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Short Title

THE CHICAGO (INTERSYNODICAL) THESES

Bunzel, MST, 1964

THE MISSOURI SYNOD AND
THE CHICAGO (INTERSYNODICAL) THESES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

A DIVIDED LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Historical Situation in America

Today over ninety per cent of the Lutherans living in America belong to one of three large synods: The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, The American Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Church in America. Since the three synods are not separated by geographical location, all three span the entire country, the question of intersynodical relationships takes on importance. At the present time the three synods are not in pulpit and altar fellowship with one another, nor has American Lutheranism ever been. Dr. Fred W. Meuser states that the essence of the problem "is simply the inability to agree on what makes a church body truly and fully Lutheran."¹

Some of the original causes for the organizational diversity were: (a) the different European backgrounds of the American Lutherans, (b) the different periods in which the Lutherans immigrated to America, (c) the need for and desire of organizational structures in different parts of the country in the early years of Lutheranism in America, (d) the theological differences within the European Churches,

¹Vilmos Vajta, editor, Church in Fellowship (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c. 1963), p. 2.

and (e) some theological differences that developed in this country.

Although the Lutherans in America have never all been in fellowship with one another, they have at various times and for various reasons attempted to come together either in an organic union or at least in pulpit and altar fellowship. During the nineteenth century there were the movements that brought about the formation of the General Synod (1820), the General Council (1867), and the Synodical Conference (1872). The basis of the General Synod was adherence to the name Lutheran. The General Council required adherence to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. However, the basis of fellowship was not clearly defined and unionistic practices within the Synod existed. The Synodical Conference was organized with one of its chief purposes being to promote complete unity in doctrine and practice. It believed that complete unity must first be achieved before church fellowship could be declared with another church body. During the 1850's there were free conferences which attempted to overcome the theological and practical differences and to create a better understanding between the various Lutheran bodies. The twentieth century saw an increase in the activity of the Lutheran bodies' attempts at union. In 1917 the majority of the Norwegians merged into one body. In 1918 the General Council, the General Synod, and the United Synod of the South formed the United Lutheran Church in America. The American

Lutheran Church composed of the Ohio, the Iowa, and the Buffalo Synods was organized in 1930. In the same year the American Lutheran Church, the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Augustana Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church formed the American Lutheran Conference. The National Lutheran Council had also been organized in 1918. In 1960 the American Lutheran Conference members with the exception of the Augustana Lutheran Church merged to form The American Lutheran Church. Then in 1962 the United Lutheran Church, the Augustana Lutheran Church, the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, and The Suomi Synod merged to form the Lutheran Church in America. However, after all of these mergers, the simple fact remains that American Lutheranism is still divided into three parts. Today attempts again are being made to bring the three groups together in the Lutheran Council in the United States of America.

The Missouri Synod's Role

At the present time, too, there is a wide interest in the ecumenical movement. The meeting of the Lutheran World Federation at Helsinki in 1963 again renewed an interest in Lutheran co-operation. There are many in the Missouri Synod who would like to see their synod take a more active part in Lutheran co-operation. At the present time Missouri's representatives are meeting with the other Lutheran groups in order to work out some type of organization to replace

the National Lutheran Council in which the Missouri Synod would be represented. There are people within the Synod who believe that it is a necessity for Missouri to work with the other American Lutherans both in the mission field and at home. In order for the members of the Missouri Synod to make a decision concerning the matter, this author believes it is necessary for them to have a knowledge and understanding of the historical background of the Missouri Synod's position and role in the past concerning this question.

It will be noted that of all the mergers and union movements listed above, the Missouri Synod played a role only in the free conference meetings of the 1850's and in the formation of the Synodical Conference. Although this is true, it does not mean that it did nothing in this matter during the long period following the formation of the Synodical Conference. There were numerous meetings between members of the Missouri Synod and members of the synods that later formed the American Lutheran Church. After 1930 there were meetings with the American Lutheran Church in an attempt to establish pulpit and altar fellowship between the two bodies.

The official negotiations can be broken down into three periods. The first was from about 1917 to 1929 during which time the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses were formulated, discussed, and then rejected. The second period was from 1929 until 1947. The basis of the negotiations at that time

was the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States and the Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church. The third period runs from 1948 until 1956. At that time the Common Confession was used as the basis of the negotiations. It appeared at one time or another during each of these periods that pulpit and altar fellowship agreements would be reached. But this never did happen. Since each of these periods builds upon the previous one, this paper will study the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses in an attempt at finding out why the negotiations ended in failure and what might be learned from these negotiations for any future attempts at coming together.

The Manner of Investigation

The main interest of this paper will be centered on the Missouri Synod. Thus there will be a close look at the Synod's Proceedings for the period involved, especially the committee reports dealing with the negotiations and the theses. Another basic source will be the periodicals of the time. The Lutheran Witness will be the basic Missouri Synod periodical source and the Lutheran Standard will be the main source for Missouri's opponents. Also the theological journal of Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, which appeared under various names (Lehre und Wehre, Theological Monthly, and Concordia Theological Monthly) will be extensively used. Another source

of great importance will be the personal files of some of the men involved in the negotiations which are found in the Concordia Historical Institute. The topic will be presented historically with some conclusions and questions discussed in the final chapter. The actions and debates within the other synods will only be discussed insofar as they affect the Missouri Synod. This is especially true of the other members of the Synodical Conference.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Missouri Synod and Church Fellowship

To better understand the attitude of the Missouri Synod during the first third of the twentieth century, it is necessary to first look at its position toward Lutheranism and church fellowship. An article originally written by Dr. C. F. W. Walther for the first issue of Der Lutheraner was translated and published in the Theological Monthly. It therefore might be assumed that Dr. Walther's statement was still the accepted view within the Missouri Synod in 1921 when the translation was printed. Dr. Walther wrote:

By the term Lutheran nothing else must be understood than that we are Christians who accept as correct those teachings brought back to light through the work of Luther. All who profess these teachings we call Lutherans A true Lutheran and a true Christian, a Lutheran Church and a Christian Church, God's Word and Luther's doctrine--these are one and the same thing.¹

Walther continued by saying that the hand should be extended to anyone who accepts the entire Word of God and professes faith in Jesus Christ.

The confessional position of the Missouri Synod is stated in Article II of its constitution.

¹C. F. W. Walther, "Why the Name Lutheran," translated by Carl Romoser, Theological Monthly, I (August-September 1921), 249.

Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit, the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.²

Prof. Dau, quoting Der Lutheraner, explains that: "The Bible is the revealed Word of God itself; the symbols are the correct understanding of the Word, which God has given to His Church."³ In the same article it is concluded that the Missouri Synod does not claim that the Confessions are an absolute necessity. The Scriptures are all sufficient, the Confessions are only an explanation of the Scriptures.

In a 1920 Lutheran Witness, there appears an explanation of the basis of union of the Synodical Conference. This explanation sheds some light on Missouri's requirements for union with other groups. The article in part states:

The basis of union between these bodies [members of the Synodical Conference] is complete agreement in the doctrines of Holy Scripture, as evidenced in public profession and churchly practice. Three great principles, firmly grounded in Scripture underlie the fraternal relations which these bodies hold to one another: 1) The revelation of the divine mind given in Scripture is so plain that every Christian may know what God wants him to believe and do. Unity

²Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 3.

³W. H. T. Dau, "Confessionalism of the Missouri Synod," Theological Monthly, I (April 1921), 108.

of belief is possible. 2) Relations of church-fellowship (joint worship, joint religious work) are properly, the privilege of those who hold membership in bodies which through their public teachings and practice establish their adherence to every point of Christian teaching. 3) Each member in the general body is responsible for the public teaching and conduct of all those for whom he is in relations of fellowship.⁴

Missouri held the position that the disunion among the Lutherans in America was caused by false doctrine and harmful practices based on that false doctrine within some of the Lutheran Churches in America. The cure for this would be to follow God's Word and separate from the erring bodies.⁵ Prof. F. Bente adds light to the understanding of the Missouri Synod's position when he explains what a true Lutheran is.

True and faithful Lutherans, however, are such only as, being convinced by actual comparison that the Concordia of 1580 is in perfect agreement with the Holy Bible, subscribe to these symbols ex animo and without mental reservation or doctrinal limitations, and earnestly strive to conform to them in practice as well as in theory. Subscription only to the Augustana or to Luther's Small Catechism is a sufficient test of Lutheranism, provided the limitation does not imply, and is not interpreted as, a rejection of the other Lutheran symbols or any of its doctrines. Lutheran churches or synods, however, deviating from, or doctrinally limiting their subscription to, the bans of 1580, or merely pro forma professing, but not seriously and really living its principles and doctrines are not truly Lutheran in

⁴"The Synodical Conference," The Lutheran Witness, XXXIX (September 14, 1920), 293.

⁵[Martin S. Sommer], "Who is Guilty of Keeping Lutherans Apart?," The Lutheran Witness, XLII (January 2, 1923), 5f.

the adequate sense of the term, though not by any means unLutheran in every sense of that term.⁶

Concerning the situation within the Missouri Synod at this time Prof. Martin S. Sommer states:

There are no liberals, there are no rationalists, and there are no modernists and there are no unionists. God has graciously preserved the Missouri Synod from being overrun with these parasites who sap the life-blood of a number of church bodies.⁷

The Free Conferences

It was with this above stated frame of mind that the Missouri Synod entered into the 1900's. At the turn of the century an attempt was made to bring about unity among the more confessional Lutheran Churches in America. This movement included the Midwestern synods and to a lesser extent some of the General Council members. This attempt developed into a series of five free conferences between 1903 and 1906. It is true that there were conferences before these, such as the Beloit Conference; however, they do not seem to have been as inclusive as the later five.

The first of the five conferences was held at Watertown, Wisconsin, on April 29 and 30, 1903.⁸ The purpose of this

⁶"The Church," The Lutheran Witness, XLII (March 13, 1923), 82f. This article is quoting from American Lutheranism by F. Bente.

⁷[Martin S. Sommer], "The Differences of Opinions in the Missouri Synod," The Lutheran Witness, XLII (April 10, 1923), 119.

⁸For a discussion of the Watertown Conference see the following articles: H., "Church News and Comments," The

conference was to discuss the issues that were dividing the bodies from one another and to remove, as much as possible, the misunderstandings and prejudices that had grown up among these Lutherans. Pastors of all the synods that officially received all the symbolical books were invited to attend. Two hundred and fifty pastors and professors of eleven different synods gathered together in the chapel of Northwestern University for this conference.⁹ Prof. A. E. Ernst of Watertown was elected chairman and Rev. F. Haeuser, of the Missouri Synod, and Rev. Appel, of the Ohio Synod, were elected secretaries. Prof. F. Pieper addressed the gathering on the theme, "Grace in the Doctrine of Conversion and Election." After the delivery of the paper, the conference tried to set forth the real point of difference between the synods concerning this doctrine. For the remainder of the conference the different views were discussed. Rev. George Fritschel, who was to present the second paper at the conference, declined to submit his paper because there would

Lutheran Witness, XXII (April 9, 1903), 60; H. S[ieck], "Church News and Comments," The Lutheran Witness, XXII (May 21, 1903), 85; F. B[entel], "Die freie Conferenz von Watertown," Lehre und Wehre, XLIX (May 1903), 142; "Freie Conferenz," Lehre und Wehre, XLIX (May 1903), 143f; J. Sheatsley, "Free Lutheran Conference," Lutheran Standard, LXI (April 11, 1903), 234; J. Sheatsley, "The Watertown Lutheran Conference," Lutheran Standard, LXI (May 23, 1903), 331; "The Recent Free Conference," Lutheran Standard, LXI (June 6, 1903), 360f.

⁹The eleven synods represented were the following: the Missouri (German), Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan [District Synod], Missouri (English), Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, Michigan (Independent), Norwegian, and the New York Ministerium of the General Council.

not have been time to discuss it. In its closing session the conference chose a committee to make the arrangements for a second conference.¹⁰ It was decided that the same topic should be treated from an exegetical standpoint at the next conference. Both sides, the Synodical Conference members and the members of the other synods, felt that a step toward unity had been made.

The second in the series of free conferences met in Lincoln Hall, Milwaukee, on September 9 to 11, 1903.¹¹ It was a gathering of about seven hundred Lutheran ministers and professors, plus several elderly laymen. The Rev. H. A. Allwardt of the Ohio Synod presented an exegetical paper dealing mainly with Matthew 22:1-14 and Romans 8:28. He attempted to prove that the universal will of salvation and the eternal will of election in the main are the same. Dr. Stellhorn writes:

¹⁰The members appointed to the committee were: J. Strasen (Missouri German), C. Jaeger (Wisconsin), C. J. Albrecht (Minnesota), Theo. Seifert (Michigan District), H. Sieck (Missouri English), H. K. G. Doermann (Ohio), G. Wenz (Iowa), Gram (Buffalo), L. Larsen (Norwegian), F. Beer (Michigan), and J. Nicum (General Council). J. Strasen was appointed chairman.

¹¹For a discussion of the Milwaukee Conference see the following articles: H. Sieck, "Church News and Comments," The Lutheran Witness, XXII (September 24, 1903), 157f.; F. Blentel, "Die freie Conferenz in Milwaukee," Lehre und Wehre, XLIX (October 1903), 304f.; F. W. Stellhorn, "The Second Intersynodical Conference," Lutheran Standard, LXI (September 19, 1903), 593.

. . . Dr. Allwardt had set forth that the explanation of Holy Writ should always take place according to the analogy of faith, so that difficult passages must never be understood in a sense that would not be in perfect harmony with the entirely clear passages that teach the fundamental truths of the Gospel . . . the other side [Synodical Conference] limiting the analogy of faith to the passages treating of the same doctrine.¹²

The discussion after Dr. Allwardt's presentation was to be restricted to the interpretation of Matthew 22:1-14. However, after both sides gave their interpretation of the passage, the discussion ranged over a wide area. The Synodical Conference members objected to Allwardt's mode of exegesis. It then became clear that the two sides did not agree on the basis for interpreting the Holy Scriptures, nor on the meaning of the phrase analogia fidei. Dr. F. Pieper stated that he:

. . . did not consider the term "in view of faith" admissible in theology, that it was misleading and had no foundation in the Scriptures, still if anyone was sound in the doctrine of conversion and did not connect false ideas with this term, he would not call him a synergist.¹³

On the last day of the conference it was agreed that much had been accomplished. Thus it was unanimously resolved to have a third conference, which would be held in Detroit. The same committee that had been appointed in Watertown was to make the arrangements for the next meeting.¹⁴ Also a

¹²F. W. Stellhorn, Lutheran Standard, LXI, 593.

¹³H. Sieck, The Lutheran Witness, XXII, 158.

¹⁴Ibid. Actually the list given by Sieck substitutes

program committee was to be chosen to determine the points to be discussed at the Detroit meeting.¹⁵ With these arrangements having been made the second conference came to an end.

The program committee met on December 29 and 30, in Chicago.¹⁶ The eight theses adopted in 1877 by the Northern District of the Missouri Synod were discussed in accordance with the request of the Ohio Synod's representatives. The representatives from the Ohio and Iowa Synods stated that they were in perfect agreement with these theses, especially with their expression of the analogy of faith. However, during the discussion it became clear that there was a difference in the understanding of the theses.¹⁷

Grabau for Gram of the Buffalo Synod and no member is listed in place of Allbrecht of the Minnesota Synod.

¹⁵The members of this committee were: A. Hoenecke (chairman), H. A. Allwardt, F. W. Stellhorn, A. Pieper, F. Pieper, H. Stub, F. Beer, A. Grabau, H. Ernst, Geo. Fritschel, P. Wischan, and another member of the Iowa Synod (to be appointed by the arrangements committee). The arrangements committee was to make sure that all synods taking part in the conference would be represented on the program committee.

¹⁶Those in attendance were: F. Pieper and G. Stoeckhardt of Missouri; A. Hoenecke and A. Pieper of Wisconsin; F. Richter and M. Fritschel of Iowa; H. G. Stub of the Norwegian Synod; H. A. Allwardt, H. Ernst, and F. W. Stellhorn of Ohio. P. F. Wischan of the Pennsylvania Synod sent an apology for not attending and F. Beer was absent.

¹⁷For a discussion of the Chicago meeting see: F. B[entel], "Die Vorconferenz in Chicago," Lehre und Wehre, I (January 1904), 35-37; F. W. Stellhorn, "Meeting of the Preliminary Committee of the Intersynodical Lutheran Conference," Lutheran Standard, LXII (April 16, 1904), 242.

The Detroit Conference met from April 6 to 8, 1904, with 305 pastors and professors present.¹⁸ The two questions discussed were: (1) What is meant by the analogy of faith?; and, (2) How is it to be used? Dr. F. Pieper defined the position of the Synodical Conference and the Norwegian Synod as follows:

By the analogy of faith we mean the clear Word of Holy Writ. As regards the particular doctrine, we find the clear Word in those passages of Scripture which treat expressly of the doctrine under consideration. The relation between various doctrines is not to be determined by men, but again from the Scriptures alone insofar as it is there revealed. Passages which treat of one doctrine must not be dragged in to explain other doctrines.¹⁹

The representatives of the Ohio and Iowa Synods maintained:

No interpretation of a passage is correct, if you get from it a doctrine whose connection with other doctrines is not clear to an intelligent Christian. To prove any doctrine you must have recourse to the analogy of faith, that is, to all Scripture and not merely to proof-passages.²⁰

The discussion was long and heated at times, but no agreement

¹⁸G. St[oeckhardt], "Die Freie Conferenz in Detroit," Lehre und Wehre, L (April 1904), 176. The breakdown of the 305 representatives was: Missouri--124, Wisconsin--10, Minnesota--3, Michigan District Synod--4, English Missouri--6, Norwegian--1, Ohio--97, Iowa--23, Michigan--18, Buffalo--3, United Norwegian--1, General Council--10, the General Synod--5. For a further discussion of the Detroit Conference also see: R. Smukal, "Inter-Synodical Conference," The Lutheran Witness, XXIII (March 10, 1904), 48; [C. A.] W[eiss], "Church News and Comments," The Lutheran Witness, XXIII (May 5, 1904), 77; F. W. Stellhorn, "Free Intersynodical Conference, Convened At Detroit, Mich., April 6, 7, and 8, 1904," Lutheran Standard, LXII (April 16, 1904), 242.

¹⁹[C. A.] W[eiss], The Lutheran Witness, XXIII, 77.

