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# The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and World War I-A Study of the Loyalty Problem During World War I and Theodore Conrad Graebner's Attempt to Solve it

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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

AND WORLD WAR I

A Study of the Loyalty Problem During World War I and  
Theodore Conrad Graebner's Attempt to Solve It

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A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for elective  
H-200

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by

Walter Steinbach

March 1971

A  
You have done a fine piece  
of historical research in an  
area where few others have worked.  
Although your style and organization  
could be improved, your presentation  
is clear and well organized and  
based on impressive documents.  
You have performed a useful  
service to the church, and I  
appreciate it very much.  
R.B.

Ralph A. Bohlmann

Advisor

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The loyalty of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod during World War I was indeed open to question. The clergy of the Missouri Synod preached in the German language. The children of Missouri Synod members were taught in German at their parochial schools. Some members had close relatives living in Germany. In April of 1917 the United States declared war against Germany, and the citizens of the United States expected members of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod to declare war against Germany and all that represented Germany. Members and clergy were not so willing to give up their heritage, and there was a tension in many parts of the United States between the German Lutherans and the people who lived in the same community. That tension was the questioning of the Missouri Synod's loyalty to the United States. Some Americans said that no one should be allowed to talk in the language of the enemy because that showed a loyalty to the enemy. The Missouri Synod felt that a person could be loyal to the United States and still speak German. The problem for the researcher is in the attempt to discover whether the members of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod were loyal, or the accusations which were charged against the Missouri Synod were true.

The questioning of the Missouri Synod during World War I is an area which Missouri Synod historians seldom write of. There may be a statement of the problem, but little more. On the other hand, some historians tend to talk about German Lutherans being vehicles of

German propaganda, and another group all German-Americans together as German loyalists. It was reported that many Lutheran clergymen were investigated as to their loyalty, and some were guilty of espionage. It would seem important to investigate such statements, and attempt to discover whether Missouri Synod pastors were among those who were found guilty. This paper is a student's attempt to fill in a gap of the Missouri Synod's history which is not treated by Missouri Synod historians.

This paper deals with troubles experienced by the Missouri Synod in general, but its answer to the major problems are based almost exclusively on the writings of Professor Theodore Conrad Graebner. Professor Graebner was on the faculty at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1914 he assumed the role as co-editor of the Lutheran Witness, the official English periodical of the Missouri Synod. Professor Graebner was probably the most important leader of the Missouri Synod who attempted to prove its loyalty during this time. He also became the advisor for many pastors who did not know what to do in certain situations because their loyalty was questioned. There will be several times in this paper where it is impossible to distinguish between German Lutherans and Missouri Synod Lutherans, but attempts to make this distinction are not always possible. This paper has also limited itself to the English sources. This seemed to be the only fruitful way to deal with the mass of sources available in such a short span of time.

To understand the questioning of the loyalty of Missouri Synod

Lutherans it is necessary to understand the Missouri Synod before the United States entered the war. During the time of neutrality the Missouri Synod issued statements which definitely were pro-German. This certainly had much to do with the harassment which the Missouri Synod later experienced. But there were other reasons to question their loyalty. When Missouri Synod pastors preached in the language of the enemy, this was bound to cause trouble. When the Missouri Synod at times seemed unwilling to work with the government because of its view that church and state should be separated, there were accusations of disloyalty. This paper is arranged topically: Missouri Synod's view prior to the United States entering the war, the harassment of Missouri Synod members and pastors, and the language problem. In the discussion of each topic, Professor Graebner's answers or attempts to answer the problem will be stated. A final topic is the problem of loyalty itself. That section will demonstrate how Graebner tried to prove the Missouri Synod loyal, and will also reflect his dealings with the language problem and church--state relationship problem.

When beginning to research this topic, the first step was to read some of the histories of World War I. Then all histories of the Missouri Synod were reviewed. The next step was to go through all the Lutheran Witness articles which dealt with the war, particularly those written by Professor Graebner. The final step of research was to go through the Graebner files at the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, Missouri. These files were not opened to the public until 1970, and therefore much of this material has never been published. The Graebner files on the World War I period contain letters, which

were sent to him for advice to problems experienced at this time and his advice in return letters. Professor Graebner's files also contain many newspaper articles from all over the country which dealt with the loyalty question.

This research demonstrates that a large majority of the Missouri Synod members and clergy were indeed loyal to the United States. The questioning of Missouri Synod's loyalty was based almost completely on outward characteristics, chiefly: speaking in German and occasional unwillingness to cooperate in governmental affairs. These outward characteristics reveal little about how Missouri Synod members actually felt about loyalty. In all of the research, the facts do not reveal even one Missouri Synod member being guilty of disloyalty to the United States. On the contrary, the Missouri Synod could provide many clear indications of its loyalty. Over thirty-seven thousand young men of the Missouri Synod served in the Armed Services. It was estimated that nearly one-hundred million dollars were contributed to the United States' war effort.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MISSOURI SYNOD PRIOR TO THE UNITED STATES ENTRY INTO THE WAR

Ray Abrams in his book, Preachers Present Arms, makes this statement about Lutherans prior to the United States entering the war:

The Germans found their support mainly in Lutheran churches, where in many cases the German language persisted. It was not necessary to subsidize the elements represented by these groups. They were naturally pro-German, but propaganda stiffened their backbone and made their leaders more militant.<sup>1</sup>

One easily gets this opinion from what the Lutheran Witness printed during the years 1914-1917. Another way to get this opinion is by inference. During the year 1916 several pleas were made by the Lutheran Witness for neutrality. The inference was that since the Lutheran Witness advocated neutrality, it sided with Germany. The probable presupposition for both evidences was already stated by Abrams: "They were naturally pro-German". The members of the Missouri Synod were of German heritage, and it was only natural for them to favor Germany.

There was a direct leaning toward Germany among Missouri Synod Lutherans prior to the United States' entrance into the war. The Lutheran Witness during this time printed articles and statements written by German citizens. One such statement was a letter sent out by a group of eminent Protestant Christians stating that the "fundamental responsibility for beginning the war is laid at the door of Russia."<sup>2</sup> Another statement dealt with the German concentration camps. The American press had attacked Germany on this very point. Dr. Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg wrote:

No hostile civilian, man or woman, was ever put into a

concentration camp in Germany until the beginning of November, when it was found necessary to retaliate against British and later the French.<sup>3</sup>

This was quite a statement to print in view of the fact that most Americans were pro-Allies to some degree. Whenever a paper or periodical, such as the Lutheran Witness, reprinted such statements without rebuttal, the reader could automatically assume that the editor took the same view.

The Lutheran Witness co-editors, Graebner, and Martin Sommer, also wrote articles which tended to favor Germany. The August 11, 1914 issue of the Lutheran Witness stated: "The idea that Germany's ruler thirsted for war and eagerly seized the first opportunity is too ridiculous to be seriously discuss."<sup>4</sup> Sommer wrote an article entitled, "Meddlesome Priests". It told of the destruction of many historic edifices in the city of Louvain. The Germans had conquered the city and left a battalion behind to guard it. Then some Roman Catholic priests gathered townsmen in order to scatter the remaining battalion, and the Germans were in turn forced to more destructive measures.<sup>5</sup> Sommer's main point was that the Roman Catholic priests were wrong, but at the same time Sommer was saying that Germany could not be considered the villain in this situation. Throughout the First World War Professor Graebner was to have a running battle with the American press. Prior to the United States' entrance in the war, he attacked the anti-Germanism of the American press. In July of 1915 Graebner wrote

Pharisaic hypocrisy comes to a climax in the solemn curses called down upon the Germanic armies by the American Press because of the "barbaric", "inhuman" and "Huns savage" made of their warfare, while the actions of the Allies are never made the object of the criticism, no matter what the methods employed.<sup>6</sup>

Before the United States' involvement in the war, few Americans knew there was a war going on. An event which opened their eyes a little was the sinking of the ship, Lusitania. It was sunk by the Germans, and caused the first nominal amount of American casualties of the war. Probably most of the Americans, whose eyes were opened, saw only the financial implications. Many American business men were making a financial profit from their war time trade, and the thought of its being cut off hurt them. But to the Lutheran clergymen it had different implications. Frederick Keller, an Evangelical Lutheran clergymen, said, "Germany is absolutely justified in sending to the bottom a boat which carried nearly one-half a million dollars worth of ammunitions of war."<sup>7</sup> The Chicago Press of May 8, 1915 contained an appeal by Lutheran clergymen to other Lutheran pastors to call attention to the fact that "the German government had been forced by England to the horrible steps and according to International law is not responsible for the loss of American life."<sup>8</sup> Graebner said that when the Germans sunk this ship, they

saved several thousand German fathers and sons. It was the blowing up of this ammunition which caused the rapid sinking of the vessel. These considerations may or may not justify or excuse the sinking of the Lusitania with its attendance loss of life.<sup>9</sup>

Even though Graebner took care not to justify the killing, he appeared to have pro-German tendencies.

