to go into details by means of correspondence, although I wish you had approached me directly before going to Friedrich and Geiseman, seeking to arrange meetings between them and synodical officials. I have written Geiseman regarding the proposed informal meeting at Chicago and have told him that my first reaction is one of complete opposition. We have started no revolution. We have no political axes to grind. We are not in the least interested in personalities, and you ought to know by this time that I haven't in the slightest measure any official ambitions.

What the American Lutheran wants to do is to analyze the present day situation and to present the changing conditions under which the Church of today is compelled to work. It intends to ask frankly whether or not the Church is meeting the present-day needs. It also intends to express its opinion regarding changes and methods that the needs of the day seem to call for. It intends to present its case in an absolutely objective manner. There will be no direct criticism of official procedure. There will be no stepping on official corns. But God knows that we need to wake up to the fact that we are living in a changing world and that the methods of bygone ages need to be abolished. . . .

⁶Letter from L. Meyer to Paul Schulz dated October 8, 1934.

To summarize what I have said above, let me repeat that we have not the slightest intention of creating trouble in Synod. I yield to no man in my love for the Church and in my interest in Synod's progress. We have no intention of belittling or berating and criticizing personalities, but we do feel that we have the duty to foster the welfare of the Church according to our lights. If anybody is afraid of a cold-blooded analysis, it is just too bad.⁷

In responding to Lindemann, Meyer stated that Geiseman had approved of the idea of an unofficial meeting to clarify the different view-points and had assured Meyer that Paul Lindemann would feel the same. Meyer went on to add:

My reaction to your proposed method of procedure . . . is that if, as you state, "It seems useless to hope for official action regarding constructive changes," and if, as you again state, "The directive influence towards the rehabilitation of our Church-life ought to come from above, but we feel that at the present time this directive influence will not be exerted unless it is compelled by sentiment from the rank and file," then your first approach should be to those whom you hold responsible for the present conditions and policies and from whom, in your opinion, such constructive changes should issue.

Lorry Meyer proposed a meeting in which Lindemann, Geiseman, Arthur Brunn, Ressmeyer, O. P. Kretzmann, and Friedrich could present their case to Dr. Fuerbringer, Dr. Behnken (1st Vice-President of the Synod), Dr. Lankenau (2nd Vice-President of the Synod), Rev. Paul Schulz, and Dr. Pfothhauer (although he did not believe Dr. Pfothhauer would attend the meeting, but should be invited just the same). If Pastor Lindemann did not approve of the meeting, Meyer said that he would not bring it about. Meyer concluded by stating:

Those were the tentative plans. Before putting them into effect, however, I would have felt it my duty to submit the whole matter to Dr. Pfothhauer. No matter how "unofficial" a meeting of such a nature may be, it would nevertheless, be interpreted as semi-official

⁷Letter from Paul Lindemann to L. Meyer dated October 8, 1934.
Ibid.

and for men holding synodical offices it would not be fair to attend such a meeting without Dr. Pfothenhauer's knowledge.

However, I shall now regretfully drop the whole matter unless I should hear from you to the effect that you would gladly welcome such an informal round-table discussion.⁸

On October 11, 1934, Pastor Meyer met personally with President Pfothenhauer to discuss Paul Lindemann's plan.⁹ Shortly afterwards, Meyer received a letter from Pastor Schulz stating:

I have just received your correspondence with Lindemann and hasten to reply because you state that Dr. Pfothenhauer will be in St. Louis Monday morning. I just wish to state that I think we should drop all proposed negotiations with the gentlemen in question and that if anything further is to be done in the matter, it must be done in some other way. As far as I am concerned, I am through, because I now also believe that any meeting with people who take this attitude is utterly hopeless. Until now we might have said that their action was reprehensible, but Lindemann's last letter makes it contemptible. He is violently denying that he is raising accusations against anybody and yet in the same breath he is repeating these same accusations and adding new ones; and again he is emphatically refusing to meet those whom he is criticizing, which is not only un-Christian but ungentlemanly.

Of course, he is now trying to make it appear that the officials of Synod are afraid. The fact is that he, undoubtedly, now fears that he has started something. . . .

In brief, as I have said, I will have nothing more to do with the matter unless called upon by Dr. Pfothenhauer himself. In that case I shall, of course, consent from a sense of duty. I now believe more than ever that these gentlemen should be "called" by Dr. Pfothenhauer and that Prof. Friedrich, who is directly employed by Synod, should peremptorily be told to keep his hands out of this affair.¹⁰

In response to this, Pastor Meyer wrote:

⁸Letter from L. Meyer to Paul Lindemann dated October 11, 1934.

Ibid.

⁹Letter from L. Meyer to Paul Schulz dated October 11, 1934. Ibid.

¹⁰Letter from Paul Schulz to L. Meyer dated October 21, 1934.

Ibid.

Many thanks for your letter on the Lindemann debacle. Dr. Pfothenauer is of the same opinion. I shall now drop the matter. More later.¹¹

When the Second Vice-President of the Synod, Dr. F. J. Lankenau, found out about Paul Lindemann's "plan" he wrote to Lorry Meyer:

What is said of the "Changes in Life as they Affect the Church" is not new nor startling. Many of us have noticed these changes and have considered them in our work. Of course, many of our "conservative" brethren may not have done as much as they should to meet changed conditions, but neither would they do so if we had a new regime. But what might happen quite easily is that a too "progressive" administration might bring about a "SPLIT." . . .

In Fort Wayne I heard that Paul Miller is also in with the movement. I was also told that he is pushing Paul Lindemann as THE MAN OF THE HOUR. -- But as I told the brother that gave me this information, are these men that are criticizing Synod's administration so severely showing such a great superiority over others in their work?

Dear Lorry, I see breakers ahead. We need a safe man at the helm, or it may mean the wrecking of the ship; and I feel that the safest man we can possibly find at this crucial hour is the present captain of the ship!¹²

Pastor Paul Lindemann declined to engage in a meeting with synodical officials,¹³ and according to the wishes of President Pfothenauer the matter was dropped.¹⁴ However, Lindemann did send copies of his plan to various pastors and synodical officials requesting them to submit pertinent articles to the American Lutheran. This request was extended to Geiseman, O. P. Kretzmann, Friedrich, Henze, Brunn, Ressimyer, Dr. W.

¹¹Letter from L. Meyer to Paul Schulz dated October 15, 1934.
Ibid.

¹²Letter from F. J. Lankenau to L. Meyer dated October 19, 1934.
Ibid.

¹³Letter from P. Lindemann to L. Meyer dated October 30, 1934.
Ibid.

¹⁴Letter from L. Meyer to F. J. Lankenau dated October 22, 1934.
Ibid.

A. Meier, Dr. Th. Graebner, Fred Lindemann, A. R. Kretzmann, Dr. Dau, Prof. Rehwinkel, Dr. Landenau, Dr. Behnken, Dr. Arndt, and others.¹⁵

Meyer wrote to both Dr. Behnken and Dr. Lankenau advising them not to participate in Lindemann's plan.¹⁶ In fact, the only synodical official to contribute an article to the American Lutheran was Prof. Friedrich.¹⁷

From November 1934 through June 1935, the American Lutheran carried articles which never attacked the Synod's doctrinal position nor any individual synodical official, but which continually called into question the policies of the synodical administration and urged that pastors and laymen effect a change.¹⁸ In the June 1935 issue, Paul Lindemann carried a special article on the upcoming Cleveland Convention:

Delegates from every section of the country will gather and will pass resolutions affecting the policy of a large segment of American Lutheranism for the next three years. . . .

The affairs of the kingdom of God are never unimportant, but the Cleveland convention falls in a period of seething social and economic turmoil and spiritual bankruptcy, or rapid and revolutionary changes

¹⁵ Letter from P. Lindemann to L. Meyer dated October 30, 1934. Ibid.

¹⁶ Letter from L. Meyer to J. W. Behnken dated November 2, 1934, and letter from L. Meyer to F. J. Lankenau dated November 5, 1934. Ibid.

¹⁷ E. J. Friedrich, "Is Our Clergy Measuring Up," American Lutheran 18 (May 1935):6-8.