²⁰Ibid.

could be reached.²¹ Although it was deemed almost useless to have another conference it was agreed to meet again and discuss the passages in the Confessions which treat the doctrine of predestination. It was also agreed that all future conferences would be open to all who called themselves Lutherans, whether they accepted all the Confessions or not.

On August 8, 1905, the fourth free conference met at St. John's Church, Fort Wayne.²² At the opening session of the conference the following declaration drawn up by the pastors of the Ohio Synod was read:

In the presidential report of the president of the Missouri Synod, published by that body, we read the following:

First, the leaders of the opposing Synods (the Ohio and Iowa Synods) were not won for the truth but apparently have fixed themselves in the error that man's salvation is due not only to the grace of God alone but also to man himself.

Second, in addition at the free conferences (held in Watertown and Milwaukee, Wis., and Detroit, Mich.) the errors in principle have more and more come to view on the part of the leaders of the opposing synods, that the Holy Scriptures alone are not to furnish articles of faith, but that men themselves, especially theologians, have the right to regulate the Scripture statements

²¹Stellhorn, Lutheran Standard, LXII, 242. According to Stellhorn the main speakers were: F. Pieper and G. Stoeckhardt of Missouri; A. Pieper and A. Hoenecke of Wisconsin; H. G. Stub of the Norwegian Synod; F. Richter, M. Fritschel, and M. Roy of Iowa; F. Beer of Michigan; F. A. Schmidt of the United Norwegian Church; and H. A. Allwardt, C. H. L. Schuette, and F. W. Stellhorn of Ohio.

²²Articles dealing with the Fort Wayne Conference are: "Intersynodical Conference," The Lutheran Witness, XXIV (July 27, 1905), 120; [G.] St[o]eckhardt], "Freie Konferenz in Fort Wayne," Lehre und Wehre, LI (August 1905), 368-372; F. B[entel], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," Lehre und Wehre, LI (August 1905), 373-375; "Free Inter-Synodical Conference," Lutheran Standard, LXIII (August 26, 1905), 529-533.

according to a system of their own reason which they falsely call the Analogy of Faith. That which is to be considered as according to the faith, therefore, is not what the Scriptures teach but what the theologian finds suitable for his system.

We of the Ohio Synod herewith declare:

First, that the doctrine expressed in the above Missourian statements and imputed to us are false and opposed to God's Word and that we reject and condemn them as such.

Second, that we have never in any manner either by word of mouth or by written statement held such doctrines.

Third, that we herewith leave it to the honorable synod of Missouri and demand of its president, Dr. Pieper, of St. Louis, either to prove the statements he has signed or else publicly to retract them.²³

The above declaration seems to have been a sign of what was to come.

The discussion was limited to the exegetical considerations of the Scriptural passages used as proof texts for the doctrine set forth in Article II of the Formula of Concord, and the first chapter of Ephesians.²⁴ The debate centered on whether the Ephesian chapter speaks to the universal plan of salvation or the eternal decree of election.

The Synodical Conference met between the fourth and fifth free conferences. F. W. Stelhorn states that at a special meeting of the pastors present at the Synodical Conference

²³Lutheran Standard, LXIII, 530f.

²⁴The main speakers were: Fritschel of Iowa, Allwardt of Ohio, Schmidt of the United Norwegian Church, Stelhorn of Ohio, Koehler of Wisconsin, Stoeckhardt of Missouri, Schuette of Ohio, Hoenecke of Wisconsin, and Beer of Michigan.

Convention "unanimously resolved not to take further part in any meetings of the Intersynodical Conference."²⁵

However, Profs. J. Koehler and F. Bente and Dr. G. Stoeckhardt did attend and speak at the fifth conference held in Fort Wayne, on October 24 and 25, 1906.²⁶ The general theme of the conference was: What has man's conduct to do with his conversion? /C. A. Weiss in commenting on the conference stated: "From expressions that one reads here and there, it would seem that everybody expects Missouri to yield, but wants to maintain his own position."²⁷ F. W. Stellhorn in his comments reports: "Whoever wants to get in harmony with Missouri, must adopt the Missourian policy, shifting as it may be and as a matter of fact has been with regard to the points now in controversy" ²⁸ He goes on to accuse Missouri of a Calvinistic view of predestination and conversion. At the close of this fifth conference the members of the Synodical Conference unanimously opposed another meeting, while its opponents favored continuing the free

²⁵F. W. Stellhorn, "Meeting of the Intersynodical Conference at Fort Wayne, Ind., October 24 and 25," Lutheran Standard, LXIV (November 3, 1906), 694. F. W. Stellhorn does not list his sources for this information.

²⁶Present at the meetings were about 50 representatives of the Synodical Conference, 50 from Ohio, 15 from Iowa, and a few others from various synods.

²⁷[C. A.] W[eiss], "Church News and Comments," The Lutheran Witness, XXV (November 15, 1906), 182.

²⁸F. W. Stellhorn, Lutheran Standard, LXIV, 694.

conferences. However, local areas continued to have intersynodical conferences.²⁹

In 1907 looking back over the five conferences Prof. George H. Schodde wrote:

The five Intersynodical Conferences which have been held during the past few years have in more respects than one "pointed a moral and told a tale." Chief among their lessons has been the conviction that, humbly speaking, a reunion of the old confessional forces of the Lutheran Church in this country, as represented on the one hand by the Synodical Conference and on the other by the Independent Synods of Ohio and Iowa, is now an impossibility. In fact, the debatable ground between the two contending forces seems now to be greater than it was a quarter of a century ago³⁰

Prof. Schodde goes on to state that it was a surprise to learn that one of the basic problems was a disagreement on the principles of Biblical hermeneutics. He then continues:

. . . but the real chief matter of importance was to learn what the Scriptures taught. In this way the controversy was forced into exegesis, where it ought to have been from the very outset. In this, a leading respect, the Conferences have achieved good results and have cleared up the matter considerably.³¹

²⁹Scattered throughout the Lutheran journals are announcements and reports of these conferences. For example see "Church News and Comments," The Lutheran Witness, XXVIII (December 23, 1909), 613; XXXI (April 11, 1912), 62; XXXIII (July 28, 1914), 126; and others.

³⁰[George] R[omoser], "Lutheran Intersynodical Conferences and the Scriptures," The Lutheran Witness, XXVI (May 30, 1907), 82. Romoser quotes from an article by Prof. Schodde in the Columbus Theological Magazine.

³¹Ibid.

Thus came to an end one phase in the chain of events that is still going on today, the attempt to unite in fellowship the confessional Lutheran Churches in America.

Developments among the Independent Lutheran Synods

After the Ohio Synod had withdrawn from the Synodical Conference, they gradually began to draw closer together with the Iowa Synod. Then in July 1893 representatives of the two synods met in Michigan City, Indiana, and agreed on six theses which were a weaving together of the viewpoints of both synods. These theses dealt with the Church, the Ministry, the Symbols, Open Questions, Eschatology, and Election. However, in Ohio's 1894 Convention it was decided not to take action on the theses because they did not state Ohio's doctrine of the Church clearly and definitely enough.³² As has been seen above, during the free conferences of the early 1900's the two synods found that they were close together on some of the issues, especially that of election. Thus on February 13 to 15, 1907, a meeting was held in Toledo, Ohio. At this time the Michigan City Theses were modified and sent to the two synods for adoption. In 1907 the Iowa Synod adopted them.³³ By the 1908 Ohio Convention

³²Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, Minutes, 1894, pp. 132f. Hereafter this will be cited as Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1894, pp. 132f.

³³Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1908, p. 11. The Minutes report that President C. H. L. Schuette received a letter from

all the districts of the Synod had adopted the theses.³⁴ It was, therefore, up to the Joint Synod to take action. President Schuette stated that he didn't think Ohio could give full assent to the Toledo Theses until the relationship between Iowa and the General Council was clarified.³⁵ It was then resolved by the convention to take no action until Iowa made clear its position concerning the General Council.³⁶ President Richter replied to the request of the Ohio Synod by stating that the Iowa Synod considered the doctrinal basis of the General Council as satisfactory, but didn't join the Council because its practices were not always in harmony with its doctrinal basis.³⁷ The Ohio Synod then adopted the following:

We . . . regard the honorable Synod of Iowa, according to its confessional standpoint, as a purely Lutheran body. Although this leads to the conclusion that there are, as a matter of principle, no obstacles in the way to prevent a mutual pulpit and altar fellowship

F. R. Richter, president of the Iowa Synod, stating that the Iowa Synod had adopted the Toledo Theses during their June 1907 Convention.

The Toledo Theses are printed out in appendix A.

³⁴The Wisconsin District did not accept Section d of Thesis IV which stated: "Perfect agreement in all non-fundamental doctrines, though not attainable on earth, is, nevertheless, an end desirable and one we should labor to attain." Ibid., pp. 10f.

³⁵Ibid., p. 12.

³⁶Ibid., p. 132.

³⁷Ibid., 1910, pp. 91f.

between us, we are nevertheless of the conviction that in the meantime such fellowship should be abstained from on all sides, inasmuch as the opinion prevails among us that certain points of difference pertaining to minor questions of doctrine as well as of practice call for a more careful examination.³⁸

It was not until 1918, when the Iowa Synod broke off fellowship with the General Council which had merged with two other groups to form the United Lutheran Church, that fellowship was declared between the Ohio Synod and the Iowa Synod.³⁹

During this same period the Norwegian Lutherans were attempting to come together. The Norwegian Lutheran Churches reflected the various tensions and concerns of American Lutheranism plus some added tensions brought over from Norway, such as the position of lay ministers in the church. In 1900 there were three major Norwegian Lutheran Church organizations, the Hauge Synod, the Norwegian Synod, and the United Church. The United Church had been formed through the merger of the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood, the Norwegian-Danish Conference, and the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod in 1890. In 1905 the Hauge Synod proposed that an attempt should be made to organically unite all the Norwegian Lutherans in America.⁴⁰ Within a year agreement had been reached on absorption and the role of lay activity. By 1908 they had

³⁸Ibid., p. 134.

³⁹Ibid., 1918, p. 140.

⁴⁰Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism In America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1955), 265.

agreed on the doctrines of the call to faith and conversion, but the disagreement concerning election remained. Therefore, the Norwegian Synod and the United Church appointed committees in 1911 to deal with this problem. The joint committee unanimously agreed upon a statement concerning the doctrine of election in 1912. This 1912 Madison Agreement or Opgjoer concluded that the differences were not over the substance of the doctrine but over the form of presentation. The committee decided not to go beyond the statements of the Confessions (Article XI of the Formula). The agreement recognized that there had been past differences which were over the form of presentation; both forms, however, were historically Lutheran based on different ways of viewing election. Both forms were acceptable since neither contradicted the Word of God. Therefore, this difference should not be a cause of schism.⁴¹ The United Church Convention of 1912 unanimously approved the Madison Agreement. The five district conventions of the Norwegian Synod discussed the Agreement, and after a considerable amount of debate, each convention adopted it. The Hauge Synod also approved the document in 1912. President Stub of the Norwegian Synod announced to the 1914 convention that 590 of the 629 congregations of the synod were in favor of

⁴¹"The Madison Agreement," Doctrinal Declarations, p. 12.

merging with the two other bodies.⁴² Thus the Norwegian Synod appointed a committee to meet with the committees of the other two bodies in order to prepare and submit to the three bodies articles of union. However, as discussion of the interpretation of the agreement continued within the Norwegian Synod a strong, though not numerous, minority group opposed the merger. During the years 1916 and 1917, the Austin Agreement (Settlement) was worked out so that a large number of the minority found it possible to join the coming merger. As the Norwegian Synod drew closer to the other two Norwegian bodies, members of the Missouri Synod became greatly concerned. The Missouri Synod felt that the Madison Agreement was not fully in agreement with the doctrine as it is taught in the Scriptures and in the Confessions.⁴³ A number of letters passed back and forth between Dr. F. Pieper and members of the Norwegian Synod, especially members of the minority. In a letter to Rev. O. T. Lee, written on March 9, 1917, Dr. Pieper says:

And it is further my opinion: If the new body

⁴²Prior to the convention a vote was to be taken in each congregation. Actually 359 congregations voted for the merger, 27 voted against, and 231 congregations did not report. According to the constitution of the synod those not voting within the time limit were regarded as endorsing the resolution. G. M. Bruce, The Union Documents Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church With a Historical Survey of The Union Movement (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1948), p. 19.

⁴³Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1914, (English) p. 53, (German) p. 176.

invites you 1. with the understanding that you do not accept the old Opgjoer, and 2. with the understanding that you are allowed to testify for a change of the Opgjoer . . . under these conditions you could with your synod even enter the new body without denying Christ and His truth.⁴⁴

Pieper continues:

. . . only under the conditions of full liberty to work for a change of the Opgjoer in the wrong points your staying in your synod is both justifiable and a duty.⁴⁵

Pieper's main objection to the Opgjoer concerned the "co-ordination of the so-called Two Forms of doctrine," and the "co-ordination of man's responsibility in respect of the acceptance or the rejection of God's grace."⁴⁶ But in spite of Missouri's concerns, on June 9, 1917 the Norwegian Synod joined with the United Church and the Hauge Synod to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. Dr. H. G. Stub was unanimously elected president of the new organization.

In 1918 the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church was formed by thirteen members of the old Norwegian Synod. These thirteen were the members of the minority who decided that they could not go along with the

⁴⁴Francis Pieper, "Letter to Rev. O. T. Lee," dated March 9, 1917. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Francis Pieper, "Letter to J. N. Kildahl," dated November 30, 1916. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

Madison and Austin Agreements. They believed that the agreements held open the door to the view that man had the ability to accept as well as reject the grace of God. In 1920 this synod joined the Synodical Conference.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Wentz, op. cit., p. 269.

E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c. 1960), II, 220.

CHAPTER III

THE FORMULATION OF THE CHICAGO (INTERSYNODICAL) THESES

The Desire for a Joint Committee

Although the free conferences of the early twentieth century had not brought the confessional Lutheran bodies in America together, the desire for fellowship was not quenched. Nor did the movement among the independent synods end the wider movement. Thus at the forty-first convention of the Joint Synod of Ohio, in 1912, the following resolution was adopted.

We recommend (a) that intersynodical conferences within smaller circles be encouraged, as these may be of great benefit, if conducted in a proper and judicious manner;¹

The 1914 Convention of the Missouri Synod authorized its president to appoint a committee to investigate the desirability of resuming the Intersynodical Conferences.² The committee reported back in 1917 and stated that many intersynodical conferences were held especially in the Northwest. One of the results of these conferences was the following communication.

¹The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio and Other States, Minutes, 1912, p. 118. Hereafter this will be cited as Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1912, p. 118.

²Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1914 (English), p. 53. Hereafter this will be cited as Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1914 (English), p. 53.

We pastors of the Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, and Missouri Synods, assembled for an intersynodical conference at St. Paul, Minn., should like to . . . suggest that Synod take any other feasible steps to bring about complete unity of doctrine in the several synods.³

As a result, a committee composed of Prof. George Mezger, the Rev. J. G. F. Kleinhans, and the Rev. O. L. Hohenstein was chosen. This committee was to examine the documents of the St. Paul meeting, and to deal with similar committees of other synods, and to advise Synod on these matters.⁴ In the President's Report to the Joint Synod of Ohio's 1918 Convention, it is reported that all three synods had complied with the request of the St. Paul Conference.⁵

The joint Intersynodical Committee immediately went to work; so that by the 1920 Missouri Synod Convention, its

³Ibid., 1917 (English), pp. 76f.

⁴Ibid., p. 77. Prof. Mezger was a member of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; Rev. J. G. F. Kleinhans was president of the Southern Illinois District; and Rev. O. L. Hohenstein was the pastor of a congregation in Peoria, Ill.

At the 1920 convention the same men were re-appointed to the committee. Ibid., 1920 (English), p. 84.

From 1923 to 1926 the committee members were Rev. Kleinhans, Profs. Mezger and Th. Graebner of St. Louis. Since Prof. Mezger was in Germany during this period Prof. Wm. Arndt of St. Louis served in his place on the committee. Ibid., 1926 (English), pp. 20, 136.

At the 1926 convention Prof. Th. Engelder of St. Louis replaced Prof. Graebner as a committee member. Ibid., 1929 (English), p. 110.

⁵Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1918, p. 7. The three synods meant are the Ohio, the Iowa, and the Synodical Conference. Actually both the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod of the Synodical Conference had appointed committees to represent them.

committee could report that the meetings had already born fruit. The representatives of the four synods had agreed to a series of ten theses on the doctrine of conversion. The Convention's Committee 22, which examined the report of the Synod's Intersynodical Committee, reported that it had found the theses "a concise presentation of the Scriptural doctrine of conversion, offering a sufficient basis for agreement in this doctrine."⁶ It was resolved to have the ten theses printed and sent to all the pastoral conferences for examination. The 1922 Ohio Convention resolved that the theses should be printed in both English and German and then sent to each pastor in its synod.⁷

Missouri's Committee reported in 1923 that theses and antitheses were adopted by the joint Intersynodical Committee on the doctrine of conversion and election. They also announced that discussions on other doctrinal controversies, which were keeping the synods apart, had begun. The convention resolved to continue the Intersynodical Committee discussions.⁸ It also appointed a committee to examine the

⁶Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1920 (English), p. 83. The members of Committee 22 were: Directors W. C. Kohn and M. J. F. Albrecht; Pastors F. Tresselt and M. Walker; Teacher F. F. Burandt; and Lay delegate H. Honebrink. Ibid., (German), p. 29.

⁷Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1922, p. 46.

⁸Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1923 (English), p. 83.

work that had so far been completed and to report back to the Synodical Convention in 1926.⁹ An editorial in The Lutheran Witness commenting on the work of these various committees remarked:

Entire agreement has not yet been achieved, because all points of the controversy have not been fully discussed, but progress has been made, and the efforts will be continued. The teaching of the synods in the past, both as to its matter as well as to some of the expressions used, are to be examined carefully, measured by the teachings and words of Holy Writ, and where discrepancies between divine truth and human presentation are found, these are to be corrected, not by changing divine truth, but by correcting human expressions.¹⁰

As the Missouri Synod moved through the 1923-1926 triennium opposition arose within Synod to the ten theses. There also appears to have been some doubts on the part of the Examining Committee members. Thus Prof. William Arndt writes in a letter to Prof. George Mezger:

On March 22nd our Committee, President Kleinhans, Prof. Graebner, and I intend to go to Springfield to discuss the theses of Conversion and Predestination with the Committee appointed by Synod. We have heard that there is some opposition in this Committee to these theses. . . .¹¹

⁹Ibid. This committee shall from herewith be called the Examining Committee. The members appointed to the committee in 1923 were: Th. Engelder and R. Neitzel, professors at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, and P. Schulz, a parish pastor. In 1926 Prof. F. Wenger of Springfield replaced Th. Engelder, who was elected to a professorship at the Seminary in St. Louis and became a member of the Intersynodical Committee.