Another concern prior to the United States' entrance into the war was the request to remain neutral. Before the First World War the United States had been generally isolated politically. The one exception may have been the Mexican incident of 1911. But eventually,

because of international trade and some other reasons, the United States was forced out of isolationism. President Wilson had been an isolationist. The Missouri Synod was no different, but the Lutheran Witness sensed that America was not practicing isolationism as it should. There are many pleas in the Lutheran Witness for neutrality. Whether the Missouri Synod wanted neutrality because they were citizens of the United States, or because they didn't want to war against Germany, cannot be definitely answered.

German Lutherans became a little skeptical about President Wilson's intent to stay neutral. He was involved in Mexico, and had made some pro-Allies statements. The presidential election of 1916 was a three party election. The Democrats renominated President Wilson. But the Republican party was split between Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Evans Hughes. The main issue for all candidates was whether to enter the war. Hughes apparently had a vacillating policy toward the war, but he had won over a number of the German Lutherans. It was rumored in the Chicago Journal that he met secretly with German Lutherans ministers in Milwaukee and pledged to them a program of neutrality if he were elected. It was reported that Lutheran clergymen wrote letters to the press urging Hughes' election.<sup>10</sup> The Lutheran Witness also was a little skeptical of Wilson. He, as an idealist, claimed to have a greater perspective than others, and he said that he didn't care how the common person felt about entering the war for he knew what was best for America. The Lutheran Witness reprinted an article in opposition to Wilson's view of the common person from the June 10, 1915

issue of the New York American:

These people, these citizens, these Americans, who must inevitably fill the armies and fight the battles of the nation, we declare and affirm to be resolutely opposed to dragging this country into this European war as an ally of any of the warring powers.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Graebner wrote a series for the Lutheran Witness during the year 1916 which was entitled, "Moral and Religious Aspects of the Great War". The main point of the series was a request to remain neutral. He said that the United States was not really neutral. It had continued to send munitions and food supplies to the countries involved in the war. He attacked the idea that a neutral country can send war supplies to enemies equally. Graebner stated that many big business men in the United States were making much money from war trade. In this connection he also attacked the American religious press and the American pulpit for permitting the United States to be so hypocritical.<sup>13</sup> He also dealt with the question of whether there was such a thing as a war for humanity. Apparently some Americans felt that the United States should enter the war to protect the people of another nation. Graebner said that there could not be a war for humanity; only a Calvinist could have such an idea. People were killed in war so how could such a thing be possible. A government furthermore was to function only within its boundaries.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to the Missouri Synod's war views prior to the United States entering the war, it is well to recall Adam's view that German Lutherans "naturally" favored Germany. The Missouri Synod still had some love for its heritage, and there was nothing wrong with this as long as they did not actively participate in the war. Prior to the entrance of the United States into the war, German Lutherans were free

to favor Germany. The Lutheran Witness did not actively promote Germany, but felt that Germany should get fair treatment. Whether the Missouri Synod was completely neutral could be questioned, but so could the neutrality of the rest of America. Rather than justifying the Missouri Synod's view of neutrality, it is more important to view the attitudes of Missouri Synod members when the war began. Most Americans favored the Allies before American entrance in the war, and the transition of their loyalty shifted much more easily than the German Lutherans, who had to take a much larger turn.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ray Abrams, Preachers Present Arms, (New York: Round Table, Inc., 1933), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>"Church News," Lutheran Witness, XXXIV (February 9, 1915), 46. ✓

<sup>3</sup>Martin Sommer, "Ill-Treatment of German Prisoners," Lutheran Witness, XXXIV (February 23, 1915), 59.

<sup>4</sup>Theodore Graebner, "War," Lutheran Witness, XXXIII (August 11, 1914), 134. ✓

<sup>5</sup>Martin Sommer, "Meddlesome Priests," Lutheran Witness, XXXIII (September 22, 1914), 155.

<sup>6</sup>Theodore Graebner, "The Greatest of All Wars," part III, Lutheran Witness, XXXIV (July 27, 1915), 230-233.

<sup>7</sup>Abrams, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Theodore Graebner, "War with Germany," Lutheran Witness, XXXIV (June 29, 1915), 171-172. ✓

<sup>10</sup>Abrams, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup>"Who Wants War?" Lutheran Witness, XXXIV (June 29, 1915), 207.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Moral Issues and Religious Aspects of the Great War," part II, Lutheran Witness, XXXV (March 21, 1916), 80-83. ✓

<sup>13</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Moral Issues and Religious Aspects of the Great War," Lutheran Witness, XXXV (February 22, 1916), 49-50. ✓

<sup>14</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Moral Issues and Religious Aspects of the Great War," part III, Lutheran Witness, XXXV (May 2, 1916), 126-128. ✓

## CHAPTER III

### HARASSMENT

On April 6, 1917, war was declared by the United States upon the Central Powers. Charles Seymour in the book, Woodrow Wilson and the World War, said that when President Wilson declared war, nine out of every ten Americans were in favor of it.<sup>1</sup> Many members of the Missouri Synod were of the small minority. When war was declared, every one was expected to be completely patriotic to the American cause. This was a transition for many in the Missouri Synod. Almost automatically the minority would be the first to be suspect of disloyalty. So it was vitally important for the minority to prove their loyalty in every way possible. The consequence of failing to prove this was harassment, which members experienced throughout the war. "Harassment" may be a strong word, but it expresses the way Theodore Graebner felt about the anti-German-American treatment experienced by many Missouri Synod members and clergy.

There probably was no document which caused more trouble for the Missouri Synod than a statement issued by the Nebraska Council of National Defense. The Council charged that "conspicuous representatives of the Lutheran Church had almost universally refused to cooperate in efforts for the support of the government and had discouraged the American cause," showing thereby the utmost partiality to Germany.<sup>2</sup> This statement was issued in July of 1917, only three months after the United States had entered the war. Along with certain professors at



the University of Nebraska, these Lutherans were denounced for "treasonable utterances, disloyal activity, and passivity that has tended to give aid to Germany."<sup>3</sup> Specifically, it was charged that bankers who invested in Liberty Loan Bonds were threatened with withdrawal of deposits. The sale of war bonds was opposed. Red Cross work met antagonism. And the Lutheran Church failed to take steps toward organizing war relief work.<sup>4</sup> There were many cases of harassment because of this statement. A report from the Rev. H. M. Schreiner of Lincoln, Nebraska, was an example: "our school was burned down, Oct. 4. It is a plain case of arson, because on our school grounds two empty jugs, that had contained coal oil, were found."<sup>5</sup> Many such incidents occurred all over the United States. In Mt. Leonard, Missouri, a notice was nailed to the church door: "This notice is to notify you as pastor of this church, Not to teach German in church; or preach German in the Church. If you do not like Uncle Sammy go back over Sea. Comply with notice at once, Before a committee waits on you."<sup>6</sup>

Not every harassment was completely unjustified. The July 5, 1918 issue of the Chicago Daily News reported that Rev. P. Weil (not listed in Missouri Synod's Statistical Yearbook of 1918) of Hammond, Indiana

narrowly escaped being mobbed yesterday during the big Fourth of July celebration when he hung the American flag at half-mast. When notified of his act he gave no satisfaction and escaped punishment only when D. E. Boone, president of the American Alliance and Sergeant William Welsch of the United States Army forced him to pull the flag to its proper place.<sup>7</sup>

Local harassment was reinforced by statements of national impact. The December 1917 issue of Life magazine described three types of people to be watched during times of international crises. They were:

(1) he who criticized the government; (2) he who carried a billy; (3) he who always talked about the Quadricentennial of the Lutheran Reformation.<sup>8</sup> This third type of person was the one who talked about the Four-hundreth Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. The year 1917 was important to Missouri Synod Lutherans. Periodicals, such as the Lutheran Witness, talked of it in nearly every 1917 issue. To the person who knew little of Lutheran history this could become a jumping point for harassment of the individual who mentioned it. Another statement of national impact was made by a Scotch-American comedian, William Lauder. He toured the United States, and part of his act was to accuse German Lutherans of singing a hymn which contained Prussianism. The hymn was supposedly printed in a Lutheran almanac, and the verse mentioned by Lauder was this:

Christ Jesus shed his blood for me  
 From every debt has set me free;  
 He has procured the Father's favor,  
 He has become my gracious Savior.  
 To bayonet thrust he gives the vigor  
 The joy to aim to pull the trigger.  
 My aid is Jesus, that I know,  
 On to the far I gladly go.<sup>9</sup>

Many papers picked up the speech of Lauder and his accusations. His speech and the article in Life magazine caused the harassment of German Lutherans to spread.

The problem arose of how to deal with this harassment. When pastors read the Life article or heard Lauder's speech, or heard of the Nebraska situation, they would ask for advice or information on how to proceed. Because of leadership and knowledge of Professor Graebner, many pastors contacted him. In his dealings with the government he was very careful not to offend it. In a bulletin, "War and Christianity,"

Graebner had said: "The taunts, and insults to which the German-American element has been exposed, not by our Government, but by the ignorant daily press and some near-statesmen."<sup>10</sup> He knew that it would not benefit the Synod to set the government against it, and that the situation required delicate treatment.