¹⁸ Arthur Brunn, "Shall We Scrap our Machinery," American Lutheran 17 (November 1934):6; Otto Geiseman, "They Are Our Brothers," Ibid., 17 (November 1934); Paul Lindemann, "Today and Tomorrow," Ibid., 18 (January 1935):2-5; Edgar F. Witte, "The Challenge to the Church in the Present Social Order," Ibid., 18 (February 1935):11-13; Arthur Brunn, "Our Home Mission Problems," Ibid., 18 (March 1935):6-7; O. P. Kretzmann, "Youth Faces the Church," Ibid., 18 (April 1935):3-6; O. H. Pannkoke, "An Attempt to Outline a Progressive Program," Ibid., 18 (May 1935):8-10.

in the mode and thought of life. The world in which the Church must function differs from what it was even three years ago. . . . This holds good on almost every field of the Church's endeavor and particularly on the missionary and educational fields. . . . May God grant the assembled brethren wisdom and faith and courage to go further than the usual attempts to bolster up and revitalize a tottering system and to determine upon really radical measures of readjustment. The situation is really critical. To our mind the next decade portends disaster unless drastic measures are taken to rectify a situation which can be maintained only by occasional frantic pulmotor methods and which is bound to break to pieces under the stress of conditions that we shall have to face during the next decade.¹⁹

Yet, the movement for change did not end with the June issue of the American Lutheran. Extensive politicking was going on before and during the 1935 Cleveland Convention. Documentation for this comes from several sources. In the first draft of his memoir, This I Recall (this information never made it into the final publication), John W. Behnken tells of the politicking:

However, in all honesty I must say that if I had known at the time of the Cleveland convention what I learned about five years later, I would not have accepted the Presidency. From a man, whose reliability I cannot doubt, I learned that there was very much electioneering or propaganda. This occurred in the lobby and had also taken place through the mails. It is hardly believable that anyone would resort to such political tactics and maneuverings, against or for a candidate, in church elections. But it happened. The reader will understand, then, why I have warned repeatedly against electioneering at our conventions. It simply is improper and inexcusable in synodical elections. May God graciously preserve our Synod from practices which would make a political football out of our elections. Where this is done the church body is on slippery paths, and these lead downward.²⁰

¹⁹ Paul Lindemann, "The Cleveland Convention," American Lutheran 19 (June 1935):3.

²⁰ John W. Behnken, "First draft" of This I Recall, in the possession of William J. Schmelder, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO.

Martin Scharlemann had just graduated from Concordia Seminary at this time. Because there were no calls into the ministry readily available, young Martin was serving as the secretary to the Secretary of the Synod, Pastor Martin F. Kretzmann. It was Scharlemann's job to assign lodging for the convention delegates and then to dictate into German shorthand

Some people within the Missouri Synod wanted change; change in the linguistic character of their church, in the financial situation of their Synod, in the outreach program of their home-mission efforts, in the administration of their church body. The men associated with the American Lutheran took it upon themselves to push for this change as a prelude to the Cleveland Convention in an effort to "Americanize" the Missouri Synod.

President Pfothhauer and Dr. Behnken

At seventy-six years of age, Dr. Frederick Pfothhauer represented the "old" Missouri Synod to many synodical members. He was one of the few remaining Missouri leaders who had studied at the feet of C. F. W. Walther. In 1935, Pfothhauer had served the Synod as President for twenty-four years. He was considered to be part of the third generation

the minutes of the Cleveland Convention as they were translated from English into German by Dr. Herman Harms. Dr. Scharlemann intimated that as the various ballots for the synodical presidency were being conducted, there was much politicking conducted at the Convention and at the parish of Pastor C. W. Spiegel (pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church of Cleveland, the church in which all of the committee meetings were conducted). Yet Dr. Scharlemann states that Dr. Behnken had no part in this. Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981.

In a phone conversation with Dr. C. W. Spiegel on February 22, 1982 (who became a professor at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois after serving as pastor at St. Paul's in Cleveland and who is now retired in Springfield, Ill.), he intimated to this writer that much pressure was being applied to elect Dr. Behnken for the synodical presidency without the actual knowledge of Dr. Behnken. Some years after the convention at which Behnken was elected President, he told Spiegel that, "If I had known when I was elected president of Synod what I know now, I would have never accepted the position." Dr. Spiegel implied that this statement was made not only in reference to the politicking that had gone on, but also with respect to the people who had engaged in that politicking and the expectations (with reference to change) that they had for Dr. Behnken's presidency.

-- a generation that was passing. Many felt it was time for the fourth generation to take the helm.²¹ In many ways, Pfotenhauer did indeed typify the old Missouri Synod, a position that he would readily defend. President Pfotenhauer continued to hold a firm commitment to the German language. He strongly believed that the Missouri Synod could remain a bilingual church body on American soil, even after World War I. He continued to stress an evangelism outreach to German immigrants when immigration was declining.²²

However, some of the hardships that were facing the Missouri Synod in the 1930s were situations that were beyond the control of President Pfotenhauer. These included the economic depression and the over supply of ministerial candidates (which was caused by the depression).²³ Pfotenhauer may well have employed better resources for managing the financial troubles of the Missouri Synod, but apparently he did not react fast enough for many Missourians.

Still, many people within the Missouri Synod continued to feel that Pfotenhauer was the best man for the job. As Second Vice-President Lankenau put it:

²¹Walter A. Maier, "The Convention Afterglow," F. Pfotenhauer papers, Box 1, File 5, C.H.I.

²²By the 1930s, immigration from Germany had dropped sharply and those who did come were usually atheists or associated with the German State Church. Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981.

²³During this period, many congregations could not afford a pastor and went vacant, and because of the synodical debt, the Missouri Synod could not afford more missionaries. In 1935, there were only 13 ministerial calls for 300 candidates. Lorry Meyer, "The Story of the Cleveland Convention," F. Pfotenhauer papers, Box 1, File 5, C.H.I.

We need a safe man at the helm, or it may mean the wrecking of the ship; and I feel that the safest man we can possibly find at this crucial hour is the present captain of the ship!²⁴

Similarly, Dr. Behnken records:

As the 1935 convention approached, the members of my church council wanted to know whether there was anything to the rumor that I would be elected President. I assured them that it wouldn't happen, since I had been reliably informed on my visit to St. Louis that spring for the noonday services that synodical leaders had persuaded Dr. Pfothenhauer not to refuse reelection. With Dr. Pfothenhauer available, I informed the church council, the matter was settled as far as I was concerned.²⁵

Pfothenhauer himself was not one to retire voluntarily. Throughout his presidency, he held to the policy of "Let Synod decide," which he had exclaimed to every one who came to him for advice on whether or not "to run again."²⁶

John W. Behnken, on the other hand, represented a newer and younger Missouri Synod. He was a fourth generation Missourian. As First Vice-President of the Synod, he was a key figure among synodical officials. Behnken was not associated with those who pushed the "plan" of the American Lutheran. He did, however, represent many of the principles set forth in Lindemann's plan. Yet, in a much more palatable manner.

John Behnken was born in Cypress, Texas, March 19, 1884; the first American born Missouri Synod President. After graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1906, he served a congregation in

²⁴Letter from F. J. Lankenau to L. Meyer dated October 10, 1934. Lorry B. Meyer papers, Box 1, File 1, C.H.I. Pfothenhauer actually came very close to being reelected in 1935.

²⁵John W. Behnken, This I Recall (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 47.

²⁶Lorry Meyer, "The Story of the Cleveland Convention."

Houston, Texas until 1935. From 1926 until 1929 he was President of the Missouri Synod's Texas District.²⁷ In 1929, Behnken was elected Second Vice-President of the Synod,²⁸ and in 1932 he was elected First Vice-President.²⁹ Behnken spoke fluent English. As a guest preacher at the annual Lenten services for the St. Louis area Missouri Synod congregations (held in the American Theater), Behnken became a favorite speaker and was known throughout the Synod as a great orator.³⁰ He also had proven himself by his evangelistic and stewardship methods at his congregation in Houston.³¹ For many people in the Missouri Synod, Behnken represented the new Missouri Synod that they wanted to see.

Because of a lack of evidence, it is difficult to say what kind of relationship Pfotenhauer and Behnken shared. Yet, if Pfotenhauer's letter of June 14, 1934 is any indication, it was a very warm friendship:

Der Lutheraner reported this morning that the faculty in St. Louis has given you the title of Doctor.

I was very happy when I heard this and I hurried to send you happy wishes for this honor.

May the Doctor title, as it did for Luther, give you new courage and comfort in your work. And may our kind God keep you as His Doctor for many years and with an increasing degree send you as a blessing to our dear Church and Synod.

²⁷Lueker, Lutheran Cyclopedia, p. 82.

²⁸The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 34th Regular Meeting at River Forest, Illinois, on June 19-28, 1929 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p. 205.

²⁹The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 35th Regular Meeting at Milwaukee, Wisconsin on June 15-24, 1932 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 259.

³⁰Interview with Dr. Lewis Spitz, Sr., December 15, 1981.

³¹Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981.