¹⁰[Martin S.] S[ommer], "'Ohio', 'Iowa', and 'Missouri'," The Lutheran Witness, XLII (October 23, 1923), 341.

¹¹William Arndt, "Letter to Prof. Geo. Mezger," dated March 13, 1924. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

Prof. Arndt continues:

In one way, I had hoped you would return this summer so that the Intersynodical Movement might have the prestige of your person to back it. However, if you were to return this year and then go back to Germany after a few months, not much might be accomplished. It may be better for the movement if you will return next year, when sentiment regarding the theses will have crystallized still more and then take up the defense of the theses.¹²

There was also opposition to the theses within the other member synods of the Synodical Conference. The General Pastoral Conference of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church sent its criticism of the theses to the joint Intersynodical Committee. The General Pastoral Conference objected to the statement in the theses concerning the phrase "intuitu fidei finalis." They wrote:

1. Concerning the term "election in a wider" and "a narrower sense" it is our opinion that they should not be used in the manner which they have been employed in the theses, because it gives the impression that there are two doctrines of election in Scripture.
2. The Committee's position as stated concerning the

¹²Ibid. Prof. Mezger had been sent to Germany in 1923 to be the Missouri Synod's representative in Europe and to teach at the Zehlendorf Seminary. Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1947), p. 302.

Two letters from the student body of Zehlendorf in March 1924 requested that Prof. Mezger be kept in Germany at the school although his time of service was about over. The Student Body of Zehlendorf Seminary, "Letter to Pres. Pfotenhauer," dated March 7, 1924; and "Letter to the Seminary Faculty," dated March 10, 1924. These letters are found in the F. Pieper file. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

Contrary to Prof. Arndt's wishes Prof. Mezger remained in the above stated position until his death in 1931. One can only speculate on what might have happened had he returned before the 1926 Convention.

second form does not agree with the sense of the words of the second form as quoted. In the second form as it has actually been used, man is represented as acting, while in the statement of the committee giving the meaning or what is meant by the second form God is represented as acting.

3. The two forms, as they have been used during the controversy, do not teach the same doctrine of election. The first form makes election "the cause of faith," while the second form "presupposes faith and makes it the deciding factor in election." If the last clause means anything at all, it makes man's faith the cause of election. (intuitu fidei--ablative of cause)¹³

On November 27, 1925, Theodore Graebner wrote a letter to Theodore Engelder in which he stated:

Of all the exceptions made to the Theses not one, in my opinion, is of a material nature. By this I mean that within the Synodical Conference (including Norwegian) even the point which came closest to a real difference in opinion, the toleration of intuitu fidei under such restrictions, has not been made a question on which church fellowship depended. Indeed, it has been specifically conceded that church fellowship does not depend on the rejection of this term. The references are known to you. They are found in Eckhardt Reallexicon "Gnadenwahl," p. 382f. and 387f. 2) As a whole, these articles are a doctrinal statement which actually rejects synergism and also Calvinism, not once but many times.¹⁴

With material on the doctrine of conversion and election submitted to the general synods, the Intersynodical

¹³General Pastoral Conference of the Norwegian Synod, "To the Committee appointed to receive criticism on the Theses adopted by the so-called Intersynodical Committee," dated August 25, 1925. This document is found in the William Arndt file (box 16a, folder 10). Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁴Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Theo. Engelder," dated November 27, 1925. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

Committee began work on the other doctrines that had been causes of dissention.¹⁵ In a letter to William Arndt, dated August 14, 1924, Theodore Graebner stated that he "fully subscribes to the theses on Scripture, the Symbols, and Church Fellowship, as adequate and sufficient statements of the Scriptural position."¹⁶ He also stated that the other topics cover the points of controversy. However, on September 1, the Missouri Synod's Committee members (Arndt, Kleinhans, and Graebner) sent a telegram to Dr. C. C. Hein stating that unanimous consent of the union theses was being withheld until some portions not having received sufficient discussion were revised.¹⁷ The problem seems to have revolved around the thesis on Church Fellowship. Dr. Hein of the Ohio Synod and the Missouri representatives differed over the definition of the terms used. This became clear when Dr. Hein defended the joint activities of the Ohio Synod with other Lutheran bodies. Thus the Missouri men wanted these terms defined

¹⁵The doctrines involved were: (1) the Scriptures, (2) the Symbols, (3) Church Fellowship, (4) the Church, (5) the Ministry, (6) the Anti-Christ, (7) Chiliasm, (8) Sunday, and (9) Open Questions.

¹⁶Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Wm. Arndt," dated August 14, 1924. The letter is found in the William Arndt file (box 16a, folder 10). Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri. The theses mentioned were those which the Intersynodical Committee had formulated and were ready to present to the individual synods.

¹⁷William Arndt, J. Kleinhans, and Theodore Graebner, "Telegram to Dr. C. C. Hein," dated September 1, 1924. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

before they gave their approval to the theses.¹⁸

At the request of the Intersynodical Committee, Prof. Graebner met with Dr. Hein, on September 5, 1925, to discuss this problem. Two days later Prof. Graebner wrote to Prof. Arndt concerning his talk with Dr. Hein. He wrote in part:

In other words while admitting that the N. L. C. has in fact done church work of a unionistic character, Dr. Hein does not attempt to defend such practice but pleads for it the situation which followed in the wake of the World War.

2. Lutheran Foreign Mission Conference. Dr. Hein denies that its activities are unionistic. Engage in externals only.

3. Lutheran Brotherhoods. Dr. Hein knows that this association is rabidly unionistic. His own Men's Club has withdrawn as have all or most in the Ohio Synod. He will try to have official approval voted 1918 rescinded.¹⁹

Graebner further writes:

5. Unionism with Norwegians, Swedes, Merger, etc. Dr. Hein . . . denies that there is exchange of pulpits, union services, etc.

6. Relation to Norwegians I warned Dr. Hein against an attempt to have a middle-of-the-road group of Lutherans (Ohio, Iowa, Scandinavians) federated against the Missouri Synod on the one side and the Merger on the other.

I think it is pertinent to ask what value we should attach to our Intersynodical Committee work when before it is completed Ohio enters into negotiations, on a separate basis for union with the Scandinavians.²⁰

¹⁸Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Theodore Engelder," dated May 19, 1925. This letter is found in the William Arndt file (box 16a, folder 10). Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁹Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Professor W. Arndt," dated September 7, 1925. This letter is found in the William Arndt file (box 16a, folder 10). Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

²⁰Ibid.

Prof. Graebner sums up his feelings on the matter of the disagreement within the Intersynodical Committee in a letter to Prof. Engelder.

In my opinion, the greatest difficulty in the way of union is not in the Theses on Election and Conversion, but the interpretation of that paragraph in our own committee work which treats church fellowship. . . . the Ohio and Iowa Synods prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that their conception of church fellowship is different from our own. On this point I would not for a minute hesitate to assume the responsibility for a refusal to join the Ohio and Iowa Synods in fellowship. Undoubtedly, both are engaged in unionistic undertakings. And when they draw out of these it will be because interest is exhausted, not because the thing is wrong.²¹

So the matter stood as Missouri prepared for its 1926 Convention.

The Minneapolis Theses

Meanwhile, as the Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Missouri representatives were coming together in the Intersynodical Committee meetings, another set of meetings were taking place. On March 11, 1919 the representatives of the Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, and Augustana Synods, the Lutheran Free Church, the Norwegian Church of America, and the United Danish Church drew up the Chicago Theses. In 1920 all the synods, except Buffalo adopted the eight theses on: (1) the Work of Christ, (2) the Gospel, (3) Absolution, (4) Holy Baptism, (5) Justi-

²¹Theodore Graebner, "Letter to Theo. Engelder," dated November 27, 1925. This letter is found in the William Arndt file. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

fication, (6) Faith, (7) Conversion, and (8) Election.²²

At the 1920 Ohio Synod Convention, their President advised:

- a) That an exchange of delegates and free conferences be sought with the synods names [Iowa, Norwegian, and Augustana]; and
- b) That in response to a request by our Iowa brethren, a committee be appointed to confer with them on questions looking toward a closer union and to some co-operation in such work as the two bodies have in mind.²³

Committees were appointed for both purposes. Events had advanced to the point that at the 1922 Convention of Ohio a resolution was adopted which stated:

be it resolved, That the General President appoint a committee to make overtures to the Norwegian Lutheran Church and the Swedish Augustana Synod looking toward the establishing of pulpit and altar fellowship with these bodies.²⁴

By 1926, it appeared that a union was rapidly approaching. The Ohio Synod's Districts had discussed a proposed union with the Iowa Synod and all the districts favored the organic union of the two bodies.²⁵ Meanwhile, the Buffalo Synod had resolved: "That definite steps be taken at our synodical convention in June to effect a merger or union with the Iowa Synod and possibly with Ohio, provided satisfactory arrange-

²²G., "Vertreter acht Lutherischer Synoden," Lehre und Wehre, LXV (April 1919), 183f. Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 108.

The Chicago Theses are printed out in Appendix B as part of the Minneapolis Theses.

²³Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1920, p. 5.

²⁴Ibid., 1922, p. 131.

²⁵Ibid., 1926, p. 22.

ments can be made"26

Already in 1925 the Minneapolis Theses had been formulated and were sent to the Districts of the Ohio Synod for adoption.²⁷ The president of the synod was instructed to declare pulpit and altar fellowship with the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America as soon as the Theses were adopted.²⁸

The Missouri Synod's 1926 Convention

Both the Ohio Synod and the Missouri Synod held conventions in 1926. Since the English translation of the theses drawn up by the Intersynodical Committee was not available for prior discussion, the Ohio Synod did not take action on the theses. Three significant reports concerning the theses were presented at the Missouri Synod's Convention. The Synod's Intersynodical Committee reported:

5. We believe that the sentences now before Synod cover all doctrinal questions which have been under controversy among the participating synods. Whether the theses are adequate in all points, Synod will have to decide on the basis of the report made by the committee elected to examine the theses.
6. The question now arises whether the adoption of these theses on the part of the participating synods can be followed without more ado by a declaration of unity in doctrine and by fraternal recognition. Such,

²⁶Ibid., p. 23.

²⁷"Theses Drawn Up by Representatives of the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo Synods and the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America," Theological Monthly, VII (April 1927), 114. [The Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo Synods and the Norwegian Lutheran Church drew up these Theses on November 18, 1925, at Minneapolis, Minn.

The Minneapolis Theses are printed out in Appendix B.

²⁸Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1926, p. 239.

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

7. We would therefore recommend not to break off negotiations with the representatives of the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo synods, but to continue them,²⁹

The Examining Committee reported that after a careful examination of the theses on conversion and election, and the criticisms submitted, it found the following changes necessary.

Conversion, Thesis 3: Insert after "hostilely": "therefore maliciously in the proper sense of the term, as natural man can do nothing else than to resist in such fashion."

Conversion, Thesis 10: We recommend the following version:--

We therefore confess:--

"a) That conversion is solely and exclusively the work of divine grace, which man by nature only resists and only can resist, and that knowingly, willingly, and maliciously, until God overcomes the resistance by bestowing faith upon him;"

"b) That non-conversion is solely and exclusively the fault of men. They are not converted because they resist God--who earnestly desires to perform and finish the work of conversion in all men--and persist in their resistance to Him."

Conversion, Antithesis 3. Strike "as resulting from the same cause" and the note. Add at the close: "on his desisting from malicious resistance or on its non-existence."

B. The Universal Gracious Will of God, Thesis 1: Strike "Eph. 1, 11." Thesis 3: Strike "Eph. 1, 9." Add the following statement to Thesis 5: "The doctrine of the universal gracious will of God, presented in the preceding paragraphs, is in the Scriptures distinguished from the doctrine of the decree of predestination, which is presented in the following paragraphs."

²⁹Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1926 (English), pp. 136f.

Predestination, Thesis 4, should read: "Thus election, or predestination, is in Christ Jesus a cause which," etc.

Predestination, Thesis 6. Strike the second sentence. In sentence three strike "therefore."

Predestination, Thesis 8, par. 1. Add after "enumerated in our Confessions": "for example, that under the same grace and the equal guilt of all men some are converted and saved, others not."

Predestination, Antithesis 1. Add: "At the same time Thesis 4, Predestination Series, is held in all its implications."

Predestination, Antithesis 2, b: "Grace of election" is to be enclosed in quotation-marks. Add: "At the same time Thesis 4, Predestination Series, is held in all its implications."

Predestination, Antithesis 3: Add: "For the Scriptures teach that this is due solely to the resistance of men. --On the mystery confronting one who compares those who are saved with those who are not saved, see Thesis 8, Predestination Series."

The "statement concerning the phrase intuitu fidei finalis" ought to read as follows: "Beside speaking of eternal election in the form presented in the foregoing theses (which has been called the first form), the following form (called the second form) has also been used in the Lutheran Church: 'Out of pure grace God decreed from eternity that He would on Judgment Day, bestow on those of whom He, as omniscient God, foresaw that in time they would believe on Christ and preserve in faith unto the end, in view of this their faith (or as it has also been put: in view of Christ's merit apprehended by faith), the crown of glory.' Thus according to the first form election would be the cause of faith, and according to the second form faith would be the presupposition of election and the deciding factor.

"Concerning this matter we take the following position":
Point 1. Change "since" to "if." At the close of the paragraph place a dash and add: "Since it must be our endeavor, according to the Word of God, to 'speak the same thing,' every one should accustom himself to speak of election in the terms of Scripture and the Confessions, all the more so, since the Scriptural doctrine of election can in no wise be presented according to the second form." (Paragraphs 1 and 2 are thus integrated.)

Add: "2. Whereas, according to the Scriptures, our election in Christ Jesus is a cause which effects our salvation or the deciding factor in election is thereby rejected. Employing the second form in such manner involves an error which subverts the foundation of faith." Statements concerning the question, Cur alii prae aliis?

Par. 2 should read: "If putting the question presupposes that according to the Scriptures there is a uniform cause of conversion and non-conversion, of election and rejection, either in God or in men, this is to be rejected as contrary to the Scriptures. Holy Writ and the Confessions know of no uniform cause. However, if the question is not put in the sense that prae aliis involves a grace which exists only for the elect (gratia particularis, praeteritio), which the question itself rejects by the words 'with the same grace,' but is put with the intention of calling attention to the mystery confronting one at this point, as it is presented in the following statements, the question is in place."

The Spiritual Priesthood, Thesis 17: After "powers" insert "for example."

Thesis 18: Add: "and in this manner publicly exercises, in the name of the congregation, the office belonging to it."

Antichrist, Thesis 22: Add: "See above, D.I. 3, p. 13."

Sunday, Thesis 26: Add: "See above D.I. 3, p. 13."

In conclusion we call attention to the following:--

That in Thesis 15, The Church, the words "this Church" were omitted after the words "there are Christians and";

That the conclusion of Thesis 24, Chiliasm, ought to read: D.I. 3;

That in Thesis 8, Election Series, the following ought to be inserted after Tr. 1,080: "Where, among other things, we read: Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place (to one kingdom or realm), but not at another (to another nation); removes it from one place (people) and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again," etc.³⁰

The third report was presented by Committee 17 of the Convention. This committee examined the materials and reports of the other two committees. They reported and Synod adopted the following:

2. It must, however, be stated that the Lutheran doctrine has not yet in all points received such expression as is clear, precise, adequate, and exclusive of all error. The changes which the Examining Committee,

³⁰Ibid., pp. 137-140.

elected by the previous convention, has proposed, especially in the theses on conversion and pre-destination, are well founded. For this reason the theses cannot as yet be recommended to Synod for adoption in their present form.

3. . . . Some groups of Synod have expressly asked for more time in which to examine the theses. We also add that leaders and Districts of the Ohio Synod have publicly voiced their disagreement with these theses.

4. We, therefore, recommend that the theses, together with the proposed changes, be everywhere exhaustively discussed at pastoral conferences

5. We furthermore recommend that the same Inter-synodical Committee be retained and that it continue discussions with similar committees of the other synods

We also recommend that the same Examining Committee be continued for the purpose of receiving any additional correspondence. Both committees shall again report at the next convention.³¹

In this manner the matter was left to be hashed over for another three years.

³¹Ibid., pp. 140f.

CHAPTER IV

REJECTION OF THE THESES

Opposition Arises

As was stated above the Minneapolis Theses were formulated in March 1925. These theses were being used as a basis for bringing about pulpit and altar fellowship between the Ohio, the Iowa, and the Buffalo Synods and the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. In 1927 Prof. Arndt commented on the theses and stated that they did have a "Lutheran ring." He went on to discuss ten points concerning the theses.¹

- 1) The paragraph on Scripture does oppose the views that the Bible contains the Word of God or that it contains errors.
- 2) Dr. Arndt fully agrees with the paragraphs on the Symbols.
- 3) The 1919 Chicago Theses (which have become Section IV Points of Doctrine in the Minneapolis Theses) clearly teach the vicarious atonement and objective justification. Also the paragraphs on the Gospel, Baptism, Justification, and Faith cover important

¹W. Arndt, "A Few Comments," Theological Monthly, VII (April 1927), 116f. The theses are presented on pages 112-116 of this same issue.

aspects of these doctrines.

- 4) The theses on Conversion does reject synergism.
- 5) However, Dr. Arndt felt that the theses on Conversion could be more complete.
- 6) The first paragraph on Church Fellowship is excellent according to Dr. Arndt, but the phrase "co-operation in the strictly essential work of the Church," is vague. He questions whether "strictly essential" affords a loophole.
- 7) He is glad to see that the Lodge Question is discussed. Unfortunately it is not stated that Lodge membership is a sin which can lead to excommunication.
- 8) He feels that the last sentence on Absolution is not clear.
- 9) The Election thesis is too brief. It is Scriptural but not specific. Under this point Prof. Arndt questions whether the Opgjoer will still be the official statement of the Norwegians. The problem consists in whether the two objectionable points of the Opgjoer, placing the intuitu fidei view on an equal level with the teaching of Article XI of the Formula and the failure to completely reject synergism, will now be corrected.
- 10) He notices that there is no discussion of, although there should be, Chiliasm, the Church, and the Office of the Ministry.