Professor Graebner wrote about the Nebraska situation:

If some are guilty of "passivity" or "lack of national spirit"... it in a way reflects upon the patriotism of our Nebraskan Lutherans, except inasmuch as the general apathy concerning the war reflects upon the patriotism of the "ordinary citizen".<sup>11</sup>

Representatives of different Lutheran Church bodies in Nebraska appeared before the Nebraska Council of National Defense and asked if the Council had censured the Lutheran Church in Nebraska because of disloyalty. The committee of Lutheran representatives declared its loyalty and the loyalty of the membership it represented, and expressed severe disapproval of the un-American utterances of those responsible for the condition of affairs.<sup>12</sup> In dealing with the Lauder accusation Graebner wrote:

None of the hymnals of the German Lutheran Church have ever contained a verse of the song he claims we are using. The statement is utterly unwarranted, especially in view of the whole-hearted loyalty which the church has shown since the start of the war.<sup>13</sup>

Another area of discomfort for German Lutherans was the widespread accusation that all Lutheran pastors at the time of their ordination had to swear an oath to the German Kaiser. Many newspapers seemed to have had the idea that the Kaiser was the head of the whole Lutheran Church--no matter what country. Another accusation in accordance with this was that the German Lutherans in America received financial aid from Germany, and at times sent aid to Germany.

To answer such accusations Professor Graebner edited a pamphlet, Testimony and Proof, in 1918. It consisted of three parts: a speech delivered by Rev. Frederick Brand of Springfield, Illinois; Graebner's proof of American loyalty; and Graebner's historical background of several of Brand's statements. This pamphlet was especially concerned with the relationship of the Missouri Synod to the German nation and its Kaiser.

The assertion was made immediately in Testimony and Proof that the Kaiser was not a member of the Lutheran Church,<sup>14</sup> but of the Reformed Church.<sup>15</sup> An historical section proved this point by illustrating that in 1817 there had been a union between two forms of Protestantism call the United Church, and that the Kaiser was the head of this organization.<sup>16</sup> To further demonstrate that no relationship existed between American Lutherans and the Kaiser was the fact that the Kaiser forced the use of a Common Church Book. Because of this many clergymen left Germany for America and Australia. In specific answer to the Kaiser oath-myth Graebner wrote:

An oath or ordination has been widely circulated of late which the kaiser is said to demand of every German Lutheran preacher in this country before he can be ordained. This oath is pure invention, the outgrowth of fanatical religious hatred against the Lutheran Church.<sup>17</sup>

More reasons were given to show that there was no connection whatsoever with the Kaiser. Graebner could not recall a single instance in which Missouri Synod fathers in their visits to Germany met their former rulers or their successors in office. "Kaiser Wilhelm has repeatedly honored the infidel theologian, Harnack, rewarding his services with signal distinctions."<sup>18</sup> The Missouri Synod would not have anything

to do with someone who had all different Protestant leaders participate in the dedication service, which was what the Kaiser did when he dedicated the Protestant Cathedral in Berlin in 1905. Graebner said this: "It was an affair which should make every one blush with shame."<sup>18</sup>

Graebner told of the Missouri Synod's relationship with the German nation in a similar manner. There was no such organization as a Lutheran Church of Germany or Prussia. There were some federated states in the German empire which had Lutheran State Churches, but the empire had none.<sup>20</sup> Graebner said that the Missouri Synod fathers left Germany because of the persecution they experienced when they wouldn't tolerate governmental interference with their sacred rights as Christians.<sup>21</sup> In answer to the question of receiving financial aid from Germany, Graebner wrote: "The Lutheran Church of America has never solicited nor received financial assistance from the Prussian Church or any other state church of Germany."<sup>22</sup> Graebner quoted several statements in which Germans even attacked the Missouri Synod. One of these was taken from the Kirchenblatt of Breslau Freikirch of July, 1912:

The Missouri Synod's claims as an orthodox church are ill founded. Wherever missourians have gained a foothold, they have shown themselves a body destructive of Lutheranism.<sup>23</sup>

Professor Graebner did admit to a certain amount of relationship to some people in Germany. He was talking of the "Free Church", which had no relationship with the official state church and consisted of only five-thousand and eight-hundred members out an estimated German population at this time of fifty million.<sup>24</sup>

The pamphlet, Testimony and Proof, served as a witness to other Americans that loyalty to the Kaiser and Germany by Missouri Synod

Lutherans did not exist. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle of May 2, 1918 said of the pamphlet that the American Lutheran Church

does not acknowledge the Kaiser as a member, directly or indirectly. The Lutheran Church of America has never solicited nor received financial assistance from the Prussian Church or any other state church of Germany. The founders of the American Lutheran Church were victims of persecution in Germany.<sup>25</sup>

Sections of the pamphlet also appeared in the Lutheran Witness at times during the year 1918. Mr. C. L. Damer of the Kansas Minute Men wrote to the Rev. A. C. Frank of Holyrod, Kansas about as follows:

As near as I can learn, I do not think it was the intention of the first print of the Kaiser's Oath to attach it to all Lutheran Churches, and it is generally understood now that, that oath was published, pertained to the Church of the Kaiser and not the Lutheran Church, that we have here in this country....The Lutheran Witness appears to be a loyal paper.<sup>26</sup>

Although there may have been actual cases of Missouri Synod disloyalty, there were also many cases, where even true loyalty was harassed. A prominent cause for the harassment was that Missouri Synod members used the language of the enemy, which many Americans took to be a token that they were pro-German. Another cause was the general feeling of antagonism towards a church which so strictly adhered to a separation of church and state. These problems will be discussed in the next two chapters.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Charles Seymour, Woodrow Wilson and the World War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Ray Abrams, Preachers Present Arms (New York: Round Table, Inc., 1933), p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Loyalty," Lutheran Witness, XXXVI (August 7, 1917), 237-240.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>H. M. Schreiner, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated October 9, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>6</sup>W. R. Miessler, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated May 8, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>7</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>8</sup>E. C. Fackler, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated December 31, 1917, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>9</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>10</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Stop, Look, Listen!" Lutheran Witness, XXXVI (December 25, 1917), 406.

<sup>11</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Loyalty," 237-240.

<sup>12</sup>Lutheran Companion, n.d. Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>13</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>14</sup>Frederick Brand, Testimony and Proof, edited by Theodore Graebner (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1918), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Theodore Graebner, Testimony and Proof (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1918), p. 10.

<sup>16</sup>Brand, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>Graebner, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Brand, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Graebner, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>25</sup>Brand, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>C. L. Damer, "Letter to Rev. A. C. Frank," dated April 12, 1918,  
Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.



## CHAPTER IV

### LANGUAGE PROBLEM

The greatest cause for the harassment of Missouri Synod members and clergy was their use of the language of the enemy. To some people speaking German meant the same as being pro-German. When a country is at war, objectivity is usually at a minimum. The Constitution of the United States sets no limits upon the languages which may be used by its citizens. But when in war, the Constitution may be forgotten, and a "constitution" of the patriotic majority may preside. This apparently was the case in the United States during World War I. Very seldom was harassment based upon the fact of disloyalty. Rather, it was based upon not living up to the new standards of loyalty set during the war.

There were reasons why the Missouri Synod should have been allowed to keep the German language. The December 19, 1918 issue of the Nebraska State Journal had said that the language of religion is not translatable. Certain words in every language are not translatable.<sup>1</sup> This was the way the Missouri Synod felt about translating everything into English. Perhaps, it was based upon the fact that Martin Luther translated the Bible in German, or that his Catechism was in German. Whatever that closeness was, Missouri Synod members were not so willing to lose it. A Rev. Oscar Heilmann of Helena, Montana, asked Professor Graebner what to do in his congregation which was Russian-German and only spoke German.<sup>2</sup> Montana was on the verge of enacting a law that would forbid

the use of foreign languages, and Heilmann's question was whether to obey that law and forsake the spiritual teaching of his congregation or to oppose it. It was no small number of Missouri Synod Lutherans who could speak only German. Immigration was completely free until the 1870's, and still until the 1910's a large amount of German immigration was permitted. There was nothing to keep such immigrants from forming their own "colony" with little contact with other Americans. A majority of Missouri Synod Lutherans did speak English fluently, but there were a significant number who did not. Another reason for keeping the German language was that it was more intelligent to know two languages. Graebner asked, "Why should Americans of German descent deprive themselves and their children of intellectual asset?"<sup>3</sup> Could the government legally forbid the use of the German language? Professor Graebner's brother, Martin, considered the use of the German language as a liberty. "We should not give up a single one of our liberties without a fight. Whether we wish to use our rights, that is our business."<sup>4</sup> Many German Lutherans asked why they should give up German when the Norwegians and Swedes did not have to give up their languages.<sup>5</sup>

There were reasons advanced, however, why the German language should be given up. If Germany would try to gain loyalists to their cause or attempt to spread German propaganda, it would be easiest through the medium of the German language. Governor W. L. Harding of Iowa said,

No offense should be taken by loyal Americans of foreign birth or descent; for the proclamation [to stop use of the German language] in no instance classes one with the common enemy. It is

confined strictly to the using of foreign languages, all of which are a medium of German propaganda.<sup>7</sup>

There were accusations that German Lutherans were promoting pro-Germanism in their schools. The May 3, 1918 issue of the Pittsburgh Chronicle reported:

Reliable persons have told us there are many schools where the session each day is closed by the singing of "Deutschland ueber Alles" and "Die Wacht am Rhein" is better known than the "Star-Spangled Banner".<sup>7</sup>