I greet you in true love and respect.³²

As the Cleveland Convention approached, President Pfothenhauer undoubtedly felt challenged. He and many other synodical officials viewed the plan of the American Lutheran as a criticism against their administration. If Pfothenhauer believed he faced opposition in the upcoming election, it was undoubtedly only from Paul Lindemann. Dr. Behnken did not campaign, politick, nor agitate in any way.³³

The 1935 Election

When Lorry Meyer wrote "The Story of the Cleveland Convention," he found only one way to describe the attitude that prevailed -- it was a "Missionary Convention." Neither debts, nor deficits, nor shortages, nor depression could stop the missionary enthusiasm that swept the convention.³⁴

The thirty-sixth Missouri Delegate Synod was opened with a bilingual service in the spacious Convention Hall of the new Cleveland Auditorium on the morning of Wednesday, June 19. The afternoon session that same day was begun with a brief liturgical service, conducted by the Rev. C. W. Spiegel of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Cleveland. This was followed by Pfothenhauer's Presidential Address and Report. As the basis for his opening address, Pfothenhauer chose the stanzas of the hymn: "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord." The President dwelt on the work of the Holy

³²Letter from F. Pfothenhauer to J. W. Behnken dated June 14, 1934. John W. Behnken papers, Box 6, File 3, C.H.I. Translated by this writer.

³³Interview with Dr. Lewis Spitz, Sr., December 15, 1981.

³⁴Lorry Meyer, "The Story of the Cleveland Convention," p. 6.

Spirit in dispelling spiritual darkness by the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is proclaimed by the church. Like many of Pfotenhauer's Presidential Reports, the one delivered in 1935 was short and to the point. The President showed how the past three years were hard years for the Church, due to the economic conditions which prevailed. Yet, he assured the delegates that the work of the Church would not diminish.³⁵ As President Pfotenhauer took the helm of the Cleveland Convention, he continued "with that same firm, but kind leadership which had marked his twenty-four years as President of the Missouri Synod."³⁶

On the morning of Thursday, June 20, the first ballot was cast in the election for the synodical President. Before the morning session closed, the Election Committee reported the results: Dr. F. Pfotenhauer had received 263 votes; Dr. J. Behnken, 157; Dr. F. Lankenau, 22; Rev. H. Grueber, 14; and Rev. Paul Lindemann, 14. Because the absolute majority required 267 votes, another ballot was taken. At 3:30 in the Thursday afternoon session, the Election Committee reported the following results of the second ballot: Dr. Pfotenhauer, 253; Dr. Behnken, 206; Dr. Lankenau, 25; Pastor Lindemann, 16; Pastor Grueber, 15. The name of Pastor Grueber was dropped from the list and another ballot was taken. In the morning session of Friday, June 21 the Election Committee reported the following returns: Dr. Pfotenhauer, 259; Dr. Behnken, 257; Dr. Lankenau, 9; Rev. Lindemann, 6. Lindemann's name was stricken from the

³⁵The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 36th Regular Meeting at Cleveland Ohio, on June 19-28, 1935 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), pp. 6-7.

³⁶Lorry Meyer, "The Story of the Cleveland Convention," p. 6.

list and another ballot was taken.³⁷ Concerning this point in the convention, Dr. Behnken recalls:

After a number of ballots and still no majority, I asked President Pfotenhauer whether I might make a statement. "Not now," he told me. "Just wait." When finally the balloting was narrowed down to a vote between Dr. Pfotenhauer and me, I again asked him to permit me an opportunity to speak. His answer was: "You must not say anything. Let God decide the matter by the vote of the convention."³⁸

On Friday afternoon, the final results of the presidential election were reported. In the fourth ballot, 497 votes had been cast, making 249 votes necessary for election. Dr. J. W. Behnken had polled 263 votes; Dr. Pfotenhauer, 229; Dr. Lanckenau, 5. Dr. Behnken had been elected the new President of the Missouri Synod for the next three years.³⁹

Lorry Meyer reports the following with regard to Pfotenhauer's response:

As the Judge of Elections read the returns, there was an almost imperceptible quiver of his facial expression, then a straightening of the shoulders, and the hardest verdict that man in this vale of tears must hear, namely, that his days of active service have come to a close, had been taken like a man.⁴⁰

After the results were reported, Pfotenhauer addressed the assembly, briefly stating that he considered the result of the election an act of

³⁷Theodore Graebner, "Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Missouri Synod," The Lutheran Witness 54 (July 2, 1935):231-32.

³⁸Behnken, This I Recall, p. 48.

³⁹Graebner, "Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Missouri Synod," p. 232.

⁴⁰Lorry Meyer, "The Story of the Cleveland Convention," p. 6. Dr. Martin Scharlemann reports that Pfotenhauer actually "took it rather hard." Although Pfotenhauer never stated this, Scharlemann believed that he took his non-election as "a rejection of his administration, which of course it wasn't." Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981.

God's infinite love towards him and wished his successor God's richest blessings during his tenure of office.

Following Dr. Pfothenhauer's speech, the newly elected President, Dr. Behnken, addressed the assembly, thanking it for the confidence placed in him and continuing he said:

This is perhaps the hardest occasion in my life. Never before have I been touched and moved to such deep humility. I fully realize my inability, my weakness, and my shortcomings, and I am in full accord with all that has been said about my predecessor and ask that a double portion of the spirit with which my venerable predecessor has been endowed may fall upon me. Without doubt, due to the conditions in the world to-day, dark clouds are hovering over the horizon of our Church, and therefore it is urgently necessary to turn to the Lord in prayer. I am but an instrument of the Lord and therefore I plead with Synod to remember me in their prayers.⁴¹

Apparently, the speeches of both Pfothenhauer and Behnken deeply moved the assembly because Meyer reports:

Many a lump in the throat was swallowed as the realization dawned upon the convention that another chapter, and one of such great importance that we, so close to it in the history of our Church, cannot properly value it, had come to a close.⁴²

Immediately after the close of the Friday afternoon session, a group of laymen got together and drafted the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted by the Synod on Saturday morning, June 22:

WHEREAS, Our venerable and beloved Dr. Pfothenhauer has served our Church as missionary, pastor, District and synodical President during the past fifty-five years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Pfothenhauer has under God been the source of bounteous blessings to our Church and to Lutheranism throughout the world during his eight terms, comprising twenty-four years, as President of our Missouri Synod: and

WHEREAS, By God's guidance Dr. Pfothenhauer has now, after his long

⁴¹Graebner, "Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Missouri Synod," p. 232.

⁴²Lorry Meyer, "The Story of the Cleveland Convention," p. 6.

term of service in the Church, been relieved of the burdens and cares of the active Presidency, and

WHEREAS, We, the lay representatives of our congregations in convention assembled, are constrained to express our gratitude for the blessings that have been ours through our beloved leader and President; therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the lay representatives in convention assembled, recommend that this Synod create for him the office of Honorary President; and be it further

Resolved, That we recommend that this Synod instruct its Secretary to cast one ballot for Dr. Pfotenhauer as incumbent of this office; and be it further

Resolved, That we recommend that Synod vote him a monetary consideration of \$200 a month.⁴³

Honorary President Pfotenhauer Continues To Serve

Even though retired, Honorary President Pfotenhauer took his title seriously. As late as 1938, he continued to serve on Missouri's Standing Committee for Relations with the Finnish National Church.⁴⁴

Because of the lack of evidence, it is difficult to say if President Behnken turned to Pfotenhauer for advice. In a letter to Dr. L. Fuerbringer, Pfotenhauer wrote:

At our next convention we will have to speak out with respect to the other Lutheran Synods. The report of the Intersynodical Committee will also take this up. May God help us so that our Synod can express itself clearly.

Pfotenhauer still believed that fellowship with the American Lutheran Church was impossible because of what he considered their unionistic activities with the Norwegian and Augustana Synods.⁴⁵ Whether or not

⁴³Ibid., pp. 6-9. Graebner, "Thirty-Sixth Convention of the Missouri Synod," pp. 232-33. 1935 Proceedings, pp. 212-13.

⁴⁴The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the 37th Regular Meeting at St. Louis, Missouri, on June 15-24, 1938 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 234.

⁴⁵Letter from F. Pfotenhauer to L. Fuerbringer dated March 6, 1938. F. Pfotenhauer papers, Box 1, File 4, C.H.I.

he expressed his opinions to President Behnken is unknown.

During this period, Pfotenhauer was asked to compile a number of his sermons for a book. In 1938, Predigten gehalten zu verschiedenen Zeiten und bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten was published with a preface by Dr. L. Fuerbringer. Characteristic of Pfotenhauer's true linguistic love, the book was published only in German.⁴⁶

As he had done throughout much of his presidency, Pfotenhauer also continued to serve as associate pastor of a congregation. From 1930 until 1939, he was pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois. On Good Friday, 1939, Dr. Pfotenhauer preached his last sermon. On Easter Monday, Pfotenhauer entered Englewood Hospital for major gland surgery. It took him several months to recover, but by summer he was well enough to visit his children in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. There he spoke to the Park Region Conference at Alexandria, Minnesota on "Lutheran Union," and at the church in Fergus Falls performed his last ministerial act by baptizing an infant in the public service.