When the Ohio Synod's Convention met in 1928, it was announced that all of its districts had unanimously adopted the Minneapolis Theses. The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America having already accepted the theses, pulpit and altar fellowship was declared between the two bodies.² Thus by the end of 1928 the four Lutheran bodies--the Ohio, the Iowa, and the Buffalo Synods and the Norwegian Lutheran Church--were in pulpit and altar fellowship. Prof. Arndt commented that Ohio had now approved the Norwegian Opgjoer by establishing fellowship with that body. He wondered how the Ohio Synod would be able to accept the Intersynodical Theses which rejects some of the statements in the Opgjoer.³

The Iowa Synod, meanwhile, had placed a stumbling block on the road to organic union with the Ohio Synod, when in 1926 it changed the statement on Scripture in the proposed constitution of the future organization to read: "The Synods accept all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the inerrant and only source, norm, and guide of faith and life."⁴ The

²Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, Minutes, 1928, p. 223. Hereafter this will be cited as Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1928, p. 223.

³W. Arndt, "A Historical Convention," Theological Monthly, VIII (December 1928), 371f.

⁴J. Buenger, Missouri, Iowa, and Ohio: The Old and the New Differences (n.p., [1928]), p. 90. The merger committee

Ohio Synod had serious questions concerning this change. When the Iowa Synod met in 1928, its convention adopted the following resolution:

- (1) Synod today as always confesses the Old Lutheran doctrine concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, as the doctrine again and again has been presented in its publications,
- (2) As a brief and unequivocal summary, of the same, we adopt as our own the words of Dr. Sigmund Fritschel:
 - (a) The Scriptures are the Word of God as to contents and form in the full and real sense of the word;
 - (b) It is this in all its parts, and it is not permissible to discriminate between divine and human elements, between God's Word and the word of men;
 - (c) The fact that the Scriptures are of divine origin and character establishes the fact of its inerrancy.
- (3) When we confess the inerrancy of the Bible as we now have it, this does not include inaccuracies of transcription, different readings, omissions, or minor additions to the original text, or passages which to us seem to be contradictions or discrepancies, but which do not affect the interests of salvation and faith.⁵

The Lutheran Herald Commenting on this resolution stated:

On the basis of this declaration, the Iowa Synod declared it will no longer insist on the form that was given to the confessional paragraph at Dubuque in 1926, although that form is perfectly correct and that it will be satisfied with any wording of this paragraph which properly expresses the Lutheran doctrine of the Scriptures. The Synod again declared its willingness to enter into organic union with Ohio and Buffalo.⁶

had agreed on: "The Synods accept all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and the only source, norm, and guide for faith and life." Ibid.

⁵Theo. Buchring, "Iowa Synod Reaffirms Position," Lutheran Standard, LXXXV (August 18, 1928), 528.

⁶Ibid.

Prior to Missouri's 1929 Convention J. Buenger published a pamphlet discussing the differences in doctrine between Missouri and the other synods represented on the Intersynodical Committee as he saw them. Buenger in discussing the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry stated that by acceptance of the Toledo Theses Ohio had accepted Iowa's position. The Toledo Theses stated that "the means of grace is a necessary manifestation of the Church," and "an infallible mark of its existence," and "in so far the Church is visible."⁷ Thus the two synods (Iowa and Ohio) held that the means of grace are part of the essence of the Church. This position Missouri rejected for there is no Scriptural proof that the Word and the Sacraments belong to the essence of the Church. Since there is a difference concerning the doctrine of the Church, there necessarily must also be a difference in the doctrine of the Ministry. According to Iowa a number of Christians do not form a full Church. There must be both Christians and a clergyman, who is the representative of the Word and Sacraments, in order to have a Church. However, Buenger goes on, the Lutheran doctrine, and that of the Missouri Synod, says that the power of the keys and the power of calling and ordaining belongs to the local congregation and not to the office of the clergy.⁸ Thus for Iowa a congregation cannot call a

⁷J. Buenger, op. cit., pp. 18-20.

⁸Ibid., pp. 17f.

minister unless a member of the clergy is present. In the union negotiations for fellowship this difference gets entangled in the Open Question debate. For Iowa declares its doctrine of the Ministry to be an Open Question and thus not a difference preventing fellowship. Hence, there is no conflict between their view of the Ministry and that presented in the Intersynodical Theses. Concerning the problem of Open Questions, Buenger believed that Iowa and Missouri were using different definitions for the term. The general problem arises when Iowa declared that:

For us an open question is nothing but a question not preventing Church-fellowship, and whoever is discussing doctrinal questions with us should keep in mind that we use the term "open questions" only in this special sense.⁹

Buenger thought that the Missouri Synod must take issue with this definition. There are differences that are not Open Questions, and yet do not prevent church fellowship. Open questions are questions which are not answered in Scripture; differences not preventing church fellowship are those differences that do not lead to a separation in the Church. Another difference between the two synods involves the Millennium. Within the Iowa Synod there are two different views which are accepted. The belief that all believers will be raised before the last day is rejected. But some within their midst hold the erroneous belief that certain of the martyrs will be raised. The

⁹Ibid., pp. 30f.

Open Question doctrine comes into the debate when Iowa declares that "the belief in a millennium is 'firmly grounded in the Word of God' and on the other hand: 'We treat this doctrine of the last things as an open question'"¹⁰ Buenger asks how it can be that something which Iowa admits is taught in Scripture can be dispensed with by calling it an Open Question? The answer, of course, is by means of its definition of Open Questions. Another difference arises over whether the Antichrist of II Thessalonians 2 is fulfilled in the Pope. Missouri says that it is, while Iowa denies the relationship. The partial reason for this position by Iowa is that those within their synod who believe in the millennium cannot admit that the Antichrist has already come. Even those not holding to the millennium doctrine within the Iowa Synod will not say with certainty that the Antichrist is fulfilled in the Pope. Thus even if the various shades of opinion in the Iowa Synod are considered, the correct position is not found.¹¹ Iowa's view that the statement in the Augsburg Confession, "that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary," is not a binding part of the Confessions is also rejected by Missouri. Buenger closes his discussion with the statement:

It is true that the present time, in some respects, is more favorable for a settlement than any time before. The heat of the controversy is passed, the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹Ibid., p. 43.

minds of the combatants have calmed down, there is more common ground than ever because the contending parties have come nearer to each other, and it is now possible to overlook the whole territory. But at the same time there is one grave danger threatening us. Because a great many are tired of doctrinal controversies, and the differences do no longer seem so important, we are apt to content ourselves with the common ground on which we stand overlooking the differences that are still left. Such a union without true unity in faith and doctrine, however, would be a calamity for the Lutheran Church, the testimony and the sufferings of our Fathers would then have been in vain. Let all who love our American Lutheran Zion, by their prayers and their faithful adherence to the truth help to further true unity and prevent false union.¹²

It appears that this pamphlet, at least in the eyes of this writer, is clearly asking for a rejection of the Inter-synodical Theses just prior to the convention at which the Synod would have to take a stand one way or the other on the theses. One wonders what effect this pamphlet had upon the delegates to the convention.

It must also be noted that already in the beginning of 1928 some, or at least one, of the high officials of the Missouri Synod held an unfavorable view of these theses. J. T. Mueller writing to Dr. F. Pieper stated: "Dr. Pfothenauer [the President of the Missouri Synod] ist ganz und gar gegen die Theses."¹³ However, there were also those who still favored the theses. Theodore Graebner, no longer a member

¹²Ibid., p. 92.

¹³J. T. Mueller, "Letter to F. Pieper," dated January 2, 1928. This letter is found in the Pieper file. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

of the committee, wrote: "As far as this second set of theses [Theses on Other Doctrines] is concerned, I do not think they can be termed unionistic as a basis of fellowship with Ohio and Iowa and Buffalo."¹⁴ It should be remembered that Prof. Graebner had already approved the first set of theses covering Conversion and Election.

It should also be noted that when the theses were completed two members of the Ohio Synod, W. D. Ahl and M. P. F. Doermann, found it necessary to add a separate declaration to them which read:

The Theses treat the doctrine of election, or of the predestination unto adoption of children a posteriori, that is, from the viewpoint of believing Christians, and answer the question: "Whence is my present, past, and future salvation?" We concede the right to take this view, and also give it the preference for practical ends. However, we cannot share the opinion that Scripture and the confessions present the doctrine of election chiefly from this viewpoint, and that, accordingly, only this form of the doctrine is to be authorized in the Church.

Furthermore, we cannot say that the so-called second form of the doctrine which has been used by our Church for more than three hundred years, gives expression to another "doctrine"; we regard it rather another "method of teaching," by which the right doctrine of election can be maintained to its full extent. As regards the doctrinal contents, ¹⁵of the Theses, we are in complete harmony therewith.

¹⁴Theodore Graebner, "Letter to W. Arndt," dated August 14, 1928. This letter is found in the Arndt file. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁵"Chicago Theses," Theologische Quartalschrift, XXVI (October 1929), 272f. This article also gives the English translation of the Chicago Theses (Intersynodical Theses) which was approved by the committee for the English translation in St. Paul, Minnesota, on June 21, 1929. The German

The 1929 Missouri Synod Convention

On June 19, 1929, the thirty-fourth convention of the Missouri Synod began. In his opening address President Pfotenhauer said:

The universal tendency of our times is to "get together." Isolation in church-life is regarded as intolerable. Those who keep themselves separate for the sake of truth are denounced as bigots. The well being and prosperity of the Church is sought in the merger of church-bodies even at the cost of truth. Sad to say, this destructive virus of unionism has infected also many Lutheran circles.¹⁶

He continued:

God grant that the remembrance of the great events in the history of the Church may be to us all a call for admonition and encouragement not to seek the well-being of the Church in all manner of unions at the expense of truth, but rather to let it be our great care to hold fast for ourselves and our children our rich inheritance as embodied in our Lutheran Confessions. Then, even though we, with our brethren in the Synodical Conference, must feel ever more the sting of isolation, the true foundation of Israel will richly flow for us in the Word of God; heaven will stand open; we shall have a cheerful conscience, sweet comfort in life and death, and unfailing strength for a life of godliness. And God will use our testimony as a guide for many also outside of our Synod.¹⁷

theses were to be the official text.

The committee doing the translating consisted of L. Blankenbuehler (Missouri), A. W. Walck (Buffalo), A. D. Cotterman (Ohio), and K. Ermisch (Iowa), "English Translation of the Chicago Theses," Concordia Theological Monthly, I (January 1930), 64.

¹⁶The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1929, pp. 7f. Hereafter this will be cited as Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1929, pp. 7f.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 8.

The delegates to the convention then went to work. The Intersynodical Committee reported that it had met with the representatives of the Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, and Wisconsin Synod; and, as prescribed by the previous convention, took up the recommendations of the Examining Committee with them.

The report continued:

The recommendations of the Examining Committee were discussed and in many instances adopted. Failure to adopt some of the proposed changes was not due to any difference in doctrine between the colloquents, but to the fact that most of the colloquents considered the proposals liable to misunderstanding or superfluous. Important additions were also made. A longer passage was introduced into the theses concerning the so-called election in view of faith for the purpose of showing that the doctrine covered by that expression is not equivalent to the doctrine of election presented in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The passage on Chiliasm was also intensified by an important addition.¹⁸

In concluding the report stated:

The theses are before Synod for adoption or rejection. We consider the question whether the theses can be adopted to be distinct from the question whether we can enter into fraternal relations with the synods with which we have been conferring. The latter is at present excluded by the connections into which, sad to say, these synods have entered and the fraternal relations which they maintain with Lutherans who are not faithful to the confessions. These theses are a matter by themselves, and Synod ought to take action on them.¹⁹

In this manner, it seems, the Committee tried to salvage something out of the many years of work that had gone into

¹⁸Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁹Ibid.

the writing of the theses. It seems to have been clear that due to the coming formation of the American Lutheran Conference, in which Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo would be in fellowship with the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, it would be impossible to declare pulpit and altar fellowship with the three synods on the basis of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses at that time.²⁰ The doctrinal position of the Norwegian body would first need to be clarified. The primary question was whether the Opgjoer would be rejected by the Norwegians or accepted by the other three synods. If the latter were true, fellowship could not be declared since Missouri considered the Opgjoer to be a unionistic document with an incorrect doctrine of Election. Therefore the Committee attempted to separate the two questions of declaring fellowship and accepting the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses with the hope that the theses would be accepted and the decade of committee work would not have been totally rejected. For Missouri's Intersynodical Committee still believed the theses to be a correct statement of the beliefs of the Missouri Synod on the area covered by the theses.

The beginning of the end of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses was struck by the Examining Committee. The Committee reported:

²⁰The Intersynodical Theses became known as the Chicago Theses because they had been adopted by the representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin Synods on April 15, 1925, at Chicago.

After careful examination of the revised theses of August, 1928, your Committee finds itself compelled to advise Synod to reject these theses as a possible basis for union with the Synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate. At times they do not touch upon the point of controversy; at times they are so phrased that both parties can find in them their own opinion; at times they incline more to the position of our opponents than to our own.

The revision made in St. Paul [that spoken of in the Intersynodical Committee report] has not improved the theses. Although most of the exceptions made by your Committee touched upon vital points, the great majority of them were not considered. The chapter which suffered the greatest change by insertion of the declaration on intuitu fidei finalis is now less clear than it was before. Much in the theses is not sufficiently simple to be understood by laymen--an unconditional necessity in confessional theses.²¹

The report then stated the criticism that the Committee had of the theses.

The chief criticism of your Committee are that in the "Short Presentation," etc., and under "C" the Scriptural doctrine of the universal will of grace is not clearly separated from the doctrine of election by grace. One gains the impression that election is included in the universal will of grace and concerns persons only in so far as it decrees that those shall enter heaven who, according to the foreknowledge of God, already, believe. Everywhere one misses the clear statement that in Christ Jesus, God elected unto faith, unto sonship, unto perseverance, and unto salvation certain persons who are known to Him alone.

We must further criticize the fact that neither in the "Short Presentation," etc., nor under "A" the distinction between natural and malicious resistance was ruled out. At the end of "B" one misses the unqualified declaration that election is not the application of the universal will of grace to those who are saved, but something entirely different from the universal will of grace, to wit, a special act of God, consisting in the election of certain persons unto faith, unto sonship, unto perseverance, and unto salvation. The attempt, in the

²¹ Ibid., pp. 110f.

declaration concerning intuitu fidei finalis, to distinguish clearly between election and a so-called decision of God to receive into heaven those who believe unto their end, has failed. In the declaration about Cur alii prae aliis? umbrage is still cast upon the mere asking of the question and upon the question itself as something dangerous and misleading. Most of the paragraphs under "D" are inadequate. They do not remove, but keep silence about, the old differences. We nowhere find a clear statement of the fact that the doctrine of the Church, the Ministry, Sunday, Chiliasm, and Antichrist are not open questions, but clear and well-defined doctrines of the Scriptures and our Confessions. --In the article on the Church a clear confession that the Church, in the true sense of the term, is invisible, was not made. The language enables the opponents to retain their old doctrine of a visible side of the Church. --In the statement regarding the spiritual priesthood and the doctrine of the ministry nothing is said of the doctrine of conveyance (Uebertragungslehre); neither is it clearly stated that every local congregation is the supreme and sole authority in calling a minister, independent of the clergy of the body to which it belongs. The paragraphs concerning Antichrist do not touch the old position of the opponents. The doctrine of Sunday is not presented; nor is there a statement to the effect that the false doctrine cannot be tolerated beside the true doctrine. The same thing is true of Chiliasm. It is not a Scriptural doctrine, but no opposition is raised to any one's holding it as a personal opinion.

Your Committee considers it a hopeless undertaking to make these theses unobjectionable from the view of pure doctrine. It would be better to discard them as a failure. It now seems to your Committee a matter of wisdom to desist from intersynodical conferences. By entering into a closer relationship with the adherents of the Norwegian Opgjoer, the opponents have given evidence that they do not hold our position in the doctrine of conversion and election. In view of this action further conferences would be useless and only create the impression as if were endeavoring to come to an understanding, which is not the case. It ought now also to be apparent that the manner of conducting these conferences, to wit, the exclusion of all historical matters, is wrong. As a result the opponents hardly understand each other.²²

²²Ibid., pp. 111f.

The final death toll rang out with the report of the Convention's Committee 19, the Committee on Intersynodical Matters.²³ The report stated:

- 2) We recommend, however, that Synod do not accept the theses in their present form, for the following reasons:--
- a) Because many serious objections have been raised by members of Synod, which, in our opinion, should be carefully considered and eventually be taken into account in any further work concerning the theses;
 - b) Because the omission of all historical data in working out the theses was evidently not conducive to a full understanding on the part of the colloquents. We must begin with the status controversiae.
- 3) We further recommend that Synod declare its readiness to deal also with the synods concerned, provided the latest historical development, namely, the move toward a closer union between the Ohio and Iowa Synods, on the one hand, and the party of the Norwegian Opgjoer, on the other, be taken up first and adjusted according to the Word of God. The President of Synod shall appoint a committee, which in this case shall lead the discussions.
- 4) In any event we recommend that Synod elect a committee which is to be instructed to formulate theses which, beginning with the status controversiae, are to present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple manner.²⁴

The committee also stated that there should not be any suspicion concerning the personal faith and position on doctrines of the members of the Intersynodical Committee. The report of Committee 19 was adopted by the convention.

²³The members of this committee were: Pastors R. Karpinsky, E. A. Mayer, P. Eickstaedt, Th. Hanssen, and H. L. W. Schuetz; Professors F. Pieper, P. E. Kretzmann, and G. Chr. Barth; Teachers R. C. Runge and M. F. Burmeister; and Lay delegates Wm. Wendorf, F. Graue, and Mans.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 112f.