In Nebraska it was said that in more than a one hundred schools the national anthem of America was not sung, and more than one hundred schools did not fly the United States flag.<sup>8</sup> There probably were congregations which purposely antagonized the community in which they lived. The New York Times of January 23, 1918, reported that in a Lutheran congregation in Milwaukee, in which two-thirds of the congregation had been born in America, the pastor continued to preach German. The Milwaukee Journal said of this situation:

There is just one real reason why the Milwaukee parson preached in German. It is because he wants to prevent or delay the Americanization of his parishioners and his device is highly effective for that deplorable purpose.<sup>9</sup>

Such articles were to have some impact upon American society. Many Americans were not able to distinguish between people who talked in German, and those who were pro-German. The Rev. J. M. Weidenschilling of Waco, Nabraska wrote in a letter to Graebner:

Popular attitude compels us to use only English in our schools. And even then a neighboring pastor was forced to close down his school and to deliver 4 minute speeches in the movies.<sup>10</sup>

The forced speech was probably a loyalty speech. Popular opinion appeared to have had greatly influenced local loyalty committees, which were called the County Councils of Defense. It was with such

councils that many of the Missouri Synod congregations had to deal. The Houston Daily Post of August 15, 1918, reported that in Lockhardt, Texas, during 1918, members of the German Lutheran Church asked the Caldwell Council of Defense to continue to have German services because some members could only understand German. They were loyal citizens because they bought Liberty Bonds and War Savings Stamps. The Council understood their plea, but because living in America meant using its language, they said to stop using German.<sup>11</sup> Another such instance was reported in the Delmont Record (South Dakota) of August 22, 1918. There was a plea to preach German for fifteen minutes after the church service, and the County Council of Defense of Armour, South Dakota, refused that plea.<sup>12</sup>

Eventually such local action caused state--wide action. In the May 28, 1918 issue of the Lutheran Witness it was reported that the state of Idaho prohibited the use of all languages except English. In the same issue of the Lutheran Witness it said that the Montana Council of Defense prohibited German in the pulpit. Also the Governor of Missouri was beginning to think of similar legislation.<sup>13</sup>

Once again Professor Graebner was the advisor for many Missouri Synod pastors. He steered a path which would try to reconcile the Missouri Synod to other Americans. But Professor Graebner also knew that Missouri Synod members had certain rights, and he also was not about to surrender these rights. Somehow he had to straighten out the statements made by the American press.

In a January 1918 issue of the Lutheran Witness, Graebner wrote in reply to a criticism of German Lutherans made by a Mr. Adams,

editor of Everybody's Magazine:

What is with German Lutherans only a means to a religious end he construes as a means to a cultural (Kultur) end....Mr. Adams fails to realize that our parochial schools have, with the exception of religious instruction and its linguistic bases, been thoroughly American even in language.<sup>14</sup>

Professor Graeber, in reply to accusations about singing "Deutschland ueber Alles", said that he was a parochial school graduate and had never in his life heard that song sung. Also he had never seen the German flag until he traveled on a German ocean liner.<sup>15</sup>

It was not only the words of the press that harmed, it was also the harassment which pastors and congregations experienced. Graebner had to give some advice to pastors in crucial situations. In some places it meant closing their parochial schools and even their churches. Graebner was very much convinced that since the language problem was so closely related to their loyalty which in turn was closely related to their future success, every effort should be taken to prove one's loyalty. On April 30, 1918, Graebner wrote to Rev. A. G. Dick of Leavenworth, Kansas:

It is only a matter of months, possibly, weeks, before the conclusion will be forced upon us that school-instruction in German will be interpreted as a sure token of pro-Germanism.<sup>16</sup>

When Graebner advised Rev. Heilmann, who had the Russian-German congregation which spoke little English, he either did not know Heilmann's congregation in a letter of April 19, 1918, or changed his view a month later. According to the rest of Graebner's advice the first supposition would fit best. On April 9, 1918, Graebner advised Heilmann to conduct his services completely in English because of public sentiment.<sup>17</sup> On May 13, 1918, he advised Heilmann to preach in the

German tongue because that was all they understood, and also because the Swedes still kept up their Swedish.<sup>18</sup>

Professor Graebner felt that there should be a separation between the German used at parochial schools, and the German used in public worship services. There was a scriptural and constitutional right to use German in church, but schools did not belong to this right because the state could supervise schools.<sup>19</sup> To the Rev. William Brueggemann of Asmond, Nebraska, he wrote:

There is no excuse now and has not been for fifteen years for teaching German in our schools. In church services the right of every Christian to hear the Gospel in the language which he prefers ought to be respected.<sup>20</sup>

Graebner was convinced that what would happen to the language question in the future would depend upon how the German-Lutherans acted during the time their loyalty was questioned. In the Lutheran Witness he wrote that there would be exceptions where congregations impressed the community with their loyal Americanism before pressure was exerted by public opinion.<sup>21</sup> And in a letter to Rev. W. F. Dannenfelt of Buhl, Idaho, he wrote about the community in which pro-Germanism had persisted: that to place limits upon the German elements is exactly what has to be expected and to fly in the face of public opinion in a matter like this simply means the ruin of our work."<sup>22</sup> Graebner had two words of advice for the future. First, if a congregation had liberally shown its loyalty before pressure was brought upon it, that congregation would have free choice about the German language. Second, if limits had been placed on German elements, the people were to accept them, for it would do no good to rebel and probably cause more harm.

The above discussion was not based on a unanimous view of German Lutherans. There were some pastors and congregations who felt happy to be rid of the German language. One such pastor was George Henry Hilmer, who said:

By the preaching of the gospel in the language of our country we now would reach out for the unchurched neighbors....By a compromise vote [of the congregation] it was resolved to have English services at least twice a month. In the course of a few years we gained more members.<sup>23</sup>

Hilmer described the war as a blessing in disguise for getting rid of the German language.

Graebner steered a path for the Missouri Synod which considered God's Word and its proclamation as primary. The adiaphora which surrounded the language problem was to prove loyalty. When it was a question of whether God's Word would be heard, Graebner said preach in the German language. But in cases where speaking God's Word was not the issue, he recommended giving up the German language in order to prove loyalty. He knew that during war time, it was vitally important to do as much as possible to prove loyalty to one's country, in order to carry out the tasks God had given the church.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Heilmann, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated May 9, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Graebner, Testimony and Proof (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1918), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Graebner, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated April 7, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>5</sup>Graebner, Testimony and Proof, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>"The War, the Language, and the Church," part III, Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (November 26, 1918), 377-378.

<sup>7</sup>"Language and Loyalty," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (May 28, 1918), 163-165.

<sup>8</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>9</sup>~~Theodore Graebner~~, "Where Wise Counsels Must Prevail," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (March 5, 1918), 74.

<sup>10</sup>J. Weidenschilling, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated April 13, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>11</sup>"The War, the Language, and the Church," part IV, Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (December 10, 1918), 391-393.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>"Language and Loyalty," 391-393.

<sup>14</sup>~~Theodore Graebner~~, "A Protest," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (January 8, 1918), 5-7.

<sup>15</sup>Graebner, Testimony and Proof, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to A. G. Dick," dated April 30, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>17</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Oscar Heilmann," dated April 9, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>18</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Oscar Heilmann," dated May 13, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.



<sup>19</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Fr. Pritzlaff," dated June 13, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>20</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Wm. Brueggemann," dated August 6, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>21</sup>~~Theodore Graebner~~, "The War, the Language, and the Church," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (September 3, 1918), 282-283.

<sup>22</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to W. E. Dannenfeldt," dated March 29, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>23</sup>George Hentry Hilmer, A Brief Story of the Life and Activities of the Rev. George Henry Hilmer (Tri-City, Indiana: Tri-City Independence, 1955), p. 16.

## CHAPTER V

### GOVERNMENT AND CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS

The Missouri Synod had problems in their relationships with the government and with other church bodies. The Missouri Synod felt very definitely that the church and government should be separated. Although the Bill of Rights of the United States says about the same thing when granting to its citizens the freedom of religion, this line of separation can become very thin during the time of war. How much can the government expect church bodies to do for them? Under whose direct jurisdiction are the chaplains? There were numerous events during World War I which caused tension between church and state. It was natural for the government to attempt to work through local congregations, where people regularly gathered on Sunday mornings, rather than spend money on special patriotic meetings. In addition, something said or done in church means God has approved. A second area of this problem was the relationship with other church bodies. During war there are so many things to do, and so few people to do them, that it would seem natural to combine church bodies for such purposes. The Missouri Synod's reaction to such suggestions did not go along with their view of the separation of church and state.

Once again the problems for the Missouri Synod arose around the local congregations. Throughout the First World War there were patriotic meetings. These meetings were to put citizens behind the American cause. Usually the program included the singing of the National

Anthem, raising the flag, and several speeches. The chairman of the local loyalty committee, the city mayor, and the eloquent speakers of the community shared in the speaking chores. Of course in most areas the eloquent speakers included the local clergy. This meant the mixing of many church denominations for a patriotic cause. The outcome of such a meeting would have the potential to be a patriotic meeting with religious coloring.