In September 1939, Dr. Pfotenhauer began complaining about cramps. An X-ray revealed a malignant growth at the exit of his stomach. After bestowing his fatherly blessing upon his children, he left Fergus Falls on September 20, for Chicago, stopping along the way to visit friends. At Chicago he again entered Englewood Hospital and on Monday morning, October 9, 1939, Frederick Pfotenhauer died. Before he passed into God's

⁴⁶ F. Pfotenhauer, Predigten gehalten zu verschiedenen Zeiten und bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938).

heavenly kingdom, Dr. Pfothenauer would often pray aloud in German. Yet, when he noticed that a nurse had been listening, he translated his prayer into English for her benefit.⁴⁷

⁴⁷E. A. Mayer, "Dr. Friedrich Pfothenauer (1859-1939)," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 13 (April 1940):16-22.

CHAPTER IX

AN ANALYSIS

Pfotenhauer, Some Personal Characteristics

Before getting into an analysis of Pfotenhauer's leadership role in Missouri Synod's unity attempts, a closer look at Pfotenhauer's personal characteristics as a leader is in order. In some respects, this will be a review of information already given. Yet, additional information will be included which will provide an opportunity for reflection.

Frederick Pfotenhauer was born in Germany and spent the first sixteen years of his life there. Until he came to America, he knew only the German language. Throughout his life, the German language was his primary linguistic preference. Much of his paternal family remained in Germany so that he always had close ties to his homeland. Pfotenhauer also came from a long, unbroken line of Lutheran pastors (who traced their lineage back to the Reformation). He was very proud of his Lutheran heritage as well as the German language, and believed the two went hand in hand.

Pfotenhauer had studied under Walther, Schaller, Guenther and F. Pieper. Although not a scholar in his own right, Pfotenhauer was well trained in the "old" Lutheran theology¹ of the Missouri Synod's earliest

¹"Old" Lutheran was the title given to the confessional Lutherans who immigrated to America in the early 1800s by the less confessional American Lutheran who were already well established on the East Coast.

teachers. Even though Pfothenhauer was considered to be a third generation Missourian at the time of his retirement from the Presidency, he was actually of the second generation. Much of his outlook on Lutheran unity was shaped by the controversy over predestination which was developing when he graduated from the seminary.

Although Pfothenhauer had spent seven years as a missionary on the Great Plains, he did not share the rugged character of the Missouri Synod's second President, F. C. D. Wyneken.² As a leader, Pfothenhauer exuded the nature of a highly sophisticated gentleman. Standing at about six feet with white hair and white mustache, President Pfothenhauer's appearance and manner commanded respect. He carried himself with great formality and dignity and spoke with a distinct and refined high German dialect. For people within the Missouri Synod, he was a father figure, the Synod's outstanding representative.³ Although some within the Synod criticized Pfothenhauer's administration (indirectly), their numbers were not great. Those closest to Pfothenhauer (other synodical officials) were extremely loyal.⁴

During Pfothenhauer's presidency, the administration of his office was conducted from his home in Chicago, Illinois. With around 1,000,000

²Wyneken had been a missionary sent to Indiana from Loehe's school in Neuendettelsau, Germany. He was known for his rugged character and disregard for formal attire.

³Interview with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981. Pictures from Pfothenhauer papers, File 1, Box 1, Concordia Historical Institute (Hereafter cited as C.H.I.). Pfothenhauer was very distinguished in his dress. He was also known to enjoy a good cigar now and then.

⁴Supra, pp. 161-63.

members, the Missouri Synod was small enough to manage from one or two rooms in his home. President Pfothenauer took up residence in Chicago because he considered it the most convenient location from which to travel to various parts of the Synod. Pfothenauer would make it a point to visit district conventions as often as possible and would regularly visit synodical institutions. At the synodical schools he would sit in on each classroom listening to the lectures of the professors. In the evenings he would go around and visit the students individually in their study rooms.⁵ President Pfothenauer made it a point to know what was happening from the lowest to the highest areas of synodical activity.

Although President Pfothenauer frequently traveled throughout the Missouri Synod and was well informed on synodical activities, he rarely communicated with officials outside of the Synod. Any correspondence with other synodical presidents was usually initiated by them. Only in extreme situations, where relations were threatened, did he contact another synodical president. This apparently occurred with President Hein⁶ because of the Ohio Synod's relationship to the Norwegian Synod and with President Brenner of the Wisconsin Synod⁷ because of the August Pieper article.

⁵Interviews with Dr. Martin Scharlemann, December 14, 1981, and with Dr. Lewis Spitz, Sr., December 15, 1981. Pfothenauer also had quite a sense of humor (although in a sophisticated manner). Dr. Spitz told of one of Pfothenauer's visits to St. Paul's College, Concordia, Mo. In meeting with the teachers, Pfothenauer noticed that three of them did not smoke and commented, "Their Lutheranism is in suspect!"

⁶Supra, p. 125.

⁷Supra, p. 149.

In intersynodical matters, Pfothenauer always worked through a committee of representatives which was either appointed or elected. Only in the case of the Finnish Lutheran Church did Pfothenauer personally serve on the committee. Yet, whether the committee was appointed or elected, at least one member kept in close contact with President Pfothenauer for advice and guidance. Pfothenauer would tell the committee how to respond in a given situation, and his advice was always followed.⁸

Because Pfothenauer was not as academically inclined as other Missouri Synod presidents had been (Walther and Pieper), he depended heavily on members of the seminary faculties for advice on important theological questions. This advice was solicited from the faculty as a group (as in the case of the Army and Navy Board),⁹ or from individuals (consistently from Graebner and Fuerbringer). However, Pfothenauer always made the final decision in matters of policy.

Pfothenauer took his leadership position very seriously. Yet, he was not one to act independently. Unlike Presidents Stub and Hein, Pfothenauer did not engage in private negotiations. As mentioned above, he usually worked through committees. Pfothenauer regularly sought the advice and counsel of other synodical officials. However, in matters of major significance, Pfothenauer believed that God acted through the vote of the Delegate Synod.

⁸In the case of the Intersynodical Discussions, Pfothenauer's primary contact was Theodore Graebner, who regularly reported to the President and sought his advice. Graebner seems to have been a man that got stirred up easily and at times, Pfothenauer even had to calm Graebner down. *Supra*, p. 124.

⁹*Supra*, pp. 99-100.

Throughout his presidency, Pfotenhauer was reluctant toward change. This proved to be a great benefit in maintaining the Synod's theological integrity. However, in other areas, this may have been a handicap. This seems to have been the case in the language question. Because the Missouri Synod, under Pfotenhauer's leadership, was reluctant to change from German to English, many congregations faced severe anti-German sentiment during World War I and many parochial schools were forced to close. This reluctance toward changing the language of the Synod also affected the church body's growth and mission outreach. Because German immigration was declining while the Missouri Synod continued to emphasize home mission to German immigrants, the outreach potential of the Synod was not reached. In that respect, the Gospel message and pure doctrine cannot be associated with a given language. The financial problems of the Missouri Synod during the Great Depression were another area that called for change. Whether any man could have handled the situation more effectively is hard to say. Some people within the Missouri Synod believed that President Pfotenhauer could have responded quicker and with greater result. However, because the country as a whole was in serious financial trouble, it is difficult for this writer to see how President Pfotenhauer could be held totally responsible for Synod's financial problems. What is probably of greater import is the desire of Pfotenhauer to keep the Missouri Synod a German enclave. This may well have produced a reaction within the Missouri Synod that would demand more than just change in language and mission outreach. This may have produced a movement which would push for the same kind of Americanization that had occurred in other American Lutheran church bodies.

Pfotenhauer's Leadership in Lutheran Unity

Certain modern historians judge Lutheran unity attempts only on the result. The success or failure of a unity attempt is decided on the basis of whether or not a merger or union occurred. In such an analysis, it is usually maintained that compromise is necessary as union is sought along the lowest common denominator.

However, the Missouri Synod does not base its unity attempts on the pragmatic results, but rather on the Word of God, Scripture. Therefore, any analysis of Missouri Synod unity attempts must be based on the Scriptural principles for unity. Was President Pfotenhauer's leadership role in the Synod's unity attempts consistent with the Scriptural principles for unity? These principles, as understood by Missouri Synod theologians, were set forth in Chapter II of this paper. However, a brief summary is in order here.

The Missouri Synod's concept of unity was not based on the formation of an ecclesiastico-political organization. The Synod's concept of unity was based on the unity that exists in the Church, the unity of all true believers in Jesus Christ. Because the faith of believers is invisible and known only to God, the outward expression of unity must be based on the believer's confession of faith. Scripture requires believers to teach God's Word in its truth and purity and urges them to avoid false teachers. Therefore, fellowship, the outward expression of unity, can only be based on agreement in doctrine and practice. If members of an orthodox church were to fellowship with a heterodox body, the truth would be compromised and error would be condoned.