CHAPTER V

THE REACTION TO THE MISSOURI SYNOD'S 1929 CONVENTION

The American Lutheran Church

When the Ohio Synod's Adjourned 49th Convention met in 1930, Missouri's action was discussed. In his Presidential Address President Hein said:

. . . we wonder whether our efforts to bring about unity proved futile because the Missouri representatives from beginning to end, even after the theses had been unanimously adopted, refused to pray with the representatives of Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio for divine guidance and unity in the truth. Again we wonder whether what was written by the president of one of the Norwegian Synods in 1908 applies in this case: "As long as work toward union is in the hands of professors there is nothing to expect. No union will result. They all work for their own. One wants his doctrinal statements recognized, another wishes to extinguish the zeal for union, still another seeks to devour all. With such motives little can be done for true union." That this is not the attitude of every theological professor we know. We merely wonder whether it applies in this instance. The hostile spirit shown by some of the pastors is another obstacle.¹

Officially the Ohio Synod's Convention passed the following resolution:

We deplore the refusal of the Missouri Synod to adopt the Intersynodical Theses which members of their own Seminary faculty at St. Louis had helped to formulate and adopt. We stand ready to re-open negotiations looking toward better mutual understanding.²

¹Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, Minutes, Adjourned 49th Convention, 1930, p. 11. Hereafter this will be cited as Ohio Synod, Minutes, 1930, p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 109.

At the same time Ohio made ready to enter into the American Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference, two organizations that were in the process of being organized.

As has already been pointed out, Iowa removed the last obstacle in the way of organic union with the Ohio Synod. Fellowship had been declared between the two synods on the basis of the Toledo Theses in 1918. Negotiations were then continued in order to achieve organic union. In 1925 the Buffalo Synod joined the negotiations. When in 1928, Iowa agreed to the originally proposed statement on the Scriptures, the road became clear for union. Thus on August 11, 1930, in Toledo, Ohio, the three synod's delegates came together and officially adopted the constitution and ratified the merger. Thus the American Lutheran Church was formed. At this first meeting of the new organization it was stated that the American Lutheran Church stood, "ready to reopen negotiations (with the Missouri Synod) looking toward better mutual understanding."³

As has been mentioned earlier, a third set of meetings were taking place at the same time as the Intersynodical Committee meetings and the merger negotiation meetings. In 1925 the Minneapolis Theses had been adopted. These theses contained sections on (1) The Scriptures, (2) The Lutheran Symbols, (3) Church Fellowship, (4) Points of Doctrine--the

³The American Lutheran Church, Minutes, 1930, p. 36.

1919 Chicago Theses, (5) The Lodge Question, and (6) Recognition. During the following years, conferences were held between Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the Augustana Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Evangelical (Danish) Lutheran Church. Since all of the Church bodies accepted the Minneapolis Theses, their presidents drafted a constitution and bylaws for the American Lutheran Conference. In October 1930, the American Lutheran Conference came into being.⁴ Thus the American Lutheran Church was now in fellowship with the four other Church bodies. John H. C. Fritz commenting on the American Lutheran Church wrote that "the formation of the American Lutheran Conference has not been a step in the direction of preserving doctrinal unity."⁵

The Missouri Synod's Defense

After Missouri had rejected the Intersynodical Theses and the American Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference had been formed, numerous writings appeared in both periodical and book form pointing out the errors of

⁴For a brief discussion of the American Lutheran Conference see Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutherans in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1955), pp. 320-324.

⁵Th. Graebner, The Problems of Lutheran Union and Other Essays (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1935), p. vii. The above quote is taken from the introduction by Fritz.

Missouri's opponents. Again the major point of attack centered around the doctrine of election. Fellowship with the Norwegians in the American Lutheran Conference on the part of the American Lutheran Church kept Missouri from taking up the discussion of the Intersynodical Theses with any enthusiasm. P. E. Kretzmann complains that the official statements of the American Lutheran Church (the Chicago Theses of 1919) does not distinguish between God's will of redemption and His decree of election.⁶ Theodore Graebner wrote that "the old Ohio position was (and still is) that the difference in the degree or kind of resistance to the Gospel accounts for the election of some and the rejection of others."⁷ Prof. Graebner lists the following complaints against the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America:⁸

- 1) The Madison Agreement (Opgjoer) is a unionistic document.
- 2) The phrase "man's feeling of responsibility over against the acceptance or rejection of grace" in the Madison Agreement is synergistic.
- 3) Chiliasm has made converts in the Norwegian Church.
- 4) The social gospel is finding adherents within the

⁶P. E. Kretzmann, "Can the Lutheran Bodies of America Get Together," Concordia Theological Monthly, IV (January 1933), 7.

⁷Th. Graebner, The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays, p. 83.

⁸Ibid., pp. 67-73.

Norwegian Church.

- 5) Modernistic views on inspiration are being accepted.
- 6) Sentiment within the Norwegian Church is divided on the lodge question.

Rev. J. Reine, a pastor of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America wrote in 1936:

and with regard to the Norwegian Church Dr. Boe (President of St. Olaf College) informs us that he still finds the same parties represented as there were before the union. In every case it is now clear to us that many, perhaps the majority, of our churches still hold fast to the synergistic error in the doctrine of conversion and election. The Synod's representatives together with its president had the wool pulled over their eyes by the ambiguous Opgjoer of the synergistic leaders.⁹

Graebner, while discussing the Augustana Synod in his book, lists the following points that are separating that Synod from Missouri.¹⁰

- 1) Members of the Augustana Synod have established unionistic services with the Reformed sects.
- 2) Fellowship is practiced by this synod with the modernistic Swedish State Church clergy, such as Archbishop Soderblom.
- 3) Crass millennialistic views are held by some of the leading theologians and writers, such as Dr. C. E. Lindberg, of the Augustana Synod.

⁹J. T. Mueller, "Union without Unity," Concordia Theological Monthly, VII (June 1936), 465f. This article quotes Rev. J. Reine's article in Lutheraneren. ✓

¹⁰Th. Graebner, The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays, pp. 50-62.

- 4) The intuitu fidei doctrine regarding election has the official approval of the Swedish Synod.
- 5) In general the bars against secret orders are down in the Swedish Church.

Not only did the Missouri Synod's writers point out the errors within the other Church bodies, but they also re-defined Missouri's position on church fellowship. Theodore Graebner explained that "unionism is church-fellowship without doctrinal unity."¹¹ A difference of belief exists when one departs from the orthodox faith or when a church body officially advocates or permits error. Refusing fellowship is not excommunicating or saying that there are no Christians within the other body. But it is saying that the good Christians in that body are permitting errorists to remain in their organization, and in so doing are sinning against the Word of God (Romans 16:17).¹² The Concordia Theological Monthly quoting Prof. John P. Meyer, a Wisconsin Synod professor, said:

Those, indeed, who by deviating from the divine truth in doctrine or practice are responsible for divisions in the Church make themselves guilty of a "sin crying to heaven;" but those who, in obedience to God's command avoid the confirmed adherent of false doctrine or practice need not be troubled in their conscience about their attitude, no matter

¹¹Theo. Graebner, "What is Unionism?," Concordia Theological Monthly, II (August 1931), 580. ✓

¹²Theo. Graebner, The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays, p. 18.

how severely they may be criticised by any human tribunal.¹³

Committee 19 of the Missouri Synod's Convention had advised the election of a committee to formulate theses that would present the "doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions."¹⁴ The Synod resolved that the president should appoint the committee. Dr. Pfotenhauer appointed Dr. F. Pieper, Prof. F. Wenger, Rev. E. A. Mayer, Rev. L. A. Heerboth, and Dr. T. Engelder to the committee.¹⁵ The theses formulated by the committee were published in the Concordia Theological Monthly in 1931.¹⁶ Also a copy of these theses, the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, was sent to each pastor in Synod. Committee 20 of the 1932 Convention of the Missouri Synod suggested some minor changes and then recommended that the theses be adopted "as a brief Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position

¹³[Wm.] A[rndt], "Are Synodical Conference Lutherans Separatists," Concordia Theological Monthly, I (December 1930), 940.

¹⁴The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1929, p. 113. Hereafter this will be cited as Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1929, p. 113.

¹⁵Ibid., 1932, p. 154.

¹⁶"Thesen zur kurzen Darlegung der Lehrstellung der Missourisynde," Concordia Theological Monthly, II (May 1931), 321-336. An English translation of these theses was printed a month later. "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," Concordia Theological Monthly, II (June 1931), 401-416.

Dr. Carl S. Meyer has a good brief discussion of the formulation of the Brief Statement in the September 1961 issue of Concordia Theological Monthly, pp. 538-542.

of the Missouri Synod."¹⁷ The Synod's Convention adopted the report.

It should be remembered that the Brief Statement was not intended to be a comprehensive statement of all the doctrines of the Missouri Synod. The 1929 resolution of Synod stated that the committee should formulate theses beginning with the status controversiae. Thus one might have assumed that the theses would mainly deal with those doctrines which were being discussed within and between the synods at the time. However the committee included more than just those doctrines under discussion by the Intersynodical Committee. The basis of these theses seems to be A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, in the Year of Jubilee, 1897. The 1932 statement includes all of the theses of the 1897 document plus four additional theses not found in the 1897 statement but presented in the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses. The topics of the four additional theses are Sunday, Open Questions, the Symbols, and Church Fellowship.¹⁸ However a doctrinal presentation of these topics was not new to the Missouri Synod. In 1893 Dr. F. Pieper had contributed a

¹⁷ Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1932, p. 155.

The members of Committee 20 were: Pastors A. Pfotenhauer, O. Luessenhop, A. M. Beck, W. Hohenstein, and Teachers K. E. Dube and H. C. Richert; Lay delegates L. Dorpat and A. Hillger.

¹⁸ C. S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement'," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (September 1961), 538-542. By means of charts C. S. Meyer shows the topical relationship of the various statements.

paper presenting the distinctive doctrines and usages of the Missouri Synod which was published in a Lutheran Publication Society's book.¹⁹ In this paper written not for the purpose of presenting a comprehensive doctrinal statement of Missouri's beliefs but to show the differences between Missouri and the other Lutheran bodies, the topics of Sunday, Open Questions, and Church Fellowship were discussed. Thus only the thesis on the Lutheran Symbols had not appeared in one of the two prior Missouri documents. The 1932 Brief Statement also contained theses that had been covered in the 1897 statement but had not been subject to debate in the 1928 Intersynodical Theses such as the theses relating to God, Creation, the Means of Grace, and others. But not only was the 1932 statement more inclusive topically, it was also updated to meet the issues of the day.²⁰ For all practical purposes the 1932 statement more strictly defined the Missouri Synod's requirements for the basis of fellowship for any future negotiations with other Lutheran bodies.

Meanwhile, when the Wisconsin Synod met in 1929, its Intersynodical Committee reported and the convention adopted the following:

. . . that Synod declare its willingness to continue this work with other synods and that all conferences

¹⁹The Distinctive Doctrines And Usage Of The General Bodies Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church In The United States (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c. 1893).

²⁰C. S. Meyer, op. cit., p. 541.

be urged to study and examine the 'Chicago Theses' in order that the result of ten years' work be made the property of all.²¹

However by the time the next convention was held in 1931, the situation had so changed that the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses were never mentioned. Thus the Wisconsin Synod never took an official position concerning the theses.

The Hanssen--Melcher Case

The defeat of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses at the Missouri Synod Convention did not close the issue. As was shown above Missouri once again defined its position toward the other Lutheran bodies. The Synod, also, commissioned the writing of a new statement of its beliefs, which it accepted in 1932. But the debate over the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses had caused internal disruption. Probably the clearest example of this disruption is seen in the Hanssen--Melcher case.

The Northeast Special Conference of Iowa made overtures to the 1926 and 1929 conventions concerning the Intersynodical Theses. The overtures were mainly the work of Pastors Hanssen and Melcher. The matter was not permitted to rest after the 1929 convention. After Missouri's 1929 Convention the two men's complaint ran along the following line. The Synod's

²¹Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings, 1929 (English), p. 47.

Intersynodical Committee reported to the 1929 convention that:

Failure to adopt some of the proposed changes was not due to any differences in doctrine between the colloquents, but to the fact that most of the colloquents considered the proposals liable to misunderstandings or superfluous.²²

To this Pastors Hanssen and Melcher commented:

To all appearances this insertion about agreement in doctrine refers to mere trifles, not affecting our doctrinal position. But this is very misleading. For the insertion refers to the whole chapter D with 29 paragraphs on doctrines, viz.: the so-called "Open Questions" of the former Iowa Synod, in the Chicago Intersyn. Theses of 1928. That is the very chapter in this document in which not one single change has ever been made, notwithstanding the very urgent demands for necessary corrections from various quarters. The offense given by this declaration is: That it contains a public (whether intentional or unintentional) confession of consent to the false doctrines in the catalogue of so-called Iowa "Open Questions" which always have been repudiated by our Missouri Synod. Therefore the official reports of the Iowa Synod do not hide the satisfaction they feel over having been able to save this "Open Question" during the Intersynodical negotiations.²³

The two men in their pamphlet then brought to the attention of their readers that the Examining Committee declared most of the paragraphs under "D" inadequate, because they keep silent about the old differences. The Northeast Special Conference of Iowa through their overtures warned Missouri's

²²Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1929, p. 110.

²³Theo. Hanssen and E. F. Melcher, A Synodical Mistrial In Matters of Doctrine (Chicago: The Lutheran Press, n.d.), [p. 2].

colloquents and officials against the errors they appeared to be heading towards. But according to these two men neither the colloquents nor the convention's committees paid any attention to these overtures; nor did they reply to the Northeast Special Conference of Iowa concerning the matter.²⁴ Pastor Hanssen was a member of Committee 19 of the 1929 Convention. As a member of that committee he opposed a report that had been prepared in advance in St. Louis. He announced that he would present to the convention a minority report of his own. At that time Dr. F. Pieper mediated the dispute without taking a personal stand himself. The result was that a compromise report was printed.²⁵ After the convention the point of complaint was that Missouri's Intersynodical Committee representatives had in public print assented to chapter D of the Intersynodical Theses which contained false doctrine. Committee 20 of the 1932 convention met with both sides of the dispute. At this meeting President M. Graebner asked Hanssen to exemplify his charge of false doctrine in Chapter D. Hanssen chose D, 25.²⁶

"Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment in the Small and in the Large Catechism is a masterly presentation

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., [pp. 2f.]. The compromise report is that appearing in the 1929 Proceedings.

²⁶M[artin] Graebner was president of Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota.

of this subject as regards contents, form and spirit." --D 26. "Every addition to the same which in any manner prescribes some external feature, like a day or a form of worship as commanded by God, is not in accord with Scripture or the Confessions."-- Thesis 25, as to form and content, is no declaration of faith in the doctrine of Luther at all (or of our Missouri Synod), Luther is given a mark of honor for the statement of his faith,--which might be uttered by any Jew or Turk, without agreeing at all with Luther. And the Iowa Synod DOES not agree with Luther. About D26: Nobody now can change Luther's doctrine. However Iowa teaches CONTRARY to Luther, that external rest on one day in seven is binding in the New Testament also. They use the word "sabbatum" in the Latin text of the Concordia as a cover for their error. The ambiguity of the words in D 26 covers well their error about the Sunday.²⁷

The pamphlet by Hanssen and Melcher then goes on to tell what happened at the meeting.

Chairman A. Pfothenauer declared: That is sophistry. Hanssen answered; No, these are doctrinal facts. -- Now Dist. Pres. Kleinhans and Prof. Engelder asked to be excused, and were excused. Hanssen declared further discussion is needed. However the chairman declared: This Committee has heard enough, you too, are excused.²⁸

Committee 20 then reported to the convention:

Your Committee has carefully considered the protest of Pastor Theo. Hanssen, but finds that the protest is not justified and therefore recommends to the Hon. Synods the rejection of the protest.²⁹

The committee's report was accepted by the convention. In August the complaint was brought before the Synodical Conference Convention. The committee that investigated the

²⁷Ibid., [p. 5].

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1932, p. 155.

complaint reported as follows:

Your Committee, sitting on an overture relating to certain actions taken by the Missouri Synod on the Intersynodical Theses of 1928, respectfully submits the following report:--

Your Committee is of the opinion that in the appeal of Pastors Hanssen and Melcher from the action of the Missouri Synod in the question stated above the Synodical Conference has no jurisdiction.

1) Although certain charges are brought against certain members of the Missouri Synod, no charge of error in the official doctrine and practice of the Missouri Synod as such in the matter under consideration has been raised.

2) It appears that the protesting brethren, Hanssen and Melcher, have not yet fully exhausted every possibility for the amicable adjustment of this matter within their own Synod.

We therefore recommend,--

1) That this convention take no further action on the question contained in the overture submitted by the brethren Hanssen and Melcher.

However, since the matter at issue seems to affect rather deeply the conscience not only of the authors of the appeal, but of other synodical brethren as well, your Committee suggests,--

2) That the brethren Hanssen and Melcher be encouraged to continue their efforts through the proper negotiations within their own Synod to arrive at a settlement satisfactory to all.³⁰

The above report was adopted by the convention. At the 1935 Missouri Synod Convention, its committee reported that they had spent a generous amount of time giving the complainants a sympathetic hearing. The committee recommended and the convention adopted the following:

- a) That the appeal in question be rejected;
- b) That the appellants be requested in brotherly love henceforth to cease agitating in this matter.³¹

³⁰Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings, 1932, p. 38. Hereafter this will be cited as Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1932, p. 38.

³¹Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1935, p. 294.

Pastors Hanssen's and Melcher's next step was to charge the Missouri Synod with false doctrine and practice before the Synodical Conference Convention. They asked the Synodical Conference's 1936 Convention carefully to study the Missouri Synod's Convention report and then make a decision in the matter. The Synodical Conference's Committee reported to the convention:

Your Committee heard the one appellant, Rev. Hanssen, offering him ample time and opportunity to present his case; but after careful deliberation your Committee begs leave to report that it finds his charges unsustainable and recommends that the Synodical Conference deny his appeal.³²

In this manner the case was officially closed as far as the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference were concerned.

Some Later Reflections

Eleven years after the rejection of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses, The Lutheran Witness printed an article by the editors entitled, "Lutheran Union: A Discussion."³³ The article discussed some of the doctrines which had prevented the acceptance of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses eleven years earlier. Concerning Open Questions, the article

³²Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1936, p. 117.