In the April 8, 1918 edition of the Evening World-Herald of Omaha, Nebraska, this subtitle appeared: "Five Church Leaders Refuse to Sit on Platform at Patriotic Meeting". The article then told how the ministers wrote a letter to the chairman of the event, and in it said that they abhorred the doctrines of certain other sects who were represented on the program. The chairman of the event wrote back to remind the ministers that less than two years before, they had rubbed elbows at a bazaar with representatives of these sects for the benefit of Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Another problem in this area was that many people had no idea how Lutherans felt about the separation of church and state, and at times Missouri Synod pastors were placed into the position of either looking disloyal by refusing to do something, or committing a breach of the separation which they felt so strongly about. In a correspondence to Graebner from Coffeyville, Kansas, this was the report of such an incident at the end of a Red Cross program: "The chairman arose, and said, 'Brother Miessler will give the benediction.' Now you all know that is contrary to Lutheran practice, in fact we claim it contrary to Lutheran practice, in fact we claim it contrary to Scripture."<sup>2</sup> The letter then asks Graebner whether this man can be condemned.

There also was the problem which the Missouri Synod faced because many of its pastors yielded to the public and forgot about the separation of church and state. Graebner wrote to the Rev. E. F. Haertel of Chicago concerning this:

You have no idea how general the feeling is against our church and synod, and how our ministers, through an infatuation with certain ideas about "separation of church and state" plunge headlong into disgrace with the public.<sup>3</sup>

There were contradictory ideas between the government's view and the Missouri Synod's view of the office of the chaplain. The Chicago Sun Times of July 28, 1918, said that the war department wanted a special kind of chaplain: "One...who cares a good deal more about the welfare of soldiers than about distinctions in creeds."<sup>4</sup> It is not difficult to imagine how Missouri Synod Lutherans felt about such a statement. The main concern of the Missouri Synod chaplain was the Gospel which the Missouri Synod boys in service needed. The government and other denominations did not feel the same on this issue, and in the final report of the Army and Navy Board of the Missouri Synod this was the short history of problems encountered:

The greatest difficulty, however, was caused by the fact that other denominations, and also Lutheran bodies not affiliated with the Synodical Conference, looking to the spiritual welfare of the men with colors, sought cooperation of this committee, they deeming it unnecessary to duplicate the work carried on in the various camps and on the battlefield.<sup>5</sup>

The Lutheran War Commission, which included all Lutherans except those of the Synodical Conference, caused much tribulation and frustration to the Army and Navy Board. Eventually a problem was brought to Graebner by Rev. F. W. Streufert of the Army and Navy Board, when this Commission condemned Missouri Synod ministers for refusing the Lord's

Supper to all Lutheran soldiers, Graebner wrote in response: "Unionism has already done us more harm than the entire anti-Lutheran, anti-German language propaganda."<sup>6</sup>

As the year 1918 progressed, Graebner received more and more letters of request for advice, and Graebner became more and more burdened with problems which he felt he was not qualified to answer as one man for a whole Synod. In April of 1918, he recommended the appointment of the most capable man in Synod to represent the Synod in Washington, and four or six others to visit congregations from coast to coast.<sup>7</sup> A month later he began a request with Rev. Frederick Brand of Springfield, Illinois, for a war council. This was to be a group of men who could put their heads together to answer the problems of Synod.<sup>8</sup>

But until that representative or council was appointed, Graebner was left with the problems of the Missouri Synod. Because the Missouri Synod's feeling about the separation of church and state, it was necessary to describe the function of each. Graebner describes the government as a power of God (Romans 13). It has two functions: the first, to maintain such conditions as will guarantee the well-being of their citizens, and "secondly to preserve that which is the very life of government, viz. Authority." The government was to be a force within its own province as a police power, and a force outside its province as a military power.<sup>9</sup> The Editorial Committee of the Lutheran Witness said concerning the duties of citizens:

All true Lutherans publicly and unreservedly teach and confess:  
"concerning civil affairs, they teach that such civil ordinances as are lawful are good works of God; that Christians may lawfully

bear civil office, sit in judgment, determine matters by the imperial laws, and other laws in present force, appoint just punishment, engage in just war, act as soldiers, make legal bargains and contracts, hold property, take an oath when the magistrate require it, marry a wife or be given in marriage."<sup>10</sup>

Graebner made this general statement about the connection and yet the separation of church and state:

[The government] surely has a right to enlist [their] churches aid, so long as it does not hinder the free preaching of the Law and Gospel and administration of the Sacraments guaranteed under the Constitution.<sup>11</sup>

Graebner put it into more specific terms in the article, "Mingling of Church and State". He said that the state becomes guilty of breaking the separation of church and state, first if it tells the Church what to teach, and secondly, if the state gives one denomination better treatment than the others. The church can break the separation when one denomination wants preferential treatment or secondly, when a Church has any form of political activity.<sup>12</sup> In a country, such as the United States, which in the beginning was a group of colonies based upon religious principles and were state-church oriented, there may not have been as clear an idea of the separation of church and state as men, like Graebner, would liked to have thought. So it became more and more necessary to stress this separation. Graebner said in a Lutheran Witness article of February 5, 1918:

Lutheran ministers, both in times of peace and times of war, will study the Word of God and tell their people what it has to say about the duties of citizens and the duties of government. But in all such matters our ministers, consistently with their oaths of office, will bring only those matters into the pulpit which have behind them Scriptural authority.<sup>13</sup>

In dealing specifically with patriotic meetings Graebner put his theory of separation of church and state into practice. He felt that

because of the Missouri Synod pastor's precarious position in many areas, it was necessary to attend and actively participate in these meetings, but also to be careful not to go too far. In response to the question of participation in patriotic meetings with fraternal orders,<sup>14</sup> Graebner wrote:

We cannot always state the conditions under which we should prefer to see such things done. The lodges and CAR would not prevent me from making a patriotic address. If someone prays, submit to it, but write to the committee your preference.<sup>15</sup>

To avoid the predicaments that Missouri Synod pastors often were placed in, Graebner asked the Treasury Department to write a word of warning in literature which they sent out.<sup>16</sup> Graebner prepared resolutions concerning a clergyman's attitude toward patriotic meetings:

1. Encourage pastors to accept invitations to address patriotic meetings.
2. Conduct meetings purely along civic lines.
3. Pastors should work for the elimination of all religious features.
4. Pastors should stress their religious principles to the committee.<sup>17</sup>

These resolutions were never printed in the Lutheran Witness or accepted by a district or Synod, but apparently they were a summary of Graebner's advice to local pastors concerning patriotic meetings.

Another area which stressed the thin line between church and state occurred when the Treasury Department sent out literature for the Church's function in the sale of Liberty Loan Bonds. In this literature were sermon outlines to be used by pastors. Graebner once wrote to Hans Rieg of the Treasury Department: "There should be a participation which brings tens of millions to the successful pursuit of the war if no needless offense [Liberty Loan Sermon Outlines] is given."<sup>18</sup> Graebner voiced a somewhat more critical attitude in the

Lutheran Witness:

The Lutheran Witness has some weeks ago voiced the Lutheran protest against the character of the literature sent out in preparation for "Liberty Loan Sunday"...on account of the entrance of Government officials into a sphere in which our Government has hitherto scrupulously refrained from asserting any authority.<sup>19</sup>

The war years were years of uniting many smaller Lutheran Synods into a few larger Synods. During the war it would seem that because of the amount and pressure of the church's work, it would be a good time to continue the efforts of joining all Lutherans together. For example, the attempts of the Lutheran War Commission to use all Lutheran chaplains for all Lutheran soldiers. It was because of such tension that Graebner felt it necessary to define "unionism":

1. Unionism means ecclesiastical fellowship or religious work with those who do not agree on faith and doctrine.
2. Unionism is a sin.
3. No exceptions to God's Law.
4. No exceptions to God's Word.
5. Must abstain from organized work and religious exercises.
6. In certain cases there was lack of knowledge.
7. Pastor to instruct parishioners.<sup>20</sup>

Professor Graebner's request for a man to represent the Synod in Washington or a council to handle the problems of the Synod caused by the war, was answered by the appointment of the Synodical War-Time Bureau. It consisted of men from the Springfield, Illinois area: Rev. Frederick Brand, Professor R. Neitzel, Professor L. Wessl, and Professor Theodore Engelder. Their duties were:

1. Official representative for the Synod before the State.
2. Prepare suitable literature.
3. Aid members in proper response to the press.
4. Advise concerning conduct at patriotic meetings.
5. Be connected with qualified people in each state.<sup>21</sup>

But even this Bureau in the future would ask help from Graebner, for



he had been the resource in past problems and situations.

Once again Graebner had to distinguish between what God had said, and what He didn't say. God had said there was a separation of church and state, but that Christians did owe something to their government. As a citizen of the United States, a Missouri Synod member had duties to both the church and the government. In church only God's Word was to be heard. At a patriotic meeting only words for the government were to be spoken. This is a hard course to steer during war because many citizens expect Words of God also for the government. Graebner saw that this had to be clarified in order to prevent Missouri Synod members from being viewed as disloyal.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>2</sup>Reed and Family, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated May 26, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to E. F. Haertel," dated April 13, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>4</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Baepler, A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947 (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 264.