The Missouri Synod also believed that unity is something to be sought. In this endeavor, one is to witness to the truth both orally and in writing whenever and wherever possible so that true unity may be achieved.

The orthodox character of a Church is established and recognized by the doctrine which is actually taught and practiced in its pulpits, seminaries, and through its publications. After fellowship has been established, it is not broken when differences occur until every avenue for correction has been exhausted. Upon these principles President Pfotenhauer's leadership role in Missouri Synod unity attempts will be judged.

When the English Missouri Synod and the German Missouri Synod merged in 1911, fellowship had already existed for twenty-one years (since 1890 when the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States joined the Synodical Conference). Unity was based on agreement in doctrine and practice and not on any ecclesiastico-political structure. When the two synods did merge, it was a matter of policy -- the union was the best policy for both the English and German church bodies. At the convention where the merger took place, Pfotenhauer was actually not the President of the Missouri Synod, he was only acting President in the absence of Francis Pieper. However, after the English Synod became a non-geographical District of the Missouri Synod, it was never forced into amalgamating with the general body. As long as unity existed, the ecclesiastico-political structure was an adiaphoron. President Pfotenhauer never pushed for or against an amalgamation, but left it up to the English District and the Delegate Synod. Out of love for the needs and

desires of fellow brothers in Christ, the Synod left the decision of amalgamation to the members of the English Distirct.

Because fellowship had existed between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod since 1868 (the date when fellowship had been officially declared), a group of Wisconsin Synod laymen began a movement in 1913 to bring about a merger of the two synods. At its 1914 Delegate Synod, the Missouri Synod responded by appointing President Pfotenhauer to select a committee to work out a plan for the union. Pfotenhauer responded quickly, a committee was appointed, and a plan was drafted. As in the case of the merger between the English and German Missouri Synods, a merger between the synods of Wisconsin and Missouri would have been the best policy; competition would have been alleviated and institutions would have been consolidated. Even though the Missouri Synod supported the merger plan whole-heartedly, the Wisconsin Synod had its own priorities. Because the Wisconsin Synod wanted to finalize its own reorganization (which was completed in 1919), a merger with the Missouri Synod was put off indefinitely. Yet, the Missouri Synod expressed its readiness to merge whenever the Wisconsin Synod was agreeable.

Because unity among all Lutherans in America did not exist, both Pfotenhauer (in his 1917 Presidential Address) and the Synod as a whole (through its various publications) disregarded the calls for merger and joint worship that surfaced as a prelude to the Reformation Quadricentennial. Pfotenhauer believed that only where unity existed could there be joint worship and union. There is no evidence that Pfotenhauer took any action with regard to the Lutheran Society of New York and the New York Quadricentenary Committee. It is unlikely that he was unaware of

the situation. More probable is the possibility that he believed this to be a cooperation in externals since no joint worship was planned. Also, the publications of the New York Quadricentenary Committee clearly stated that its purpose was for a purely civic celebration and it had no intention of minimizing doctrinal differences that existed.

With regard to the merger of the Norwegian synods, the Missouri Synod made every attempt to evangelically discuss the problems that this merger would cause with the church body with which they were in fellowship, the Norwegian Synod. Although not directly involved with the appointed Synodical Conference committee, Pfotenhauer expressed his distress over the situation in his 1917 Presidential Report. Because the Norwegian merger was based on a compromising of doctrinal principles, it destroyed the unity that existed between the Missouri Synod and the Norwegian Synod. However, the Missouri Synod did extend the hand of fellowship to the small group of Norwegian Lutherans who did not join in the merger and who continued to maintain doctrinal agreement with the Missouri Synod.

Although Pfotenhauer did not speak out on the merger of the Eastern Lutheran Church bodies which formed the United Lutheran Church in America, the periodicals of the Missouri Synod did. Because doctrinal disagreement existed within the merger, the Missouri Synod viewed it as a union without unity. Therefore, the Missouri Synod would have no part in it. Also, it must be remembered that the Missouri Synod was not invited to join in doctrinal discussions before the merger took place. The Missouri Synod had consistently held that agreement must be reached in doctrine before there could be a union.

World War I created special problems for the Missouri Synod, not only because of the anti-German sentiment that arose, but also because the Synod had to decide how it was to relate to the other Lutheran church bodies in its service to military personnel and in its relations to the government. The Synod appointed its own Army and Navy Board, and because President Pfotenhauer wanted to participate in the meetings, all of the Board members were chosen from the city of Chicago. Pfotenhauer and the Board saw a possibility for some measure of cooperation with the other Lutheran bodies even though doctrinal agreement had not been reached. They decided that cooperation in externals was necessary for the ministry to Missouri Synod service men and for proper recognition from the United States government. In order to facilitate this cooperation with the other Lutheran church bodies, a five point "agreement" was drafted. However, this five point agreement did not fully convey the understanding of cooperation which the Missouri Synod wished to maintain. Because the wording of the agreement was not as precise as it probably should have been, it was easily misunderstood by the more "open-minded" leaders of the National Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare and the editors of the other Lutheran church bodies' periodicals. This misunderstanding (which was openly published) created a reaction within the Missouri Synod and all cooperation with the National Lutheran Commission was broken off. This, in turn, produced a reaction on the part of the East Coast Missouri Synod pastors who saw the need for some form of cooperation. The matter was settled (at least to the satisfaction of President Pfotenhauer and other synodical officials) when a new agreement was drafted which spelled out the Missouri Synod's understanding of cooperation.

Because agreement in doctrine and practice did not exist between the Missouri Synod and the other Lutheran church bodies involved in the National Lutheran Commission, the Missouri Synod (and especially Pfotenhauer as the Synod's leader) wished to maintain cooperation only in externals, that is, the building of worship facilities and the presenting of a united front before the United States government. However, several factors inhibited this cooperation from being carried out smoothly. These included the lack of precision in the wording of the original five point agreement and the location of the Army and Navy Board in Chicago. If the Board had been located closer to the government and the military camps, some of these problems could have possibly been alleviated. There appears, however, to have been a growing distrust within the Missouri Synod between synodical officials and a certain group of Missouri Synod pastors located on the East Coast at this time. Some of these pastors would later be involved in the movement that pushed for the Americanization of the Missouri Synod and which criticized the administration of synodical officials. More study is needed in order to determine the effect that these men had on the Synod, especially after the 1935 Delegate Synod.

Regarding the leadership of President Pfotenhauer with respect to the Army and Navy Board, Pfotenhauer made every effort to maintain the Scriptural principles of unity. That these principles were not applied as smoothly as they could have been is due primarily to the above mentioned factors. Here one can possibly see why Pfotenhauer depended so heavily on the members of the Synods theological faculties (men who were accustomed to precision in theological language). Yet, Pfotenhauer was also

reluctant to change traditional practices, and the selection of a committee from one geographical location may have been one such practice.

Pfotenhauer did not attend the initial meeting which was to plan the formation of the National Lutheran Council. The most probable reason for this was because he did not want his presence to be misunderstood. The call for the meeting was not a call for doctrinal discussion so that unity could be established. It was a call to organize a federation. Pfotenhauer believed that there could be no union without unity. However, he did allow Pastor Steffens from Washington D. C. to attend the Harrisburg meeting as a "guest." This was undoubtedly to find out what the purpose of the new organization was to be. If the Missouri Synod could have cooperated only in matters external, possibly Pfotenhauer would have considered bringing the matter before the Delegate Synod (Pfotenhauer did not act independently of the desires of his church body). However, Pfotenhauer understood the organizations to involve more than externals and therefore, he totally avoided the National Lutheran Council. It is interesting to note that Pfotenhauer (in a letter to Theodore Graebner dated September 21, 1918)¹⁰ showed some signs of regret that the Synod was growing more isolated as other Lutheran church bodies grew closer together. Yet, this isolation was based on the conviction that God's Word should not be compromised at any cost.

The most significant unity attempt during Pfotenhauer's presidency was the Intersynodical Conferences. They were significant because, in most other cases (except the attempted merger with the Finish National

¹⁰Supra, pp. 108-09.

Church) fellowship already existed. Although initiated by individual pastors from Minnesota, the Missouri Synod entered the Intersynodical Conferences without hesitation. Pfotenhauer's letter to his daughter, written from St. Paul, Minnesota and dated June 25, 1916,¹¹ is the closest Pfotenhauer came to exhibiting a negative attitude toward the beginning of fellowship talks. The letter states: "We are discussing the intersynodical conferences and often attack each other sharply . . ." Yet, it nowhere identifies the source of disagreement. It may well be that Pfotenhauer and the Missouri Synod pastors of the St. Paul area were not disagreeing over the fact that intersynodical conferences should be held, but over how they were to be conducted. The pastors of the St. Paul area did not want the involvement of theological professors, while Pfotenhauer respected and depended on the Synod's seminary faculties. As it turned out, the official Missouri Synod Intersynodical Committee contained two pastors and one professor. By the Synod's action in voting to begin discussions and by Pfotenhauer's support of the Synod's Intersynodical Committee, it must be concluded that Pfotenhauer supported this attempt at seeking Lutheran unity.