³³"Lutheran Union: A Discussion," The Lutheran Witness, LIX (June 25, 1940), 223f; and LIX (July 9, 1940), 239. The editorial commission at that time was composed of Theo. Graebner and Martin S. Sommer. The associate editors were W. G. Polack and G. V. Schick.

stated that the Toledo Theses, a joint confession of the Ohio and Iowa Synods, correctly stated the Lutheran position as did the Chicago Theses also. Statements of Drs. Reu and Lenski and the Chicago Theses presented the correct view in rejecting Chiliasm.³⁴ Prof. George Fritschel is quoted as saying in 1930 that:

In the Chicago Theses they ground us Iowans to dust and powder in order to see whether there was not some tiny particle of synergism in our theology. While the formulation is not admirable we decidedly stand for correctness of the presentation. In these theses the Lutheran doctrine is set forth that conversion in all its parts, from the first weak feeling of repentance through the entire process until the movement of divine origination of the first spark of faith is solely and alone, exclusively and entirely, the work of creative divine grace.³⁵

The editors also reminded their readers of the words of Dr. F. Pieper: "And to seek a 'loophole' for an error never held or a view discarded decades and generations ago would certainly be illogical."³⁶ Thus on reflection, eleven years later, the editors of The Lutheran Witness seem to have found little fault with the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses.

However this was not the unanimous opinion in the Missouri Synod. In 1940 the first issue of The Confessional

³⁴Ibid., p. 223.

³⁵Ibid., p. 224. This is a quote from Kirchliche Zeitschrift, 1930. The italics are Dr. Fritschel's.

³⁶Ibid., p. 239. The quote is taken from the article "Will There Be Unity," written in 1914 by Dr. Pieper.

Lutheran appeared. Its purpose was stated to be "to make a contribution to the cause of Confessional Lutheranism and to Lutheran Confessionalism."³⁷ In this same first issue the real purpose became clear.

Yes, our Israel is troubled. There can be no doubt as to that.

Nor can there be any doubt as to the fact that our trouble dates back specifically to the Centennial Synod (of all things) which was held at St. Louis in 1938.³⁸

Also in every issue during the first year of publication a note appeared which read: "Acceptance Of The St. Louis Union Article Of 1938 Must Be Rescinded." In discussing the problem within the Synod J. Buenger wrote:

Now in order to get at the root of our difference, it is necessary to go back to the main cause and beginning of the present confusion--the union movement of twenty years ago, which culminated in the Chicago Theses.³⁹

Buenger continued by stating that at the 1929 Missouri Synod Convention the protests against the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses prevented their being accepted. However they were not rejected but the question was left open as to whether the protests were justifiable or not. The matter was never

³⁷"The Confessional Lutheran," The Confessional Lutheran, I (January 1940), 1.

³⁸"Lutheran Union?," The Confessional Lutheran, I (January 1940), 2.

³⁹J. Buenger, "The Dogmatic--Historical Background Of The Present Union Movement," The Confessional Lutheran, I (June 1940), 37.

brought to a final decision. Therefore when union negotiations were again begun in the thirties, synod faced the same problem.⁴⁰ Through this article it becomes clear that although the immediate cause which brought about the publication of The Confessional Lutheran was the 1938 resolution of Synod, the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses and the action taken by Synod regarding these theses caused the problem that the editors were trying to combat. Unfortunately to the present day the problem caused by this publication has not been satisfactorily solved.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 37-39.

CHAPTER VI

WHY THE CHICAGO (INTERSYNODICAL) THESES WERE REJECTED

Having seen the historical events that led up to the formulation of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses and then their rejection by the Missouri Synod, a number of questions come to mind. The main one would be: Why did the Missouri Synod reject the theses? It is evident from the facts that Missouri was not willing to declare itself in pulpit and altar fellowship with the Ohio, the Iowa, and the Buffalo Synods on the basis of these theses. The situation had changed from when the negotiations were first begun. These synods had been negotiating with the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. By the 1929 Missouri Synod Convention it was clear that these three synods would in the very near future be in association with the Norwegians in the American Lutheran Conference. Since Missouri considered the Norwegian Opgjoer as a unionistic document, it obviously would not declare fellowship with a group that was in fellowship with the Norwegians until they had corrected their error. However, this does not explain why the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses were rejected as a correct statement of Lutheran doctrine. When the Intersynodical Committee presented their report at the 1929 convention, it asked that the theses be considered separately from the question of fellowship. However, the

convention still rejected the theses.

It is true that the Examining Committee reported to the 1929 convention that the theses should be rejected because of a number of unacceptable statements in the theses. However, at the same time the Intersynodical Committee found nothing wrong with the theses. Dr. Theodore Graebner, a former member of the committee, had given his approval to the theses. Why then since both committees were composed of professors from the two Missouri Synod seminaries was there this difference? One possible answer was given by the President of the Ohio Synod in his report to the convention. In quoting one of the former Norwegian presidents, he questioned the attitude of the professors. Could there have been a conflict or a difference of position doctrinally between the men on the two different faculties? There appears to be a fault with this thesis. Prof. Theodore Engelder was a member of both committees. He was on the Examining Committee in 1926 when they reported to the convention that a number of changes would be necessary before the theses could be acceptable. At this time there was no minority report presented so that it can be assumed that Prof. Engelder was in agreement with the committee report. In 1929 he was a member of the Intersynodical Committee. Its report to the convention seems to show an acceptance of the theses and again there was no minority report. Again it must be assumed that Prof. Engelder accepted the report and agreed with it. That this

thesis might hold some truth is very possible, but it does not seem to have been the basic force which brought about the rejection of the theses.

Another possibility is that the Intersynodical Committee was wrong and there were false doctrinal statements in the theses. In this case the Examining Committee would have been correct and synod would have made the right decision on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. However this would mean that some of the best theologians in synod had made a great error for such men as Theodore Graebner, William Arndt, Theodore Engelder, and George Mezger had apparently lined up in favor of accepting the theses. Also, if this thesis is true, how could Pastor A. Pfothenauer, chairman of the committee investigating the Hanssen--Melcher complaint, say that Hanssen's arguments were sophistry and brush aside the entire matter clearing the Intersynodical Committee representatives. If there were real doctrinal errors one would have expected them to have come out in the convention hearings of the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference in the early thirties. It must also be remembered that eleven years later The Lutheran Witness, the official organ of the synod, could say that the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses were doctrinally correct in many of the doctrinal areas of which the Examining Committee had objected. That the theses were not stated exactly as the Missouri Synod would have preferred in all sections is probably true. But that they

were full of errors is highly unlikely.

A fact that probably affected the outcome of the theses is that some of the higher officials in Synod were against the acceptance of them. There does not seem to be any reason to question the statement of J. T. Mueller in his letter that Pres. Pfotenhauer was against them. There also appears to have been some unfortunate events that happened which did not help the cause of those favoring the acceptance of the theses. The first was the appointing of Prof. George Mezger as Missouri's representative in Germany and his appointment as a member of the faculty at the seminary in Germany. One wonders why he was sent to Germany just when some of the main work was being done by the joint Intersynodical Committee of which Prof. Mezger was a member. Obviously Prof. William Arndt thought he would be of help in persuading synod or members of it to accept the theses. But he was reappointed to the German faculty and thus synod was deprived of his presence when it could have been used. Another tactical error, viewing the situation from the side of those desiring acceptance of the theses, was the appointment of Pastor Theodore Hanssen to the committee that brought to the floor of the convention the final resolution concerning the theses. If we can believe Theodore Hanssen, he forced a compromise report to be presented to the convention rather than the one that had been decided upon in advance.

[However, this writer does not believe that any of the

above mentioned suggestions were decisive in the final outcome of the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses. It seems more conceivable to think that the statement made by Dr. F. Pieper fifteen years earlier was forgotten. At that time Dr. Pieper had said that "to seek a 'loophole' for an error never held or a view discarded decades and generations ago would certainly be illogical."¹ The editors of The Lutheran Witness reminded synod of these words in 1940 when they were discussing Lutheran unity and past positions of the various Lutherans. Not holding to this idea would explain why there was a difference among the two committees of the Missouri Synod. The Intersynodical Committee representatives met with the men of the other synods. They had the opportunity to discuss doctrinal positions of both the men and the synods involved in the negotiations. Thus they were acquainted with the present, as of the 1920's, position held by the other synods concerning both doctrine and practice. The representatives could arrive at a mutual understanding of what was meant by the terms and wording that they used. The Intersynodical Committee worked from the present situation, not from what was believed a decade or generation before. But the Examining Committee did not have this privilege of direct contact with the other synods. Missouri's representatives on the Intersynodical Committee were always the middle men between synod and the other synods. Thus the mutual understanding probably never developed as it did with the

committee members. The Examining Committee would therefore view the theses from the point of what they knew about the other synods, or from what they believed the other synods believed. If this was the case, as this writer believes it to have been, it then would have been a situation where honest doctrinally-sound theologians could present a set of theses to the Synod's convention in good faith, and yet have another group of honest doctrinally-sound theologians advise rejection of the same theses. Their error would then be a misunderstanding of the situation--a viewing of the present from the past. For support of this view, the reader need only recall that the 1929 Convention of the Missouri Synod asked that a committee be chosen to draw up a brief statement of the Scriptural doctrines taking into consideration all the historical data. However this approach was not successful.

It seems that the above statement of Dr. Pieper could have been helpful and should have been applied to the situation in the 1920's and that it can be helpful and should be applied to the situation today. People and synods must be judged on what they actually believe at the present time. Not past errors but current theological positions are what is important to the present. The Missouri Synod would not want to be judged today on all of the statements and positions of her earlier theologians. Each age must be accepted or rejected on the basis of its own position at that time.

There are many problems that have not been covered in this study. The details of the theological debate and the intricate points at issue have not been discussed, nor has the position of the other members of the Synodical Conference been investigated in any detail. The Wisconsin Synod's representatives on the Intersynodical Committee presumably also accepted the theses. What, then, was Wisconsin's attitude? Another area that needs to be investigated thoroughly is the relationship between the Missouri Synod, the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, and the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. What was the effect of these two Norwegian Churches on the attitude of the Missouri Synod toward the future members of the American Lutheran Church? Another matter of possible investigation would be why there is such a lack of material concerning these negotiations and the earlier free conferences in the Missouri Synod's periodicals of the day. A further area of interest will open up when Dr. Theodore Graebner's personal papers are made available in a few years. Prof. Graebner's attitude and position towards the Lutheran union movements should make a good area of investigation on its own.

APPENDIX A

THE TOLEDO THESES¹

Thesis I. The Church

The Church, in the proper sense of the term, is the communion of true believers as it is begotten through the means of grace and as by their use it edifies itself. From this it follows:

a) According to its real essence the Church is and remains invisible on this earth.

b) Common participation in the means of grace is the necessary form of the Church's appearance and the infallible mark of its existence; and in so far the Church is visible.

Thesis II. The Office of the Ministry

a) The rights and duties of the spiritual priesthood comprehend not only the general command and call that believers reduce to practice their fellowship in the Gospel and their right and title to the means of grace and accordingly teach and admonish one another in every manner, but also that without special call they preach the Word to heathens and unbelievers and in case of necessity administer the Sacrament of Baptism; and then also, that they establish the office of the ministry, inasmuch as this office has been originally and immediately given by Christ to the whole Church.

b) The office of the ministry rests upon a special command of the Lord, valid throughout all time, and consists in the right and power conferred by special call to administer the means of grace publicly and by commission of the congregation.

c) The call (to the pastorate) is a right of the congregation within whose bounds the minister is to discharge the office. Ordination is a public and solemn confirmation of the call and is but an apostolic churchly custom or order.

Thesis III. Attitude to the Confessions

a) A binding subscription to the Confessions (of the Church) pertains only to the doctrines of the faith therein set forth, and to these all without any exception.

¹Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), pp. 9-11.

b) Whereas the doctrine of Sunday as taught in the Confessions is a doctrine revealed in God's Word, it is not to be excluded from the body of obligatory dogmas.

Thesis IV. Open Questions

a) All doctrines revealed clearly and plainly in the Word of God are, by virtue of the divine authority of said Word, dogmatically fixed as true and binding upon the conscience, whether they have been symbolically settled as such or not.

b) There is within the Church of God no authority whatever for departing from any truths clearly revealed by the Scriptures, be their contents considered fundamental or non-fundamental, important or apparently unimportant.

c) Full agreement in all articles of faith constitutes the irremissible condition of church fellowship. Persistent error in an article of faith must under all circumstances lead to separation.

d) Perfect agreement in all nonfundamental doctrines, though not attainable on earth, is nevertheless an end desirable and one we should labor to attain.

e) Those who knowingly, obdurately, and persistently contradict the divine Word in any of its utterances whatsoever thereby overthrow the organic foundation (of the faith) and are therefore to be excluded from church fellowship.

Thesis V. Chiliasm

a) Any chiliasm which conceives the kingdom of Christ to be something external, earthly, and after the manner of the kingdoms of the world, and which teaches a resurrection of all believers before the day of Judgment shall come, is a doctrine directly contrary to the analogy of faith and is to be rejected as such.

b) The belief of some, to wit, that the reign of Christ and His saints referred to in Revelation 20 is an event belonging to the future, as also that the resurrection there spoken of is to be understood as a bodily resurrection of some believers unto life everlasting, is an opinion which, though not incompatible with the analogy of faith, cannot be strictly proved from Scripture, no more than the spiritual interpretation of said passages can be shown to be the true one.

Thesis VI. Predestination and Conversion

a) The error of Missouri on predestination we find to consist in this, that thereby the universal gracious will of God and His decree of election are so separated as to exclude one another and that thus two contradictory wills are affirmed of God. This error renders unsafe the foundation upon which

our salvation is based and stamps as fundamentally wrong other statements which might otherwise admit of an acceptable interpretation.

b) Concerning conversion, drawn into controversy in connection with the doctrine of predestination, we confess that, viewed as the placing or planting of a new spiritual life, conversion does not depend to any extent whatsoever on any co-operation, self-determination, or good conduct on the part of man nor consist therein, but that it is wholly and solely the work of the Holy Ghost, working the same by His gracious power in the means of grace. On the other hand, however, we deny that the Holy Ghost works conversion according to a mere pleasure by His elective will or despite the most willful resistance, for example, in the case of the elect; but we hold that by such stubborn resistance both conversion and eternal election are hindered.

APPENDIX B

THE MINNEAPOLIS THESES¹

I. The Scriptures

The synods signatory to these Articles of Agreement accept without exception all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

II. The Lutheran Symbols

1. These synods also, without reservation, accept the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran Church, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith of the Lutheran Church, as this has found expression in response to the exigencies arising from time to time.

(The Evangelical Lutheran Church, in agreement with the position of the Lutheran Church of Norway and Denmark, has officially accepted only the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Small Catechism. This position does not imply that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in any way whatsoever rejects the remaining symbolical books of the Lutheran Church, as the constant reference to them in her theological literature amply testifies, but since the other symbolical books are not known to her constituency generally, it has not been deemed necessary to require formal subscription to the entire Book of Concord.)

2. Adherence to our confessions pertains only to their doctrinal content (i.e., the doctrines declared to be the divine truth and the rejection of opposite doctrines), but to these without exception or limitation in all articles and parts, no matter whether a doctrine is specifically cited as a confession or incidentally introduced for the purpose of elucidating or proving some other doctrine. All that pertains to the form of presentation (historical comments, questions purely exegetical, etc.) is not binding.

III. Church Fellowship

1. These synod agree that true Christians are found in every denomination which has so much of divine truth revealed

¹Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), pp. 107-110.

in Holy Scripture that children of God can be born in it; that according to the Word of God and our Confessions, church fellowship, that is, mutual recognition, altar and pulpit fellowship, and eventually co-operation in the strictly essential work of the Church, presupposes unanimity in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same in word and deed.

Where the establishment and maintenance of church fellowship ignores present doctrinal differences or declares them a matter of indifference, there is unionism, pretense of union which does not exist.

2. They agree that the rule, "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only," is not only in full accord with, but necessarily implied in, the teachings of the divine Word and the Confessions of the evangelical Lutheran Church. This rule, implying the rejection of all unionism and syncretism, must be observed as setting forth a principle elementary to sound and conservative Lutheranism.

IV. Points of Doctrine

In 1920 all synods with the exception of the Buffalo Synod (to which they had not been submitted) adopted theses on:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Work of Christ | 5. Justification |
| 2. The Gospel | 6. Faith |
| 3. Absolution | 7. Conversion |
| 4. Holy Baptism | 8. Election |

After discussion of these theses the representatives present came to the conclusion that we are in full agreement in all essentials pertaining to these doctrines. (The reference is to the Chicago Theses, which follow).

1. In regard to the work of Christ, Redemption and Reconciliation:

Jesus Christ, God and Man, has not only for the benefit of, but in place of, the human race taken upon Himself the sins of the world with the just penalties for them. In the place of the world and for its benefit, He has by His holy life fulfilled the Law, and by His suffering and death, by His blood, paid the penalty for the whole world, truly and completely satisfied the divine justice; redeemed the world from guilt and punishment of sin, and brought about the reconciliation of God, whose wrath had come upon mankind on account of sin and whose justice required satisfaction.

2. In regard to the Gospel:

The Gospel is not only a story, a narrative of what Jesus Christ has done, but at the same time it offers and gives the result of the work of Christ--above all, forgiveness

of sin. Yea, it even at the same time gives the power to accept what it offers.

3. In regard to Absolution:

Absolution does not essentially differ from the forgiveness of sins offered by the Gospel. The only difference is that absolution is the direct application of forgiveness of sin to the individual desiring the consolation of the Gospel. Absolution is not a judgment passed by the pastor on those being absolved, declaring that they now have forgiveness.

4. In regard to Holy Baptism and the Gospel:

The Holy Ghost works regeneration of the sinner both through Baptism and the Gospel. Both are therefore justly called the means of regeneration.

5. In regard to Justification:

Justification is not an act in man but an act by God in heaven, declaring the repentant and believing just, or stating that he is regarded as such on account of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ by faith.

6. In regard to Faith:

Faith is not in any measure a human effort. Faith is an act of man in so far as it is man who believes. But both the power to believe and the act of believing are God's work and gift in the human soul or heart.

7. In regard to Conversion:

Conversion as the word is commonly used in our Lutheran confession comprises contrition and faith produced by the Law and the Gospel. If man is not converted, the responsibility and guilt fall on him because he in spite of God's all-sufficient grace through the call "would not," according to the Word of Christ, Matt. 23:37: "How often would I have gathered thy children even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

If a man is converted the glory belongs to God alone, whose work it is throughout. Before conversion or in conversion, there is no co-operation of man, but at the very moment man is converted, co-operation begins through the new powers given in conversion; though this co-operation is never independent of the Holy Spirit, but always "to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him" (Formula of Concord).

8. In regard to Election:

The causes of election to salvation are the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ; nothing in us on account of which God has elected us to eternal life.