<sup>6</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to F. W. Streufert," dated July 14, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>7</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to E. F. Haertel," dated April 13, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>8</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Frederick Brand," dated May 8, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>9</sup>Theodore Graebner, War and Christianity (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.),

<sup>10</sup>Editorial Committee, "The Christian and His Government," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (January 22, 1918), 22.

<sup>11</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Stop, Look, Listen!" Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (December 25, 1918), 406.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Mingling Church and State," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (April 2, 1918), 108.

<sup>13</sup>Theodore Graebner, "The War-Time Pulpit," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (February 5, 1918), 42-43.

<sup>14</sup>F. J. Lankenau, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated May 16, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>15</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to F. J. Lankenau," dated May 18, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>16</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>17</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Patriotic Meeting Resolutions," Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>18</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Hans Rieg," dated February 28, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>19</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Loyalty," Lutheran Witness, XXXVI (August 7, 1917), 237-240.

<sup>20</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Unionism Defined," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (October 29, 1918), 346.

<sup>21</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Synodical Council of War," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (July 9, 1918), 218-219.

## CHAPTER VI

### LOYALTY

Because the Missouri Synod's loyalty was suspect, it was not only necessary to clear up the language and church-state relationship problems, but also to outwardly prove their loyalty. Missouri Synod members were not only expected to be pro-American, but also anti-German. This was not the easiest task. In the beginning of the war, they did not even want to go to war, but during the war they were to be the supreme examples of loyalty. Graebner felt very keenly that every thing possible must be done to prove the loyalty of the Missouri Synod to the United States.

Part of Graebner's plan to prove the Missouri Synod loyal was the attempt to justify the American entrance into the war. Some members did not feel that the United States was justified in entering the war. Graebner's private writing showed that he was convinced that the United States had a right to be at war, and he held that people who felt otherwise were not objective in their thinking. In a letter to Rev. J.M. Streckfuss of Honey Grove, Texas, he said that Germany had been for forty years a place of heresy and wickedness, and this had been proven in the war by their ruthless warfare. He continued: "It is my conviction that what some people call their 'conscience' is nothing but certain racial sympathies, artificially heightened by this propaganda, and now difficult to indicate."<sup>1</sup> In a letter of April 1918 to the Rev. F. Rohlfing of Alma, Missouri, Graebner wrote: "The editors of the Lutheran Witness have taken for granted that it is

possible to serve in this war with good conscience, even as the Deleganten Synode took for granted when it appointed an Army and Navy Board."<sup>2</sup> Graebner had further words on the question of conscience and war. When a person was in doubt, "common sense, charity and justice then demand that he follow the advice of Luther, and give his own country the benefit of the doubt."<sup>3</sup> Graebner tried to leave the justness of the war up to the individual, but he was completely convinced that America had a right to be at war. As the war progressed, he apparently felt that he could only view the war as a loyal American.

There was no doubt that even Graebner experienced some change of attitude during the war. Graebners' views before the American entrance tended to be neutral or even somewhat pro-German, but in less than a year's time, he changed his mind and was forced to reconcile this fact. Not only his mind had changed, but most of the Synod had changed, and people wanted to know why. In a Lutheran Witness editorial, which did not get printed, Graebner describes the different types of loyal citizens. The third class of loyal citizens

are those who have changed their minds. Some of us never condoned the march through Belgium and the sinking of the Lusitania, and looked with misgivings on the effects of a German victory; yet we were so well persuaded of the guilt of England and Russia in precipitating this war that it seemed that Germany must win by right of a just war.<sup>4</sup>

Graebner then went on to give three reasons why he was convinced otherwise. The first was a German article, "Conquest and Culture", which talked of the German hopes to take over the world. Graebner later said that there was no question in his mind that Germany was preparing for a world conquest, and that it must bear the blame for the war. He continues, "I did not know what I know now, neither did any one

else in the United States until our government put the facts at our disposal."<sup>5</sup> The second reason was a document called the "Licknowsky Memorandum". Licknowsky was the German ambassador to England during the years, 1912-1914. Licknowsky disclosed that Germany was responsible for provoking the outbreak of the war in Serbia, and also that Germany refused all attempts to talk peace. The third reason was "Pan-Germanism". This was the claim that the German race was superior to all races, and this also was the reason for Germany to start the war. In the Lutheran Witness Graebner wrote: "Pan-Germanism is an abomination and an execration to our soul, to the soul of the Lutheran in America."<sup>6</sup> These reasons not only explained the change of mind, but also justified the war.

It was necessary for Missouri Synod Lutherans to be totally loyal. The Chicago Tribune carried an article entitled, "Speaking to Germans in America", which said:

If the war continues, American feeling is certain to grow in intensity, and any class believed to be holding itself out of the current American purpose, avoiding patriotic responsibility or withholding whole hearted support to this country, will be marked.<sup>7</sup>

Otto Bock, who held an office in the United States District Attorney Office at Colorado, wrote to Graebner:

Probably some of the criticism that is being directed against the Lutheran Church is well merited, and until there is a sincere repentance of the un-American attitude of some of our brethren, the conditions will not be much changed.<sup>8</sup>

Even Graebner was questioned as to his loyalty. In a letter from a layman, which talked of the Lutheran Witness war policy, this was said:

:Couldn't you possibly work in a quotation that would lead a sharp man to suspect that you would like to see the United States win this war with Germany, or at least a quotation that would

suggest to a bright man that he would not commit a sin if he found a good word to say for Uncle Sam in this war?"<sup>9</sup>

So Graebner asked Missouri Synod Lutherans to go all out for the war. They not only were expected to be pro-American, but also anti-German. Graebner attacked pacifism by arguing that participation in war in itself was not sinful. John the Baptist had said to the repentant soldier, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3). John did not command this soldier to cease bearing arms. Graebner also referred to the Sixteenth Article of the Augsburg Confession, which stated that a Christian may lawfully engage in just wars. Graebner concludes: "Lutherans do not refuse service in time of war as 'conscientious objectors', but have even been found among those who render loyal and patriotic service."<sup>10</sup>

He made similar criticism of a group of pastors in North Dakota.

These pastors had made some war resolutions. Graebner wrote:

Our government looks with extreme disfavor upon "neutral" declarations of "principles" regarding war and citizenship....I am sorry that a real declaration of loyalty, a pro-war resolution was not adopted.<sup>11</sup>

To the Rev. Theodore Roshke of Wichita, Kansas, Graebner wrote:

The main thing is that our people understand that the government is not satisfied with an attitude which is only pro-American, it expects the citizens to be anti-German....I am strongly hoping that we will defeat Germany, and I believe that we all should support not only the government, but support the war, and that to the uttermost, because we were put into a position where we had to fight.<sup>12</sup>

To The President of the Missouri Synod at this time, F. Pfotenhauer, addressed the Delegate Synod of 1917 in Milwaukee with these words:

Although we are living in such troublous times, and all happenings are pointing to the end of the world, yet we Christians

may not become slothful nor discouraged, but we must lift up our heads and be active.<sup>13</sup>

President Pfotenhauer was not specific in his advice to be active, but Graebner advised Lutherans to be active for the American cause and to speak out against Germany;

When our schools celebrate patriotic evenings, let the speaker scotch these serpents that now rear their heads. Whenever our pastors or laymen have an occasion to speak in public on the issues of the war, let them point out the fact that the war of the Missouri Synod with the State Church system of Germany antedates the World War by seventy years...only intense counter-activity can check the machinations of those who would destroy, not only our schools, but our missionary opportunity among Americans forever.<sup>14</sup>

Graebner knew that the Missouri Synod clergy and members had to go all out if they would have any mission future among the Americans.

Many pastors felt they could prove their loyalty by assisting the government as much as possible, for example, by helping with the sale of war bonds and assisting in the investigation of other Lutherans. The Treasury Department wrote Graebner that it was very much gratified by the responses from Lutheran ministers to material sent out on war savings.<sup>16</sup> The Department of Justice investigated twelve-hundred individual Lutheran clergymen as to their loyalty. In the final report of the Department of Justice special mention is made that two or three prominent Lutheran clergymen assisted the government in getting information.<sup>17</sup>

Like many pastors, Professor Graebner felt he must prove his loyalty. He had enough recognition as a loyal person that the government requested several tasks of him, and he usually accepted. The United States Treasury Department had asked Graebner to prepare



literature for the government in the German language, and D. C. Brewer of the War Department requested information about certain German-oriented denominations.<sup>18</sup> He also requested Graebner to give the names of German periodicals which did not speak a pro-American, anti-German language.<sup>19</sup> Graebner reported two such periodicals which he thought needed to be further investigated.<sup>20</sup> Brewer also sought advice on how to stimulate loyalty among the German population in America. Graebner's answer was to educate the people on the war aims, and his specific advice on how to deal with the Missouri Synod was to send personal representatives to the district conventions during the year 1918.<sup>21</sup> This last request was rejected because of a lack of man power. At times it looked as if the government did not take Graebner's suggestions seriously, but he never refused to help the government. Usually he gave it his whole-hearted support because he wanted to prove that Missouri Synod Lutherans were loyal Americans. Graebner said once that his relationship to the government was not as a representative of the Synod nor of all Lutherans, but he served as an unofficial advisor to the government.<sup>23</sup>

Whenever Graebner was questioned about the loyalty of the Missouri Synod, he usually gave two reasons why they were loyal Americans: The Missouri Synod had many of their young members serving in the Armed Services of the United States, and the Synod had contributed much financially to the war effort.