The Intersynodical Committee elected by the 1917 synodical convention earnestly sought a God-pleasing agreement. In their endeavors, they kept in constant contact with President Pfotenhauer who offered advice and guidance. Pfotenhauer did not become personally involved in the discussions because the Intersynodical Movement itself had begun from the grass-roots level. All of the representatives for the discussions were

¹¹Supra, p. 111.

elected by their various church bodies and none of the synodical presidents were directly involved.

Problems arose in the negotiations when the practice of the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods did not correspond with the doctrine that had been set forth in the Intersynodical Theses. These problems included the articles of R. C. H. Lenski in the Ohio Synod's official German organ which set forth a differing position on the doctrine of election (attacks and differences of opinion in official periodicals had always been divisive of unity because they were a public proclamation of disunity) and the Ohio Synod's fellowship with the Norwegian Synod, despite the position of the Norwegian Synod on election. Because the Missouri Synod believed that unity could be based only on agreement in doctrine and the practice of that doctrine, the Theses proved to be unacceptable. In the midst of the negotiations, as problems arose, the Missouri Synod representatives acted with the utmost discretion out of Christian love (no disagreements on the part of the Missouri Synod officials were ever put into print for the general public). When disagreements arose, whether they were with the Ohio Synod or the Wisconsin Synod (in 1924 there was a disagreement over the doctrine of the ministry),¹² every attempt was made to reach an agreement in private and in an evangelical manner.

When the Intersynodical Theses proved futile in solving the disagreements between the Missouri Synod and the other church bodies, they were rejected and the Synod proposed a new approach toward seeking unity (the Brief Statement). Pfotenhauer undoubtedly worked toward the

¹²Supra, p. 118.

rejection of the Intersynodical Theses (by speaking against unionism in his 1929 Presidential Address and by refusing to recall Professor Mezger). However, it is most probable that he viewed the Intersynodical Theses as a futile effort and wanted to try a different approach. Pfotenhauer and other synodical officials felt the problem with the Intersynodical Movement was that it had avoided the status controversiae. They believed that the history of the controversy could not be avoided. If the history of the controversy was worked through, there would be no misunderstanding in terminology and an appropriate doctrinal statement could be drafted. In order to aid the Synod in future discussions with other Lutheran Church bodies, the Brief Statement was written. Both Pfotenhauer and the Missouri Synod wanted true Lutheran unity and did everything within their power to attain it. After the Intersynodical Conferences failed, the Missouri Synod expressed its willingness to continue discussions.

When President Salonen of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church approached Vice-President Brandt and President Pfotenhauer of the Missouri Synod with respect to union,¹³ the response was positive and a meeting was quickly held. Agreement was reached in all doctrinal matters except woman's suffrage (yet it appears that this was treated more as a matter of polity). Negotiations were hindered because of language problems, because the people of the Finnish Lutheran Church did not want to give up their independent identity, and because someone within the Missouri Synod forgot to attend the Finnish Church's twenty-fifth

¹³Supra, pp. 137-38.

anniversary convention. Apparently, President Pfothenhauer took personal responsibility for this last mistake, and thereafter personally served on the Finnish Relations Committee. Throughout Pfothenhauer's presidency, friendly relations with the Finnish National Church continued as Pfothenhauer and the Missouri Synod continued to seek unity toward eventual union.

In 1932, the Missouri Synod again sought a merger with the members of the Synodical Conference. Before this could take place, however, a disagreement between the Missouri and the Wisconsin Synods over the doctrine of the Church had to be settled. This was apparently accomplished with the Thiensville Theses of 1932. Yet, shortly thereafter, Professor August Pieper publicly disagreed with the Missouri Synod in an article in the Thiensville Seminary's Quarterly. As had happened in the past with public attacks, Pieper's article threatened to disrupt unity. The Missouri Synod officials did everything in their power to settle the problem evangelically. There was no public response. Negotiations were handled in private. President Pfothenhauer met with President Brenner of the Wisconsin Synod, who in turn promised to handle the situation. The rest of the Wisconsin Synod theologians continued to hold to the Thiensville Theses, so that the problem concerned only August Pieper. Yet, there is no evidence that the matter was ever settled. While Pfothenhauer and the other Missouri Synod officials did everything in their power to reach a God-pleasing agreement, there is no evidence that August Pieper ever agreed to the Thiensville Theses. By 1935, the presidency of the Missouri Synod changed hands. If this disagreement persisted, then there develops an inconsistency in the unity principles of both the Wisconsin

and Missouri Synods. More research is needed in this area since it goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is the opinion of this writer that President Pfotenhauer remained consistent in applying Missouri Synod's unity principles. Fellowship had existed for some time with the Wisconsin Synod, and it was not to be broken until every avenue for correction had been exhausted.

In 1929, the Missouri Synod had expressed its willingness to continue discussions with the church bodies that formed the American Lutheran Church. Yet, neither the Missouri Synod nor the American Lutheran Church took the initiative to begin these discussions. However, between 1934 and 1935, President Pfotenhauer received invitations from the presidents of the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America, both of which wished to begin discussions toward unity. President Pfotenhauer presented these invitations before the 1935 Missouri Synod Convention and the Synod voted to again engage in discussions toward Lutheran unity.

In leading the Missouri Synod, President Pfotenhauer was consistent in applying the Synod's principles for Lutheran unity. He was always open to Lutheran unity attempts and sought agreement in doctrine and practice. Pfotenhauer was reluctant to join in anything that was not a true attempt at reaching doctrinal agreement (the National Lutheran Council).

As the chief executive of the Missouri Synod, apparently he did not feel authorized to engage in any official discussions or organizational meetings without the approval of the Delegate Synod. Pfotenhauer believed that God acted through the vote of the Delegate Synod. Pfotenhauer always felt directly responsible to the representative body of the

Missouri Synod. Therefore, unlike the presidents of other Lutheran church bodies (Hein of the Ohio Synod, Stub of the Norwegian Synod and Knubel of the United Lutheran Church in America), Pfothenhauer never acted on his own and was very hesitant to appear at any official meetings that took place outside his church body without the consent of the Delegate Synod.

Once the Synod had voted to engage in an unity attempt, Pfothenhauer responded quickly by appointing an appropriate committee. There may be several reasons why Pfothenhauer rarely participated personally in unity attempts.¹⁴ It is possible that Pfothenhauer did not believe he had the academic ability to deal effectively with other theologians, and for this reason chose to use professors from the Synod's seminaries. Maybe Pfothenhauer believed that it was not the place of a synodical president to engage in unity discussions, but rather it was his job to appoint responsible individuals and oversee their work. Another possibility could have been a language problem. Pfothenhauer felt most comfortable with the German language and many of the discussions undoubtedly required a great deal of English aptitude.

Pfothenhauer always worked very closely with the committee that was chosen to engage in unity attempts. At least one of the committee members would report regularly to the President and Pfothenhauer would respond with the appropriate advice. In advising the committee members. President Pfothenhauer was always concerned that the Missouri Synod's unity principles be maintained.

¹⁴The only unity attempt in which Pfothenhauer engaged directly was with the Finnish Lutheran Church, and that was after initial discussions had already begun. Supra, pp. 137-43.

It is evident that Pfothenhauer was not as "ecumenically inclined" as his counter-parts in other American Lutheran church bodies. Unlike Presidents Hein, Stub, and Knubel, President Pfothenhauer was very cautious about appearing in an official capacity without the instruction of a synodical convention. Furthermore, because of his confessional position Pfothenhauer would not have allowed two contradictory doctrinal statements to stand side by side in the same union document (as was the case in the Opgjoer). Neither would Pfothenhauer say something to a representative of another church body and do the opposite, nor would he "play both ends against the middle" in unity discussions. Also, Pfothenhauer would not agree with the 1919 Knubel-Jacobs statement, "The Essentials of the Catholic Spirit in the Church," which based Lutheran unity on a narrow understanding of the Gospel. Pfothenhauer believed that Lutheran unity was achieved only where there was agreement in doctrine and practice. One factor that may well have made Pfothenhauer cautious with regard to Lutheran unity was the Predestinarian Controversy (which he had faced since he was in the seminary). Yet, despite the fact that Pfothenhauer began his ministry in a church body which regularly had charges of heresy leveled against it, he was supportive of Lutheran unity during his presidency of the Missouri Synod.