On the one hand, we reject all forms of synergism which in any way would deprive God of His glory as the only Savior. On the other hand, we reject all forms of Calvinism which directly or indirectly would conflict with the order of salvation, and would not give to all a full and equally great opportunity of salvation, or which in any manner would violate the Word of God which says that God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4).

V. The Lodge Question

1. These synods agree that all such organizations or societies, secret or open, as are either avowedly religious or practice the forms of religion without confessing as a matter of principle the Triune God or Jesus Christ as the Son of God, come into the flesh, and our Savior from sin, or teach, instead of the Gospel, salvation by human works or morality, are anti-Christian and destructive of the best interests of the Church and the individual soul, and that, therefore, the Church of Christ and its congregations can have no fellowship with them.

2. They agree that a Lutheran synod should not tolerate pastors who have affiliated themselves with any anti-Christian society. And they admonish their pastors and congregations to testify against the sin of lodgery and to put forth earnest efforts publicly and privately to enlighten and persuade persons who are members of anti-Christian societies to sever their connection with such organizations.

VI. Recognition

The representatives of the synods here present agree that the synods accepting these articles are one in doctrine and practice, recognize each other as truly Lutheran and may enter into pulpit and altar fellowship.

APPENDIX C

THE CHICAGO (INTERSYNODICAL) THESES¹

Brief Presentation of the Doctrine of Conversion and Election

Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding conversion and election of grace as presented on the basis of Scripture in the confessional writings of our Church.

This doctrine, briefly stated, is as follows:

- 1) Holy Scripture teaches that through original sin man is by nature in such a state of corruption that, on the one hand, he lacks all power and ability unto anything that is good in a spiritual respect, and, on the other hand, he is filled with a desire for, and inclination to, everything that is evil.
- 2) Prompted by His mercy and unmerited grace God in His love has taken up the cause of the lost and condemned human race and has prepared salvation in Christ for all without exception. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all men should be converted to Him.
- 3) To this end He causes His eternal, divine Law and the saving Gospel of Christ, the Savior of sinners, to be preached in all the world.
- 4) The preaching of God's Word is the means and instrument by which God proposes to work effectually in all and to save all. If God is to do His work in man, man must hear the Word. (Baptism and the Lord's Supper are included in the Word; they are "the Word made visible.")
- 5) By the Word, God works in them that hear the Word. By the preaching of the Law He crushes our hearts and thus leads us to know our sin and the anger of God and to experience in heart a genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow. By the preaching of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of our sins in Christ He draws us in such a manner that a spark of faith is kindled in us. (F.C., 601, 54; Triglotta, 903.)
- 6) This work of conversion, according to the teaching of Scripture, is entirely and exclusively God's work. Man can in no wise make himself worthy of it, prepare himself for it, nor, in general, conduct himself in such a manner that it would be because of man's conduct that God performs His work in him. True, natural man can make an external use of the Word of God by hearing and reading it. (F.C., 594, 24; 601, 53; Triglotta, 891 and 901.) However, he can in no wise contribute anything

¹Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), pp. 24-42.

toward his conversion, but, as much as in him lies, can only frustrate this work of God in him.

7) True, even in the converted person there remains a certain resistance because original sin is not eradicated until death; but in the heart of the believer the Holy Ghost, by His power, has brought forth a new life, which daily overcomes this resistance.

8) The sinner's failure to be converted and saved is in no wise due to God, but is entirely the fault of man, who either does not hear God's Word or, having heard it, puts it out of his mind, despises it, closes his ear, and hardens his heart against it, and in this manner blocks the way to the Holy Spirit. A person who in this manner resists the Holy Spirit continually and persistently and who forever rejects the grace of God willfully is not converted and perishes by his own fault.

9) Accordingly, every true Christian confesses: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." He will also on "the Last Day raise up me and all the dead and give to me and all that believe in Christ eternal life."

10) Even in eternity every detail that pertains to all that the Holy Spirit has done, is doing, and will yet do, in me and all believers has been considered and ordained by God out of grace alone, for Christ's sake, so that our salvation rests entirely in His faithful hands, and whatever may befall us must work together for our good.

11) This eternal counsel of God regarding His children, revealed to us in His Word particularly for strengthening our faith in times of trouble and tribulation, we call, in accordance with the Scriptures and our Confessions, "God's ordination unto sonship and eternal life," or briefly, "the election of grace."

12) We find our election revealed only in Christ, who is the Book of Life, and only in Him can we be assured of our election. The elect are not saved by any other grace than that which is trampled under foot by them that are lost. This constrains us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. 2: 12, 13, which means, that we be careful to abide with Christ and His Word, that we pray diligently, that we faithfully put to use the gifts we have received, and thus "make our calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1: 10.

13) When our faith views this eternal gracious counsel of God regarding us Christians, from which springs our entire salvation now and hereafter, we join with all our heart in the doxology of Paul in Eph. 1: 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

In view of the controversies waged during the last decades we deem it necessary to offer this brief presentation of the Lutheran doctrine in an extended form and in antithetical statements reject false presentations and errors.

A. Conversion

I. Brief Presentation

Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding conversion as it is presented on the basis of Scripture in divers places in the confessional writings of our Church, particularly in Article XII of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, in the Smalcald Articles, and in Article II of the Formula of Concord.

1) Since the Fall, man is by nature flesh (John 3:6) and hence an enemy of God (Rom. 8:7). His intellect is darkened (1 Cor. 2:14); his will is turned away from God and directed only towards what is evil (John 8:34; 2 Tim. 2:26). He is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Being in this condition, man is of himself incapable of anything good and unfit for it. He wills, and can will and do, only that which is evil and contrary to God. This is the natural condition of all men without exception. (Rom. 3:12; F.C., 589, 7; Triglotta, 883, 7.)

2) Out of pure mercy God the Holy Spirit approaches these men who are spiritually dead and enemies of God by the preaching of His Word. By the preaching of the Law He desires to bring them to a knowledge of their sins and of the anger of God; by the preaching of the Gospel He desires to produce in them the knowledge of salvation, of the free grace of God in Christ. In this manner He desires to convert them to Himself. (A.C., 12; F.C., 601, 54; cp. p. 98, 61; 171, 28; 173, 44ff.) It is God's gracious will, equally earnest towards all men, that all be saved and that all come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4; Ezek. 33:11; John 3:16.)

3) Natural man in no wise meets this gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in his heart (Rom. 9:16; F.C., 589, 7) but resists it. He cannot but resist it, because he is unfit for anything good, an enemy of God, and a servant of sin. (Rom. 8:7; F.C., 592, 17. 18; 509, 44.) He resists the grace of God with all his powers, knowingly, intentionally, and in a hostile spirit. (F.C., 593, 18. 22.) Of his own accord he strives only to frustrate the gracious work of God in him. This is the natural attitude of all men towards the gracious work of God by His Word as far as their own will and ability are concerned.

4) This resistance against the Word and grace of God is expressed and manifested in individuals differently, according to their characteristic traits or according to external

circumstances, but it is essentially the same in all men. In its real essence it is nothing else than the refusal of grace, rebellion against God and His grace. (F.C., 609, 83.) This resistance springs from the innate evil nature of man, from original sin, and consists in the hostile opposition which man knowingly and purposely sets against grace. (F.C., 593, 21.) Over against the grace of God in His Word all men are by nature equally guilty (in eadem culpa, Rom. 3:23, 24); this means that by nature their attitude toward the work and grace of God is evil only. This applies to those who are converted by the grace of God and to those who are lost by their own fault. (F.C., 716, 57, 58.)

5) Natural man cannot by his own powers omit, break, and hinder, nor even diminish this resistance. Man is and remains an enemy of God and resists the Word and will of God until faith in Christ is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. (F.C., 589, 5; 590, 11, 12; 593, 21; 602, 59.) Nor can man omit this resistance by spiritual powers which God, as some hold, confers on him before the creation of faith and which man is supposed to employ for his own conversion. This would presuppose that man, after all, has by nature or prior to faith a will to convert himself and also the ability to accept, and to properly employ, the spiritual powers offered him.

6) True, even before faith is kindled, a person receives in his heart various impressions of the operation of the Law and the Gospel, all kinds of emotions which he cannot evade (motus inevitabiles, Mark 6:20; Luke 4:22; Acts 24:25; John 16:8-11). However, these emotions a person suffers by the operation of God upon him from without, independently of his own volition, yea, in opposition to the same. Before faith is kindled, no inward change for the good takes place in the person by which he would be enabled, even before conversion, through the operation of grace, to submit to the grace of God, to assume a passive attitude to grace, to allow the grace of God to continue its operation upon him, etc. (1 Cor. 2:14). On the contrary, all that man is able to do and does of his own accord merely tends to ward off these impressions and to suppress these emotions. Until renewed by God, his will remains the same obstinate will that is at enmity with God. There is no intermediate state between being converted and being unconverted, between spiritual death and spiritual life. (F.C., 602, 59; 593, 20, 21.)

7) God alone, by the operation of His mighty grace, can overcome this resistance in man against His grace and His Word. (Eph. 1:19; 2:5-10; Rom. 9:16). He does it by bringing a person who has learned to know his perdition by means of the Law and is terrified by God's anger to faith in his Savior by means of the Gospel, thus drawing the person to Him, raising him from spiritual death, regenerating and renewing him. (Eph. 2:8, 9; F.C., 609, 87; 603, 61.) However, conversion does

not take place by irresistible grace or by coercion, which would be the same thing; for conversion consists in this very thing, that God, by means of the Gospel, turns a rebellious will into an obedient will, an unwilling person into a willing one. (F.C., 603, 60; 609, 87, 88.)

8) When faith is kindled, man's attitude toward the Word and grace of God is entirely changed. In the power of God who works in him both to will and to do the person willingly assents to what God proposes. There arise in him good emotions and sensations of a truly spiritual nature. These are the new spiritual life in him. Immediately man begins to fear, love, and trust in God. He is engaged in the daily practice of repentance and co-operates in good works, which the Holy Ghost accomplishes in him. (F.C., 603, 63; 604, 65, 66; 605, 70; 609, 88.) Indeed, even in the regenerate there still remains a certain resistance toward the Word and grace of God. Until death they bear the sinful flesh. However, God has created in them the new man, who willingly serves God. In the regenerate--and only in these--there takes place a constant struggle: the wrestling of the spirit with the flesh, in which the spirit, by the power and grace of God, is victorious and conquers the flesh as long as the Christian by faith clings to the Word and grace of God. (F.C., 608, 84, 85; Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:23, 25.)

9) It is God alone who is able to convert and quicken spiritually dead men, and does convert and quicken them by His grace in the Word. But, alas, not all men are converted and saved. This is in no wise God's fault. His grace is universal (universalis); it is sufficient (sufficiens) for all and efficacious (efficax) in all who hear the Word. By the preaching of His Word, God gives to all who hear it an opportunity to be converted and saved. God purposes to be efficacious in all through the Word, to give to all the power and ability to accept His Word. (F.C., 710, 29.) However, the grace of God does not operate in an irresistible manner. Man can resist it and block the way to the Holy Spirit and His operations of grace, so that He cannot achieve His work in man. Any one resisting the Holy Spirit continually and persistently, any one thrusting the grace of God from him continually and willfully, is not converted, but is lost by his own fault. (F.C., 602, 57-60; 713, 40-42.)

10) Accordingly we confess

a) That conversion is solely and alone the work of divine grace, which man by nature does nothing but resist, and cannot but resist, until God gives him faith;

b) That God earnestly desires to work conversion in all men, but "cannot perform His work" in them that are lost (F.C., 55, 12; Triglotta, 835, 12), because by their own fault they willfully persevere in their resistance, harden themselves and become increasingly obdurate in this condition

the more earnestly God operates on them by means of His Word and thus continue to heap up guilt against themselves (Matt. 23:37), until finally they may be overtaken by the condemnation of hardening.

II. Antitheses

On the basis of this truth we reject as contrary to Scripture and false any teaching by which the utter incapacity of all men for anything that is good in a spiritual respect and the monergism of divine grace in the conversion and salvation of men are denied and obscured; we also reject any teaching which finds the ultimate cause of the non-conversion even of a single person in God and His means of grace and which charges Him in any way with the fault of such nonconversion; as, for instance, the teaching

1) That man by his own natural powers or by powers communicated to him by the grace of God can in any manner omit or diminish his resistance--whether it be of the "natural" or the "willful" kind--against the gracious operation of God; or that he can in any manner contribute anything to his conversion, co-operate with God towards it, or prepare and make himself fit for the same;

2) That prior to faith man himself, either of his own accord or through powers given to him by grace, can determine to submit to the grace that is to convert him or to allow converting grace to continue its operation upon him. This "decision in favor of God" does not precede conversion (in the strict sense), but is the very conversion which God works.

3) We also reject as false and contrary to Scripture the distinction between natural and willful resistance for the purpose of offering a uniform* explanation why it is that some remain in perdition and are lost while others are converted and saved, though all are equally guilty and maintain only an evil attitude towards the converting grace of God and though grace works with equal power upon all men. By this teaching conversion and salvation are made to depend not on the grace of God alone, but also on man's conduct.

4) Again, we reject the teaching which makes nonconversion and rejection dependent not solely upon a person's conduct, but rather on a secret decree of God; a teaching which conceals or denies that the cause, the only cause, of nonconversion is man's

*A uniform explanation of conversion and nonconversion is offered by Synergists when they place the cause of both in man. A uniform explanation of conversion and nonconversion is offered by the Calvinists when they place the cause of both in God.

willful and persistent resistance, i.e., that he either does not hear God's Word, but willfully despises it, closes his ear and hardens his heart against it, and thus blocks the way which the Holy Ghost ordinarily pursues, so that He cannot perform His work in him, or, having heard it, puts it aside and disregards it;

5) Again, the teaching which employs the term "almighty grace" in the sense that God converts men by irresistible grace or by coercion;

6) Again, the teaching that in order to accomplish conversion, universal grace must be reinforced by a secret grace of election which is withheld from those who are not converted;

7) Again, the teaching that God by a secret decree has excluded from conversion those who are not converted or has passed them by with His grace;

8) Again, the teaching that God, while imparting a certain measure of grace to all, imparts only to the elect the full measure of grace sufficient for conversion.

B. Universal Will of Grace

1) Scripture teaches that everything which God has done, is doing, and will do in time here on earth, in order to acquire and appropriate to men salvation in Christ, He does in accordance with an eternal premeditated will, counsel, and purpose. (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11.)

2) God has taken pity on the fallen race of men. In the fullness of time He has sent into the world for all men His only-begotten Son, who has acquired perfect salvation for all, for each individual, also for me. God has done this in accordance with an eternal, premeditated counsel and will. Before the foundation of the world, He has foreordained Christ as the Redeemer of the entire human race. (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Peter 1:20.)

3) This fact, that Christ has fully acquired complete salvation for all men, God has also revealed and made known to all men in the Word of the Gospel. This Gospel of His He causes to be preached here in the world, in order that men may hear it, and thereby come to the knowledge of the truth, and thus be saved. God has done and is doing this in accordance with an eternal purpose and counsel. (Eph. 1:9)

4) Through the Gospel, which is His ever equally efficacious means and instrument with all men, the Holy Ghost approaches the individual sinner, lost by nature, but redeemed by Christ. After having brought the sinner to a knowledge of his utter depravity and having terrified him with the anger and judgment of God by means of the Law, the Holy Spirit earnestly purposes to bring him to faith in his Savior and thus to appropriate to him the entire salvation acquired by Christ, to justify him, to preserve him in faith by the Word, to

glorify him and in this manner to carry out His work of grace unto the end. God does this in accordance with an eternal counsel and purpose.

From the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding the universal will of grace, presented in the foregoing, there is kept distinct in Scripture--

C. The Doctrine of the Election of Grace, or of God's Predestination unto the Adoption of Children and unto Salvation

Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding the election of grace, or predestination of man unto sonship, as it has been presented, on the basis of Scripture, in the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord.

Preamble

In order to think and speak correctly concerning the election of grace, and in order not to exceed the barriers fixed in this doctrine by Scripture, we must learn from Scripture also the proper mode of presenting this doctrine. The apostle takes the position of the Christian readers here in time (Rom. 8:28ff.; Eph. 1:3ff.); he reminds them of the blessing which they hold in their possession at present; then he directs their gaze backward to the pretemporal source of that blessing. He identifies himself and his fellow Christians with the elect. Thus he would have us contemplate the eternal election of God. True, Scripture also refers elsewhere, though briefly, to the elect whom God has chosen, to the elect who are few in number as compared with the many that are called. (Matt. 22:14.) But wherever the apostles instruct Christians more fully regarding the mystery of eternity, they apply what they say to those in particular whom they are teaching. Such a direct, practical mode of contemplating the mystery guards us against unprofitable and dangerous speculations.

I. Theses

1) Holy Scripture teaches that it is God alone who, by grace for Christ's sake, has called us and all believers by means of the Gospel; has brought us unto faith, sanctifies and keeps us in faith, and finally saves us. However, Scripture teaches likewise that everything which God does now and will yet do for us and all believers He has already in eternity considered in His counsel and resolved to do. (2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:13.) Conformably to Scripture and the Confessions of our Church we call this eternal purpose of God to save us and all believers

according to the universal way of salvation the foreknowing of God (Rom. 8:29), or God's predestination of men unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29), or the eternal election unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:4), or the election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

2) The eternal election or God's predestination unto the adoption of children, is that eternal act by which God has prepared our salvation, not only in general, but has also in particular considered in His grace us and every one of His own, has elected us unto salvation, and has decreed that, and in what way, He will call us by the Gospel, bring us to faith, keep us therein, and finally give us eternal life in Christ. (Eph. 1:4ff.; Rom. 8:28ff.; 1 Peter 1:2; F.C., 707, 13 to 24; Triglotta, 1067 ff.)

3) The cause of this eternal act of God concerning His children is solely the mercy of God and the most holy merits of Christ, who by His living, suffering, and dying has redeemed all men and reconciled them unto God. In ourselves there is not found anything that could in any way have prompted God to make this gracious plan concerning us. This applies also to our faith, which is not a presupposition, but a result and an effect of the predestination unto the adoption of children. (Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:28-30; F.C., 557, 20; Triglotta, 837; F.C., 720, 75; Triglotta, 1087; F.C., 723, 88; Triglotta, 1093.)

4) Accordingly, election, or predestination, is the cause which effects and consummates our salvation and whatever pertains thereto (hence also our faith and our perseverance therein). Upon this immutable and insubvertible counsel of God our salvation is so firmly established that the devil, the world, and our flesh cannot deprive us of it. (John 10:28-30; Matt. 16:18; F.C., 705, 8; Triglotta, 1065; F.C., 714, 45-49; Triglotta, 1079.)