Not only did a large number of young men serve in the Armed Services, but the Missouri Synod did much to serve these young. At the Fifteenth Delegate Synod in 1917 it was resolved to form an Army

and Navy Board.

Realizing our obligations to our young men who go forth to serve their country in the Army and Navy, the Synod created a special Board for Army and Navy, to be appointed by the President. This Board is to make the best possible spiritual provision for our men in any branch of Federal service.<sup>24</sup>

In a short period of time the Wisconsin Synod placed their men in service under the control of this Board, and Wisconsin Synod members were added to the Board itself. The responsibilities of the Board grew large enough to appoint a special financial committee, and representatives were sent to Washington D. D. to take care of matters there. This Board was also responsible for the approval of chaplains. Over five-hundred pastors of the Synodical Conference offered their service to the Board. In a final report five chaplains served overseas. Thirteen chaplains were appointed for duty in the United States. Seventy pastors were full-time pastors at camps. One-hundred and twenty-four pastors served camps near to which their congregations were located. There were attempts by the Board to build many "camp-centers" for the worship and recreation of Missouri Synod members in service.<sup>25</sup> Professor Graebner also had a close relationship with this board. He was their resource to answer questions dealing with "unionism". He revised sermons which were sent to men in service, and he was requested upon one occasion to give advice as to the appointment of a chaplain.

With the appointment of this Board and the amount of work which it endeavored to do, it became necessary to ask for additional funds for their work. The Board had requested of the Missouri Synod members four-hundred thousand dollars for the Board's efforts. This offering was to pay for the chaplains and much of the literature sent out by the Board. During the course of the war 80,000 hymnals, 12,000 Bibles

and New Testaments, sermons, bulletins were distributed. One group, which was given special recognition for the financial success of this endeavor, was the newly created Walther League. But the major responsibility of the finances was left in the lap of the members. Graebner pleaded for this offering several times in the Lutheran Witness. One such occasion was in the August 20, 1918 issue of the Lutheran Witness:

For the sake of our loyal men with the colors, and as a thank-offering for the mercies which God has given our dear church in times of peace so many years, let us make this a successful campaign.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of the war when the Board was dissolved over five-hundred thousand dollars had been given to the Board for its efforts.

The real boast of loyalty was not the system, which surrounded the soldiers, but the soldiers themselves. The final report of the number of Missouri Synod men in service during World War I was 37,582. Of these, 10,692 served in the American Expeditionary Forces.<sup>28</sup> At this time the membership of the Missouri Synod was a little over one million. Important to the Missouri Synod's young men being able to understand the war, was the Army and Navy Board's bulletin, Lutheran Soldiers' and Sailors' Bulletin. This bulletin was edited by Rev. Karl Schlerf, and presented exhortations to the soldiers to be totally loyal. In one of the bulletins the reason the young men were at war was explained:

Our beloved America...has been drawn into this terrible maelstrom. we armed only as a last resort. But now as loyal citizens we have prepared to dedicate and are dedicating to this cause the full measure of devotion.<sup>29</sup>

More words to the soldiers were:

Be loyal to your country, your native land...you felt it was necessary to sacrifice all because your country needed you. Your country protected you in times of peace, and now in the

hour of need you feel you must stand by her.<sup>30</sup>

The young men of the Missouri Synod must have taken such words to heart. During 1918 a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Henry, made a tour of many camps in the United States and made this observation about Lutheran boys in service:

As loyal to the Stars and Stripes as any others; that these boys, illustrious examples to thousands of comrades, were of German origin, trained in German Lutheran homes, schools and churches; that a church which produces such boys does not deserve the calumny and the suspicion of disloyalty cast upon it.<sup>31</sup>

Another such compliment was made by Captain George Lester of the Army Intelligence Service:

Even among those who were pro-German, when the question of conscription came, there was no evidence except in isolated cases, of any attempt on the part of the Lutheran Church, to persuade the young men to evade military service.<sup>32</sup>

Such statements were of great help to the Missouri Synod in attempting to exist in a country where its loyalty was often questioned.

The second response to the question of loyalty was the claim that Lutherans were very helpful financing the American war effort. This was the advice rendered by one member of the Missouri Synod:

As citizens we must give the government our hearty support in the prosecution of the war that has been thrust upon us. We must help meet the needs of our food regulations and help feed our soldiers here and "over there". We must support the Red Cross that is caring for the sick and the wounded. And we must do all these things whole-hearted and loyally in conformity with the patriotic history and principles of our Church.<sup>33</sup>

One area of financial help was the Red Cross. In a letter to Graebner from Rev. A. H. Gassner of Washington, Missouri, this was said:

It is not only a patriotic but a Christian duty that one yield our full support to the agencies [Red Cross] which more than any other have robbed modern war of its greatest terrors.<sup>34</sup>

The Crystal Lake Herald (Illinois) reported this message concerning the Red Cross effort of a Lutheran parochial school, which was written by Rev. Kuehnert, pastor at Harvard, Illinois:

When we began the Red Cross drive among the 120 pupils of our school, all our children became Junior members. Within a few days our school, including the teachers and the pastor, was 100 percent Red Cross, and it is and always will be 100 percent American.<sup>35</sup>

A second expression of financial assistance was the sale of Liberty Loan Bonds. Professor Graebner became an important link between the Treasury Department and church members in this sale. Bernard Gruenstein of the Ninth Federal Reserve District requested from Graebner on March 14, 1918, a statement about the duties of church members toward the war through the sale of Liberty Loan Bonds.<sup>36</sup> This request was made in regard to the sale of the Third Liberty Loan, which began on April 6, 1918. The sale of this bond was important to Missouri Synod Lutherans because other people were watching to see how they would respond to the chance to prove their loyalty. From the time the sale began until the final tally was taken, there were at least three exchanges of correspondence between Washington and Graebner about how much had been given. Mr. Charles F. Stuart, publicity man for the Ninth Federal Reserve District, wrote to Mr. Frank R. Wilson, Secretary of the Treasury Department:

The German Lutheran ministers have shown more loyal activity evidenced in either of the former Liberty Loans, and it is felt that they can now be counted on almost to a man, to do all in their power to aid the United States government now and in the future.<sup>37</sup>

Graebner was not completely pleased with Mr. Stuart's statement, and added that the words "more loyal" are not true. "The trouble was

not lack of loyalty, but a disinclination to involve the Church in matters of a 'political character'!"<sup>38</sup>

The financial output of the Missouri Synod during this period was trully great. It was estimated that ninty-four million dollars were paid by Missouri Synod Lutherans for war loans, war stamps, and the Red Cross. Then in addition to this amount the special offering rendered to the Army and Navy Board of five-hundred thousand dollars, turns into quite a financial response of the Missouri Synod's loyalty.

This kind of contribution to the war effort made it possible for leaders of the Missouri Synod to claim that it was totally loyal to the United States. Rev. Frederick Brand, the third Vice-President of the Missouri Synod, made this claim of loyalty:

I do claim to speak for the more than a million Lutherans of the Missouri, Ohio, and Other States when I say that there is no body of men, of whatever extraction, more loyal and more given, heart, body, and soul, to the principles of our American's Constitution than they.

The first Vice-President of the Missouri Synod, Rev. J. M. Miller, made a similar claim after he had visited many congregations throughout the United States:

Missouri Synod members are doing more than their share in sacrificing for this country....There is no group of citizens as vitally necessary to the success of this land as are the Lutheran people.<sup>41</sup>

Even the accusation that certain Lutheran pastors were proven guilty of the Espionage Act was not true of the Missouri Synod pastors. The Synodical War-Time Bureau made this report of the investigation:

The secular press has repeatedly reported the conviction of certain Lutheran ministers of disloyalty. We have searched our lists of clergymen for their names but failed to find them.<sup>42</sup>

Other people also recognized the Lutheran loyalty, and Governor Capper of Kansas was impressed enough by the loyalty of Kansas Lutherans that he appointed a Lutheran to serve on the state's Council of Defense.<sup>43</sup>

What type of evidence does one use to prove one's loyalty? About the only way possible was to look at the ways loyalty had been expressed. The sacrifice of money offered some evidence, but probably more valid was the willingness to sacrifice one's life for his country. A sufficient number of Missouri Synod young men entered the Armed Forces to prove their loyalty, and a sufficient amount of money was sacrificed by Missouri Synod members to the war effort to constitute a fair proof of Missouri Synod's loyalty to the United States during World War I.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to J. M. Streckfuss," dated July 5, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>2</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to F. Rohlfing," dated April 24, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Graebner, War and Christianity (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Witness Editorial," unprinted, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>5</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Paul Walther," dated July 20, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>6</sup>Address by Frederick Brand, "Pan-Germanism and Lutheranism," printed by Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (August 20, 1918), 261-262.

<sup>7</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>8</sup>Otto Bock, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated March 15, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>9</sup>Ralph S. Rickman, "Letter to Lutheran Witness Editorial Committee," n.d., Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>10</sup>Theodore Graebner, War and Christianity.