Even though the Missouri Synod engaged in several unity attempts between 1911 and 1935, most of those attempts did not succeed. Yet, to judge the Missouri Synod's principles of unity only by its results would be nothing short of gross pragmatism. In reality, pragmatism is a poor arbitrator when one is seeking the truth. Truth is much more than expediency, much more than results. The Missouri Synod, under the leadership

of President Pfothauer, sought the truth first and foremost.

Missouri's unity attempts ended in failure because of several human factors. These included pride (both on the part of Missouri and other church bodies in wishing to maintain their own identity), problems over language, disagreements that were aired before the public instead of being settled evangelically in private, and inconsistencies on the part of certain church bodies between their statements and their actions.

Conclusion

It has been shown that President Pfothauer was consistent in applying Lutheran principles of unity to the Missouri Synod's unity attempts. And although Pfothauer was reluctant to change, particularly the language of his church body, this was not a major factor in disrupting unity. Language proved to be a factor only in the unity attempt with the Finnish National Church. Union was never achieved among the synods comprising the Synodical Conference because the individual members wished to maintain their independent identity. Fellowship with the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods was not established because true unity, agreement in doctrine and practice was not achieved. Throughout his presidency, Pfothauer supported Missouri Synod's unity attempts. Yet, his primary interest was not in pragmatic results, but rather in maintaining the truth of God's Word.

During Pfothauer's presidency, a movement of unrest began within the Missouri Synod. Its earliest rumblings were heard in New York through the New York Society and the Eastern Army and Navy Board. By the 1930s, the American Lutheran became the organ for this movement as it pressed

for an Americanization of the Synod. Further study is needed to follow this movement into the Behnken presidency in order to discover what changes it eventually sought to make and what effect it had on the Missouri Synod.

In addition, further study is needed with regard to the disagreement of August Pieper over the doctrine of the Church. If this disagreement persisted within the Wisconsin Synod without being corrected, there developed an inconsistency regarding the principles of Lutheran unity between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synod as early as 1932.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

APPENDIX A



Concordia Historical Institute

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

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22 March 1982

Mr. John C. Wohlrabe, Jr.
Concordia Seminary
St. Louis, MO

Dear John:

I wish that I would be able to get you a great deal of detail and specific information concerning the destruction and loss of the majority of the files, correspondence and manuscripts of Dr. Friedrich Pfothenhauer. Regrettably, the specific correspondence going back some almost 25 years has not been preserved at the Concordia Historical Institute. Nevertheless, since it involved my search for the presidential files of Dr. Pfothenhauer, I believe I can reconstruct the basics.

It was somewhere in the mid or late 1950's when I began a rather systematic search for the Pfothenhauer files. I did not know where the various children lived, particularly the daughters, with the exception of Mrs. Victor Bartling. Hence, I engaged in correspondence with various members, and inquired about the files. Finally, someone directed me to his daughter who had been occupying the Pfothenhauer home in the Chicago area and who had also served as his personal secretary for many years. I believe her name is Helen, but I'm not absolutely certain. Further, I was informed that all the official correspondence and files of Dr. Pfothenhauer still existed in his home.

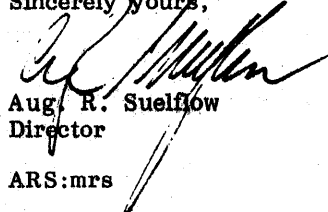
I immediately wrote to inquire. And one of the most tragic letters I had ever received came back. The daughter wrote that she had no idea that the church would be interested in these files, and that she had just moved the files out of the home into the backyard and had burned them all. What a tragic loss! And she felt it too!

Ever since, we have been making a concerted effort to try to gather whatever information there is still in existence on Dr. Pfothenhauer as synodical president, pastor, father, missionary, etc. Mrs. Victor Bartling of St. Louis has given the Institute several letters and materials which are highly significant, but they are family related, such as letters which Dr. Pfothenhauer sent his wife and children when he traveled, etc. Dr. and Mrs. F.A. Hertwig, son-in-law and daughter, have also contributed various items, some of a more official nature, and some personal. However, basically, this concludes the collection on Dr. Pfothenhauer which we have been able to reconstruct from various sources.

I have often used the unfortunate experience of the destruction of the Pfothenhauer files, papers, and correspondence as an effective illustration to bolster a synodical archives and records management program. Dr. John W. Behnken, Dr. Pfothenhauer's immediate successor, for example, deposited virtually everything which he had prepared in the line of files, correspondence, documents, etc. as the president of the Synod. So the example has helped tremendously in establishing a new pattern in collecting procedures, although it has not assisted in reconstituting the Pfothenhauer papers.

I sincerely hope that this will give you sufficient information in explanation why our Pfothenhauer files are, indeed, extremely skimpy and why there is very little hope in reconstituting it in the future.

Sincerely yours,



Aug. R. Suelflow
Director

ARS:mrs

APPENDIX B

The American Lutheran Church
Office of the General Secretary — Archives



333 Wartburg Place
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
319-556-8151

December 18, 1981

Mr. John C. Wohlrabe, Jr.
6641 San Bonita, 1 W.
St. Louis, Missouri
63105

Dear Mr. Wohlrabe,

Thank you for your letter of December 10. I have checked the correspondence of both Michael Reu and C. C. Hein and do not find any letters from President Pfotenhauer. Sorry I can not help you.

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Wiederaenders
Archivist, The ALC

RCW:ban

APPENDIX C

Lutheran
Church
in America

1100 E. 55th STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60615
TEL. 312-667-3500

 Associate Archivist

December 22, 1981

Mr. John C. Wohlrabe, Jr.
6641 San Bonita, 1 W.
St. Louis, Missouri
63105

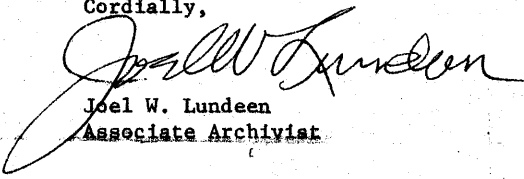
Dear Mr. Wohlrabe:

We have searched Dr. Knubel's correspondence files and can find only the enclosed letters (xerox copies).^{*} Hope that is of some help.

We will also search the Augustana files for Pfothenhauer correspondence. There must have been some between him and P.O. Bersell. Alas! Like Pfothenhauer's family, the Bersell family burned most of his papers. What a shame!

Have you checked the ALC Archives? Also Dr. Fendt's recently published (typescript) memoirs available from Augustburg Press?

Cordially,


Joel W. Lundeen
Associate Archivist

JWL/lis

enclosures

* The enclosures were two letters. The first was from F. H. Knubel to F. Pfothenhauer dated January 10, 1935. The second was from F. Pfothenhauer to F. H. Knubel dated January 19, 1935. Both letters are recorded in Chapter VII of this paper under section "Missouri's Relation to Lutherans outside the Synodical Conference."

APPENDIX D

**WISCONSIN Evangelical
Lutheran SYNOD**



3512 West North Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208
(414) 445-4030

Feb. 8, 1982

Mr. John C. Wohlrabe jr.
6641 San Bonita 1 W
St. Louis, Mo. 63105

Dear Mr. Wohlrabe:

In this winter of our discontent I afinally got down to the archives.

Regret to state that we have no corfespndence between Pres. Pftonhauer and President Bergemann. There is nothing relating to this in the six files.

Cordianlly,

W. F. Schink
W.F.Schink WELS Archivist

APPENDIX E

ZUR EINIGUNG

Leitzaetze, die auf den intersynodalen Konferenzen in der ev. luth. Dreifaltigkeitskirche zu St. Paul, Minn., am 9. und 10. November 1915 und 5. und 6. Januar 1916 ungenommen wurden.

Vorbemerkung. Es wurde von vornherein das Uebereinkommen getroffen, bei der Besprechung von dem Historischen abzusehen. Zunaechst wurde die Lehre von der Bekehrung zur Besprechung aufgenommen.

1. Die Bekehrung eines Menschen ist allein ein Werk Gottes des heiligen Geistes.

2. Die Ursache der Seligkeit eines Menschen ist allein Gottes Gnade und Christi Verdienst, die Ursache der Verdammnis allein des Menschen Schuld, naemlich sein Unglaube. Diese beiden in der heiligen Schrift klar enthaltenen Lehren muessen wir neben einander stehen lassen und glauben. Bei der Frage, woher es kommen mag, dass unter derselben Gnade ein Teil der Menschen bekehrt und selig wird, der andere nicht, stehen wir vor einem Geheimnis, das befriedigend zu erklaren uns Menschen schlechthin unmoeglich und auch nicht noetig ist.

3. Wir erkennen einstimmig und ohne Vorbehalt die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl an, wie sie dargestellt ist im 11. Artikel der Konkordienformel.