5) Every Christian can and should by faith be certain of his election unto everlasting life. He does not obtain this assurance by his natural reasoning nor by way of the Law as he reviews his good deeds, but from the Gospel promise of grace, which are sealed by the Sacraments. Accordingly, it is to the believer an insubvertible assurance; an assurance, however, which does not exclude the necessity that the Christian work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, yea, prompts him to do so. (Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 1:13, 14; Phil. 2:12, 13; 2 Peter 1:10; Heb. 11:1; F.C., 709, 25-33; Triglotta, 1071ff.; F.C., 714, 45; Triglotta, 1079.)

6) The election of grace, or predestination unto the adoption of children and unto salvation, which pertains only to us and all believers, is in no wise in contradiction to God's universal will of grace to save all men through Christ. While, on the one hand, the universal will of grace is the firm foundation on which the election of grace rests, the election of grace, on the other hand, serves the purpose of

giving the Christian greater assurance of the universal will of grace; for it is the eternal decree of God to carry into effect this universal will of grace in us and all believers. Accordingly, by the election of grace there is effected in us, the elect, not a second, different will of grace, but the identical universal will which God earnestly entertains regarding all men and which is frustrated in those that perish by their persistent willful resistance.

7) This election of grace is not paralleled by an election of wrath, by a predestination of individual men unto perdition, by God's passing most men by with the fullness of His grace, by leaving them in their misery, by a will to work less in them, by a will to draw them less powerfully, and the like. On the contrary, God wills earnestly that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The damnation of those who are lost is not due, either directly or indirectly, to God nor to His decree of election nor to the execution of the same, but solely to the malice of men. (Matt. 22:1ff.; 23:37; Acts 7:51; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 1:18ff.; F.C., 555, 12; Triglotta, 835; F.C., 711, 34-42; Triglotta, 1075; F.C., 721, 78-86; Triglotta, 1089.)

8) In regard to the election of grace and to reprobation there is indeed much that God has not revealed in His Word and that men presumptuously desire to know. Our Confessions enumerate many mysteries of this kind, among them the following: "Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place, but not at another; removes it from one place and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.,--in these and similar questions Paul fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews; whereby God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His in order to indicate what we all would have well deserved and would be worthy and worth to receive, since we conduct ourselves evilly over against God's Word and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely; in order that we may live in the fear of God and acknowledge and praise God's goodness, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit, in and with us to whom He gives His Word and allows it to abide and whom He does not harden and reject." (F.C., 715, 54-57; Triglotta, 1081.) We are not to brood over these unsearchable mysteries, but to cling to the clear Word of God, in which everything that we need to know for our salvation is plainly stated. (F.C., 711, 33; Triglotta, 1073.)

In those who perish by their own fault we are to perceive the great earnestness of God and His appalling judgment against sin and thus be moved all the more to live constantly

in the fear of God, seeing that we deserve the same fate as the reprobates, because by nature we also have only an evil attitude towards the Word of God.

In ourselves, who are saved, we are to perceive the pure grace of God, glorify and praise it all the more and render thanks to God also in this way, that we apply all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Anything that exceeds these limits we subordinate to the statement of Scripture in Rom. 11:33-36. (F.C., 716, 58-64; Triglotta, 1081.)

II. Antitheses

1) On the basis of these truths we reject every teaching which places the cause of election or predestination unto the adoption of children not solely in God's universal earnest grace and mercy and in the merits of Christ, or, generally speaking, every teaching which in any form and manner or in any respect bases election on, and explains it by, what man is, what he has, does, or refrains from doing.

2) On the other hand, however, we also reject on the basis of these truths every teaching by which those who believe only for a season are numbered with the elect; any teaching which in any manner mingles unbelief or backsliding as well as punishment and judgment of God with the doctrine of the election of grace and thus confounds Law and Gospel; any teaching by which different and mutually contradictory wills of grace are placed in God; any teaching by which an irresistible and partial grace is fictitiously ascribed to God; in short, any view which directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, in any way conflicts with the doctrine of Scripture regarding the one universal grace which is equally earnest and efficacious towards all and which in any way limits the Word of God, which states that God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For instance,

a) The teaching that God has elected us Christians to salvation in preference to others (prae aliis) by granting us, in addition to universal grace, which exists and is efficacious for all, an altogether particular grace, namely, an "election grace," by which He would lead us surely and infallibly to salvation in preference to others;

b) The teaching that it is due to this "election grace" that the means of grace effect conversion and salvation in some and not in others;

c) The teaching that it is a divine mystery, that is, a mystery in God, why the means of grace do not effect conversion in many.

Declaration Regarding the Phrase "Intuitu Fidei Finalis"

1) If the term "election or selection in view of persevering faith (intuitu fidei finalis)" is interpreted in

this manner only, that God has decreed from eternity to give on Judgment Day--for the sake of the merits of Christ imputed to them--the crown of glory to those whom He Himself by His grace has brought to faith and has kept in faith unto the end, and whom by virtue of His omniscience He knows from eternity--then such an interpretation expresses indeed a truth which is clearly revealed in Scripture and which, moreover, as far as it concerns the last of the decrees passed by God regarding the elect, can indeed be included in election or predestination unto the adoption of children and unto salvation. But neither in Scripture nor in the Confessions is this action called election or predestination unto adoption and salvation. What Scripture and the Confessions call election has not taken place "intuitu fidei" (see C, I, 1 and 2).

2) It is wrong to call the truths just outlined a second form of the doctrine of God's election and predestination unto adoption of children and unto salvation; yea, rather we are confronted with two entirely different truths, which cannot be designated by one term without creating boundless confusion.

The doctrine of predestination unto adoption of children and the selection of those who continue in faith to the end unto everlasting glory differ in many points. For

a) The former treats of the entire salvation accorded to us (eight points) in all its details; the latter treats only of the last part, the consummation (glorificatio);

b) The former views the creation and preservation of faith as the result and as the execution of God's plan; the latter views the merits of Christ, apprehended by faith and kept to the end, as the basis and presupposition of the eternal decree of God;

c) The former knows of only one basis for the decree of God, viz., the grace of God and the merits of Christ viewed as having been prepared; the latter knows as the basis the grace of God and the merits of Christ viewed as having been apprehended by faith and kept to the end;

d) The former understands by "electing" the action in eternity by which men are taken from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of Grace; the latter understands by "electing" the segregating, the singling out, of one in preference to others for the purpose of ushering him into heaven;

e) The former understands by "the elect" people who are in a state of grace; the latter understands by "the elect" those who in the sight of God are believers at the last;

f) The former answers the questions: Whence is my past, present, and future salvation? The latter the question: Why has God decreed in eternity to place certain definite persons at His right hand?

g) The former is, according to F.C., 9-11 and 12ff., the way to think and speak "correctly and profitably" of the predestination unto adoption of children; the latter is a different way of speaking regarding the action of God in eternity.

3) It is an undeniable fact that by the rise of the doctrine of an election intuitu fidei finalis and by divergent use of the term "election" involved in this doctrine, trouble and confusion have been caused; the doctrine of the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord has thereby been pushed into the background; and an unsound mixture has been produced out of both.

4) Since the Lutheran Church binds its ministers by a pledge to adhere to the Confessions, the doctrine of election, or predestination, unto adoption of children and unto eternal life, that is, their being ordained unto the adoption of children, etc., is the only doctrine within the Church which may justly claim to be the Church's doctrine of eternal election.

5) Accordingly, the only way to establish peace in the Church is for all to accustom themselves to speak as the Scriptures and the Confessions speak.

Declaration Regarding the Phrase "Cur alii prae aliis?"

As regard the use of the question: "Why are some converted in preference to others?" since God's grace and men's guilt are the same, we declare the following:

A. If the question presupposes that in the last analysis there is, either in God or in man, a uniform cause of conversion and nonconversion, of election and reprobation, the question must be rejected as false in itself and involving an error that utterly subverts a fundamental truth. Scripture and the Confessions know of no identical cause.

1) Scripture teaches quite clearly whence it is that men are converted and saved; that is due solely to the grace of God and in no respect to the activity or conduct of man. (See Theses on Conversion, I, 1-7.)

2) With equal clearness Scripture teaches whence it is that men are not converted and saved, but remain in their lost, sinful condition: that is solely their own fault ("they would not") and in no wise the fault of God. (See Theses on Conversion, I, 9.)

3) By means of our reason we cannot harmonize these two Scripture truths, viz., that the grace of God is the only cause of conversion and that man's fault is the only cause of nonconversion, just as we, by means of our reason, cannot bring Law and Gospel into harmony. (See Theses on Conversion, II, 3, with the footnote.)

4) Nor can we in many instances harmonize God's activity in the world with His revealed will.

We cannot and will not attempt to solve these mysteries, since Scripture does not solve them.

The above declaration we make on the basis of Rom. 11:33-36 and in agreement with the Confession of our Church, F.C., Art. XI, 52-64; M., 715ff.; Triglotta, 1079ff.

B. The question is admissible, however, if the words "prae aliis" do not imply a grace that exists exclusively for the elect (gratia particularis; praeteritio), but are used only for the purpose of calling attention to the mystery referred to in A, Points 3 and 4.

We should, however, like to point out in particular that the bare question "Cur alii prae aliis?" may easily lead to misunderstanding and for that reason should be avoided.

D. Theses on Other Doctrines

I. The Scriptures

1) We pledge adherence to the Holy Scriptures as the only source and norm of doctrine and faith. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21.) Over against modern theology we maintain, now as formerly, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration. (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16.) We believe and confess that Scripture not only contains God's Word, but is God's Word, and hence no errors or contradictions of any sort are found therein.

2) Accordingly, to us all doctrines and statements contained in Scripture are insubvertibly established, and our conscience is bound by them. (John 10:35.) Although some of them may seem or be more important or less important to our life of faith, still as regards their divine character all statements of Scripture are, to us, on the same level.

3) On the other hand, we maintain likewise that only such things as are revealed in Scripture can be an object of faith and doctrine. Although a doctrine may not offend against Scripture, no one has a right to believe or teach something as divine truth without or beyond the authority of Scripture. No error, though it seem ever so insignificant, can claim any right whatsoever.

II. Our Position as Regards the Lutheran Confessions

4) Our Confessions are a presentation and summary of the faith of the Lutheran Church, as it has found expression in its response to needs arising from time to time. They do not claim to be anything else than a confession of the faith dwelling in the heart and of saving truth to be preached in the Church of God.

5) We pledge adherence to all the Confessions of the Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, not "in so far as," but "because," they are a presentation of the pure doctrine of the divine Word.

6) Accordingly, any person assuming the office of teacher in our Church must obligate himself to conduct his office in accordance with the aforementioned Confessions.

7) The pledge to adhere to the Confessions relates only to the doctrinal contents (that is, to the doctrine proclaimed as divine truth and to the rejection of contradictory teachings); however, it relates to these doctrinal contents without exception and limitation in every article and part, no matter whether a doctrine is stated expressly as a confessional doctrine or whether it is adduced only casually for the purpose of explaining, substantiating, etc., some other doctrine.

8) On the other hand, anything that pertains merely to the form of the presentation (historical remarks, purely exegetical questions, etc.) is not binding.

III. Church Fellowship

9) Church fellowship, that is, mutual recognition of Christians as brethren of the faith and their co-operation in church activities, presupposes, according to God's Word and our Confessions, their agreement in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same by word and deed. (Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10, 11; M., 40, Art. 7; 337, 42; 561, 30; p. 16; Triglotta, 47. 517. 843. 19.)

Ignoring doctrinal differences existing at the time when church fellowship is being established and maintained or declaring them to be of no import is unionism, which fictitiously presents a unity that does not exist.

10) The rule is: "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only." Pulpit and altar fellowship without unity in doctrine is a denial of the truth and a sin committed against the erring.

11) Church fellowship with a church body which persistently clings to an error in doctrine and practice must ultimately be dissolved, because unity has already been disrupted by that error.

12) Wherever disagreement in the confession of the one divinely revealed truth arises through the deception of Satan or the frailty of the flesh, it devolves upon us to confess the truth of the divine Word, which alone can overcome error and close the breach.

13) Such confession is done by word and deed and requires, in the first place, that we take our stand firmly with those who confess the truth in its purity and, in the second place, that we oppose those who falsify the truth to any degree.

Note. How an error of this kind must be treated in individual instances, however, and how long the erring must be tolerated in the hope that he can be led to forsake his error, is a problem to be solved by the brotherly love of Christians.

IV. The Church

14) The Church of Christ on earth, established and being built up by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, is composed of all true believers, that is, the totality of those who put their trust in the vicarious living, suffering, and dying of Christ and are united with one another by nothing else than this common faith.

15) Accordingly, we confess with the Apology: "However, the Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward marks, but it consists chiefly in inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God. And yet, this same Church has also external marks by which it may be known; namely, where there is pure use of God's Word and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, there are Christians; and this Church only is called the body of Christ in the Scriptures." (M., 152, 5; Triglotta, 227.)

V. The Spiritual Priesthood

16) Christ has made all believers kings and priests in the sight of God, His Father, and in the saving Gospel and in the Sacraments has bestowed upon them as such all the spiritual possessions which he has acquired by His redemption.

17) Every Christian is to exercise this universal priesthood, e.g., by his testimony in behalf of the saving truth according to opportunity and the measure of his knowledge and ability.

VI. The Pastoral Office

18) As distinct from the universal priesthood, the pastoral office, as regards its essence and purpose, consists in this, that a person qualified for this office and duly called to the same edifies, teaches, and governs a certain congregation in Christ's stead by means of God's Word and administers the Sacraments in its midst.

19) This office is of divine institution, and its functions, aforementioned, are precisely defined in God's Word. Accordingly, it is the right and duty of every Christian congregation to establish this office, and this is done by means of calling a pastor. Such action is a function of the universal priesthood.

20) The calling of a pastor is a right of that congregation in which the minister is to discharge the duties of the office, and by such calling Christ appoints His ministers for the congregation. Ordination is not a divine, but an ecclesiastical ordinance for the public and solemn confirmation of the pastor's call.

VII. Antichrist

21) As regards Antichrist, we confess with the Smalcald Articles that the Pope is "the very Antichrist" (M., 308, 10-14; Triglotta, 475); for among all the anti-christian manifestations in the history of the Church down to the present time there is none in which all the characteristics predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2 are found as in the Papacy. The Papacy, then, being the hereditary enemy of the Church, must be fought with all earnestness. So much can be clearly seen from 2 Thessalonians 2.

22) Whether there will yet be a special development of the antichristian power, and of what character this will be, cannot be determined from the Word of God--a fact with which our faith has to be content.

VIII. Chiliasm

23) Every teaching of a millennium (Revelation 20) which turns the kingdom of Jesus Christ into an external, earthly, and secular kingdom of glory or in any manner denies the permanent cross-bearing character of the Church on earth is to be rejected as a doctrine that is in contradiction to clear statements of Scripture.

24) Even a conception of the millenium which does not bear this more or less physical character, but merely holds that a season of spiritual flourishing for the Church, or a general conversion of the Jews, or a resurrection of the martyrs prior to the Last Day, and similar events are still to be expected has, on the one hand, no clear word of Scripture to support it, and, on the other hand, is contradicted by words of Scripture that are quite clear. For this reason it must not be preached as a doctrine of Scripture. (See above, D, I, 3.)

IX. Sunday

25) Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment in the Small and in the Large Catechism is a masterly presentation of this subject as regards contents, form, and spirit.

26) Every addition to the same which in any manner prescribes some external feature, like a day or a form for worship, as if commanded by God, is not in accord with Scripture or the Confessions.

X. Open Questions

Since the phrase "open questions" is understood in various ways, we declare the following:

27) We reject as a grievous error the attempt to designate as open questions such as, notwithstanding the fact

that they have been answered in God's Word, are to remain undecided and uncertain until they have been decided by a verdict of the Church, thus leaving everybody at liberty until then to hold his own opinion and to teach concerning them what he pleases. All doctrines clearly and plainly revealed in God's Word are definitely decided because of the unconditional authority of the divine Word, no matter whether the Confessions say anything about them or not. There exists in the Church no right whatever to deviate in any manner from the Word of God.

28) However, if by open questions are understood such questions as are not answered by Scripture, though they are suggested in the Scriptures or by the Scriptures, a difference of opinion in answering them is permissible, provided that in doing so the teaching of Scripture is not contradicted. Human opinions of this kind, however, must not be represented as doctrines of Scripture, because they go beyond Scripture. (See above, D, 1, 3.)

29) We recognize indeed that in an attempt to define the extent of the term "open questions" we meet with a difficulty. Practically, however, in any controversial case when the point in controversy is to be defined, it will be made plain by a thorough study of Scripture, whether we are dealing with an article of faith or a so-called problem in theology. In the latter case a difference in conviction must not be regarded as a cause for church division because the authority of Scripture is not impugned.

The principle expressed in the Confessions we are to heed: "That a distinction should and must by all means be observed between unnecessary and useless wrangling, on the one hand, whereby the Church ought not to be disturbed, since it destroys more than it builds up, and necessary controversy, on the other hand, as when a controversy occurs such as involves the articles of faith or the chief heads of the Christian doctrine, where for the defense of the truth the false opposite doctrine must be reprov'd." (M., 572, 15; Triglotta, 857.)

With reference to the above theses, adopted by representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin synods, the following separate declaration was offered by two members of the committee, to be recorded in the minutes:

Separate Declaration.

The theses treat the doctrine of election, or of the predestination unto adoption of children a posteriori, that is, from the viewpoint of believing Christians, and answer the question, "Whence is my present, past, and future salvation?" We concede the right to take this view and also give it the preference for practical ends. However, we cannot share the

opinion that Scripture and the Confessions present the doctrine of election chiefly from this viewpoint and that, accordingly, only this form of the doctrine is to be authorized in the Church.

Furthermore, we cannot say that the so-called second form of the doctrine which has been used by our Church for more than three hundred years gives expression to another "doctrine"; we regard it rather as another "method of teaching," by which the right doctrine of election can be maintained to its full extent.

As regards the doctrinal contents of the theses, we are in complete harmony therewith.

We offer this declaration, partly because we wish to act in perfect sincerity, partly because we cannot admit that our Lutheran Church for the entire period of three hundred years did not possess the right doctrine of election, or of the predestination unto adoption of children.

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