<sup>11</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to J. P. Klausler," dated July 14, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Th. Roshke," dated July 14, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>13</sup>The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirtieth Convention Assembled as the Fifteenth Delegate Synod, June 20-29, 1917 (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), 3-6.

<sup>14</sup>~~Theodore Graebner~~, "A Grave Situation-Act!" Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (April 30, 1918), 130-131.

<sup>15</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to D. C. Brewer," dated May 4, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>16</sup>United States Treasury Department, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated February 20, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.



<sup>17</sup>Ray Abrams, Preachers Present Arms (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1933), p. 212-213.

<sup>18</sup>D. C. Brewer, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated February 7, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>19</sup>D. C. Brewer, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated June 8, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>20</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to D. C. Brewer," dated June 16, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>21</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to D. C. Brewer," dated April 14, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>22</sup>D. C. Brewer, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated April 18, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>23</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Martin Graebner," dated March 13, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>24</sup>Proceedings of the Thirtieth Convention Assembled as the Fifteenth Delegate Synod, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup>Evangelical Lutheran Church of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-First Convention Assembled as the Sixteenth Delegate Synod, June 20-25, 1920 (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), 51-52.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Four Hundred Thousand Dollars," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (August 20, 1918), 265.

\* In a letter to Graebner from Rev. F. C. Streufert, one of the few setbacks of Graebner's war-time efforts is mentioned:

Recently an article appeared written originally by a certain man, Claxton, who advocated teaching of the German Language. Forthwith one of our military pastors had to appear before the commanding General and make an explanation....It would be best, at least for time being, to discontinue sending out the Lutheran Witness to the various camps....because of the denominational tone.

(June 5, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.)

<sup>28</sup>Proceedings of Thirty-First Convention, pp. 51-52.

<sup>29</sup>Ernest Schlerf, "You Honor Men," Lutheran Soldiers' and Sailors' Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 9 (August, 1918), 31.

<sup>30</sup>Arthur H. C. Both, "Loyalty," Lutheran Soldiers' and Sailors' Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 1 (December, 1917), 2.

<sup>31</sup>N. J. Bakke, "A Tribute to Our Lutheran Boys in the Camps," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (November 26, 1918), 375.

<sup>32</sup>Abrams, p. 200.

<sup>33</sup>H. P. Eckhardt, "Christ Is All And In All," Lutheran Soldiers' and Sailors' Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 9 (August, 1918), 11.

<sup>34</sup>Aug. H. Gassner, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated May 4, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>35</sup>Available in Graebner Files at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>36</sup>Bernard Gruenstein, "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated March 14, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>37</sup>Charles F. Stuart, "Letter to Frank R. Wilson," dated April 28, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>38</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Note to Charles F. Stuart's letter," Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>39</sup>Walter Baepler, A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947 (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 266.

<sup>40</sup>Address by Frederick Brand, "Pan-Germanism and Lutheranism," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (August 20, 1918), 261-262.

<sup>41</sup>Abrams, p. 212.

<sup>42</sup>~~Theodore Graebner~~, "Pro-German 'Lutheran' Pastors," Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (September 17, 1918), 299.

<sup>43</sup>C. L. Damer, "Letter to Rev. A. C. Frank," dated April 12, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

In this attempt to clarify the Missouri Synod's loyalty to the United States, it was necessary to explain what the Missouri Synod's attitude about the war was prior to the United States entering the war. Prior to the April 6, 1917, the American declaration of war, the editors of the Lutheran Witness, Martin Sommer and Theodore Graebner, issued and printed statements favoring Germany. Also during the year 1916 Theodore Graebner wrote a series of articles asking the United States to remain neutral. The question whether Graebner wanted to keep America out of the war for Germany's sake cannot be answered. It is clear, however, that once the United States entered the war, Graebner was pro-American.

Certainly Missouri Synod's attitude toward Germany prior to American entrance into the war did have something to do with later harassment experienced by the Missouri Synod at the hands of other Americans. Harassment came by means of burning church buildings, paintings church doors yellow, etc. There are records of harassment of German Lutherans in many of the states. There also were verbal attacks upon the German Lutherans, such as the statements of the Nebraska Council of Defense, William Lauder and even Life magazine. Theodore Graebner attempted to deal with the problem of Missouri Synod members being harassed. His main literary effort in this area was a pamphlet, Testimony and Proof. It denied any type of relationship between the Missouri Synod and the German Kaiser or the German.

nation.

The most important reason for the questioning of the loyalty of the Missouri Synod was that many of its members used the language of the enemy. Many congregations used the German language in their worship services and parochial schools. Other Americans felt that German Lutherans should give up the use of the German language, or they would be viewed as pro-German. Missouri Synod Lutherans had their reasons for continuing the use of German: some held that the language of religion is not translatable, some members of the Missouri Synod spoke only German, and there appeared to be no constitutional reason to forbid the usage of German. On the other hand, the German language was the medium of German propaganda, and there were cases of German Lutheran parochial schools singing, "Deutschland ueber Alles", which would seem to promote pro-Germanism. Graebner tried to convince Missouri Synod Lutherans to give up the usage of German in parochial schools, but in public worship services not to give up unless it became necessary to prove loyalty.

Another area of conflict between the Missouri Synod and other Americans was that of the relationship of the church and the state. In times of war, the separation between church and state can become thin. There were three specific reasons for tension: Lutheran clergymen participating in patriotic meetings, sermon outlines which were sent out by the government to the churches, and the military chaplaincy. In all three Graebner asked that all religious activity should be kept out of governmental affairs and vice versa. Professor Graebner was completely convinced that only God's Word should be preached from the

pulpit, and a pastor, when functioning as a pastor, could only use God's Word. But when the pastor functioned as a citizen of the United States under God's command, he should try everything possible to prove his loyalty. There was the problem of dealing with other church bodies. When the Missouri Synod would not participate with people of other denominations at patriotic meetings, some saw the situation as an act of disloyalty. Graebner gave no ground toward unionism, and probably set precedents for generations of Missouri Synod Lutherans to come with his views of unionism.

Attempts to clear up problems of language and church relationships did not prove Missouri Synod's loyalty. More important indications of Missouri Synod loyalty are the many expressions of loyalty. Graebner made a strenuous effort to prove the Missouri Synod's loyalty. This effort included an attempt by Graebner to justify American entrance into the war to Missouri Synod members, a justification of the change of mind prior to the American entrance and during the war, and also a plea to members to be not only pro-American, but also anti-German. Graebner, along with other pastors, felt it important to cooperate with the government as much as possible in the investigation of German speaking churches as to their loyalty and also in helping the government in the sale of Liberty Loan Bonds. Often when Missouri Synod members were questioned as to their loyalty, they offered two proofs. The first was the number of men in service--thirty-seven thousand. The second proof was the financial support given to America by giving to the Red Cross and buying war stamps and Liberty Loan Bonds. It was estimated that Missouri Synod members contributed ninety-four

dollars to these efforts.

World War I was one of the most difficult transitional periods in the Missouri Synod's history. Because of problems the Missouri Synod experienced during this time, it was forced out of a state of isolation. Because of the German language and German heritage prior to the war, Missouri Synod Lutherans had often lived in separated communities. When many congregations were forced to give up the use of German, they became more exposed to other people in their community. Because the Missouri Synod was often put into the spotlight of suspicion, they were also forced out of their isolated communities into a relationship with other Americans. This exposure to the American society opened pathways for future mission efforts in America. The expression of the Missouri Synod's loyalty served as a Christian witness to the government and to the communities in which Missouri Synod Lutherans lived. It was once again freely able to preach the Gospel to all Americans, and other Americans accepted this Gospel without the suspicion, which was cast upon it during most of World War I.

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(Letters)

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- Fackler, E. D. "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated December 31, 1917.
- Gassner, Aug. H. "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated May 4, 1918.
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- Graebner, Theodore. "Letter to Frederick Brand," dated May 8, 1918.
- "Letter to D. C. Brewer," dated April 14, 1918.
- "Letter to D. C. Brewer," dated May 4, 1918.
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- "Letter to Wm. Brueggemann," dated August 6, 1918.
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- "Letter to J. P. Klausler," dated July 14, 1918.
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- "Letter to Hans Rieg," dated February 28, 1918.
- "Letter to F. Rohlfing," dated April 24, 1918.
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dated February 20, 1918.

Weidenschilling, J. M. "Letter to Theodore Graebner," dated April 13,  
1918.

(Miscellaneous)

Extract of speech by William Lauder before Chicago Association of  
Commerce on Friday, April 6, 1918, at the Hotel La Salle, in  
Chicago.

Newspaper article which contains Theodore Graebner's rebuttal to William  
Lauder's accusation. Source not identified.

Newspaper description of German Lutheran schools. Date given as January  
10, 1918; Yutan, Nebraska as place, but no more specifics.

Theodore Graebner's proposed editorial for the Lutheran Witness on the  
three classes of loyal citizens among German Lutherans.

Theodore Graebner's proposed resolutions for the pastor's view toward  
patriotic meetings.

Theodore Graebner's note at the bottom of Mr. Charles F. Stuart's  
letter to Frank R. Wilson.