4. Da die Konferierenden erkennen, dass Artikel 11 der Konkordienformel die reine und richtige Lehre des Wortes Gottes und der lutherischen Kirche ueber die Wahl der Kinder Gottes zur Seligkeit enthaelt, so sehen sie es als unnoetig zur kirchlichen Einigkeit an, neue und weitergehende Lehrsaetze ueber diesen Glaubensartikel auszustellen.

5. Nach dem 11. Artikel der Konkordienformel besteht Gottes gnaedige Vorsehung oder Wahl der Kinder Gottes darin, dass der ewige Gott auf Grund der Erloesung Christi alle diejenigen, die er aus Gnaden um Christi willen durch das Evangelium beruft, zum Glauben bringt und im rechten Glauben heiligt und erhaelt und ewig selig macht, schon vor Grundlegung der Welt aus Gnaden um Christi willen zu eben solcher Berufung, Erleuchtung, Heiligung und Erhaltung im Glauben und zur ewigen Seligkeit versehen, vorordnet und erwahlet hat.

6. Die Redeweise, Gott mache die einen vor den anderen selig, oder, er habe die einen vor den anderen erwahlet, findet sich nicht in der heiligen Schrift noch in den lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften. Diese Redeweise fuehrt ihrem Wortlaut nach leicht zu der irrigen Vorstellung, dass sich Gottes Gnade in Christo ueber einen grossen Teil der Menschen entweder gar nicht, oder doch nicht in dem Masse erstrecke als ueber anders. Darum sollte man diese Redeweise vermeiden.

7. Die Redeweise, Gott habe in Ansehung des Glaubens erwahlet, findet sich weder in der heiligen Schrift noch in den lutherischen

Bekenntnisschriften. Was spaetere Kirchenlehrer unter diesem Ausdruck verstanden oder nicht verstanden haben, ist eine historische Frage und kein Glaubensartikel, und man kann von einem Christen nicht verlangen, dass er sich ueber diese historische Frage ein Urteil bilden muesse. Ihrem Wortlaut nach fuehrt aber dieser Ausdruck leicht zu der irrigen Vorstellung, dass der vorangesehene Glaube eine Aursache der gnaedigen Erwaehlung Gottes sei. Darum sollte man diese Redeweise vermeiden.

8. Auf der einen Seite verwerfen wir:

a) Die Lehre, dass nicht Gottes Barmherzigkeit und Christi Verdienst allein die Ursachen unserer Erwaehlung seien, sondern auch in uns eine Ursache dazu vorhanden sei, durch die Gott bewogen worden, uns zum ewigen Leben zu erwaehlen;

b) Die Lehre, dass Gott bei der Erwaehlung bestimmt worden sei, oder Ruecksicht genommen habe auf, oder sich gerichtet habe nach des Menschen gutem Verhalten oder nach etwas, was der Mensch sei, tue und lasse von sich selbst oder aus eigenen natuerlichen Kraeften;

c) Die Lehre, dass der mit der Wahl unaufloeslich verbundene Glaube an Christum ganz oder teilweise hervorgebracht werde oder beruhe auf des Menschen eigener Entacheidung, Kraft oder Vermoegen; -- vgl. Konkordienformel, Art. 2, Par. 52. 61.

d) Die Lehre, dass dieser Glaube sei das Ergebnis eines durch den Gnadenruf mitgeteilten und deshalb dem unwiedergeborenen Menschen innewohnenden und gehoerenden Vermoegens oder Kraft, sich fuer die Gnade zu bestimmen.

9. Auf der anderen Seite verwerfen wir:

a) Die Lehre, dass Gott in der Gnadenwahl willkuerlich oder unmotiviert handele, indem er eine gewisse, willkuerliche Anzahl irgendwelcher Individuen bezeichne und auszaele und sie zur Bekehrung und Rettung bestimme, mit Uebergangung aller anderen;

b) Die Lehre, dass zwei verschiedene Gnadenwillen in Gott seien: einer, der in der Schrift in der allgemeinen Heilsordnung offenbart, und einer, der davon verschieden und uns unbekannt sei, der nur die Auserwaehlten betreffe und diesen eine innigere Liebe und kraestigere Berührung von Gott zubringe und eine groessere Gnade als dem, der in seinem Unglauben und Verderben bleibt;

c) Die Lehre, dass, wenn der Widerstand, den Gott bei der Bekehrung von denen wegnimmt, die gerettet werden, von den anderen, die verloren gehen, nicht weggenommen wird, dies seinen Grund in Gott habe und in einem verschiedenen Heiswillen bei der Wahl;

d) Die Lehre, dass der Glaubende eine absolute Gewissheit seiner Erwaehlung und Seligkeit haben kann und soll, statt einer Glaubensgewissheit, geschoefft aus Gottes Verheissung.

Anmerkung. Diese Glaubensgewissheit schliesst aber um des suendlichen Fleisches willen das Schaffen der Seligkeit mit Furcht und Zittern und die Warnung vor Abfall nicht aus.

e) Summa: alle Ansichten und Lehren ueber die Erwaehlung, die direkt oder indirekt mit der Schrift in Konflikt dommen und nicht allen eine voellige Gelegenheit der Seligkeit geben wollen pder auf irgend eine Weise das Gottes Wort beschraenken, welches sagt, dass Gott will, dass allen Menschen geholfen werde und zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit kommen,

in welchem gnaedigen und barmherzigen Willen bei Gott alle Wahlt zum ewigen Leben ihren Ursprung hat.

10. Da waehrend des Kirchenstreites unter uns Ausdruecke und Worte vorgekommen sind -- mit Recht oder mit Unrecht den betreffenden Parteien zugeschrieben --, die der anderen so vorgekommen sind, als seien sie eine Verleugnung des Bekenntnisses oder als fuehrten sie doch dazu, so haben wir uns geeinigt, alle Ausdruecke, die diesen angenommenen Saetzen widersprechen, zu verwerfen, resp. nach denselben zu korrigieren.

APPENDIX F

Letter from Frederick Pfothauer to Theodore Graebner
Dated June 14, 1918
(see pages 94-96)

You requested me in St. Louis to speak out concerning your article, "Opportunity." I do it gladly and to be sure with the frankness that one is allowed to use with an honorable friend and especially a fellow Christian. What you wrote about with regard to our opportunity in the English [language], I agree to this in general; indeed we had this great opportunity readily before the war and our Synod was thereby able to constantly solve this mission better and share the treasure of our church ably with the English vessel. Whether this opportunity will remain so great, we do not know. If the storm [continues to] wage with increasing intensity against the German language and our people concern themselves with this less, so that the vessel, out of which they still had drunk the water of life most comfortably a few weeks prior, is taken away, God may make the Gospel still rarer in our land, like it was until a while ago. The future will show first how we will proceed to put out this fire.

I cannot agree with what you wrote in reference to the German language. It may indeed be that the [German] language is taken away quicker in this country as a result of the war; yet one should not take that as a certainty. Anyway, until the war broke out, 75% of our church work was done in German, because the people understood the Gospel better in this language than they did in the English language. This has not been changed because of the war. Therefore, I cannot look at this as a small, unimportant thing, when suddenly a language is attacked. Because of this, the progress of the Gospel will be hindered. Many Christians begin to sigh against our authorities, and this is not good. Also, one should not commend this as patriotism and make it out to be a noble deed, especially when a congregation suddenly changes [their] language out of force or without need. For example, what P. Polack over in Evansville reports is different. P. Heinicke writes to me that his congregation is molested. One-third cannot understand English at all and two-thirds can hardly understand it.

I also cannot understand why we are abandoning the German language in the schools. I strongly believe that because of this, our congregation's schools will rapidly be reduced. God uses all sorts of circumstances to give our people the Gospel. Even the place of my birth is significant. Mark Twain certainly wanted to prove out of this that all people born in Italy will become Catholic and all people born in Japan [will become] heathen, etc., [so] that all religion is humbug.

If German becomes lost in [our] schools, then the farmers will also become thankful that they do not have to send their children two miles through snow and ice. The public schools stand before the door. The teacher is an innocent woman. Why not send our students there? The pastor can care for the religion. In the cities, [our] schools will be closed out of economic considerations.

In short, I do not want it known that, because of the war, the situation in our Synod has suddenly changed. And [just] as one could have seen it as a calamity if one had abruptly turned everything topsy-turvy before the war, so it is also a calamity if it was to happen now. Certainly from this it follows that we should not promote it, but where it must be, we should lighten the need and sincerely ask God that He send peace soon, that we may further build, and then also solve this language problem evangelically. My heart is filled with unspeakable sorrow when I let pass before my spirit a revue of all our congregations, and thereupon consider what they would receive in the way of spiritual nourishment if the [German] language would be taken suddenly, and it hurts me that the Witness has made this language question into a type of patriotic issue.

Furthermore, in this sad time we should comfort ourselves that the Lord continues to lead and guide and constantly build His Church. The days of our Synod could be numbered. The kingdom of Christ thrives until the blessed completion.

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