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The Historic Difference of the Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synod, and the Union Attempts of the Nineteen Twenties

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THE HISTORIC DIFFERENCES OF THE MISSOURI, OHIO,
IOWA, AND BUFFALO SYNODS, AND THE UNION ATTEMPTS OF
THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
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Bachelor of Divinity

by

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INTRODUCTION

As one studies the histories of the Missouri, Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo Synods he is struck by the frequency with which they attempted to unite with one another. Even since 1930 when Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo merged into the American Lutheran Church, efforts have been put forth by both Missouri and the A. L. C. to become one. In every case, however, lasting union has never been achieved. Each time union was attempted, it ended in failure.

This thesis discusses the union attempts which took place during the Nineteen-twenties. It was during this decade that the four synods mentioned above all tried to unite with one another, for the first time.

In view of the fact that three of these synods (Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo) did eventually unite into the American Lutheran Church, one is immediately urged to ask himself the question, "Why did not Missouri also enter into the A. L. C. merger?" It is, therefore, the goal of this thesis to answer this question. To do this it is necessary to reach into the history of Missouri's connections with the other three synods during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Many reasons for withdrawal from the 1930 A. L. C. merger can be found in this period. To show the trend of developments as they took place during the Twenties, Convention reports from 1920, 1923, 1926, and 1929 have been studied

thoroughly and the results recorded. Herein are expressed the accomplishments, feelings, and findings of the Missouri Synod Union Committees and the reasons why they recommended not uniting at the 1929 convention of the Missouri Synod in River Forest, Illinois.

This thesis is written from Missouri Synod's point of view. It attempts to answer why she did not unite with Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo and nothing more. It restates the reasons which Missouri herself gave and the union attempts which she put forth. It neither attempts to give the viewpoints of the other participating synods nor a defense of Missouri's position.

CHAPTER II

MISSOURI'S EARLY RELATIONS WITH THE OHIO, IOWA, AND BUFFALO SYNODS

The union attempts of the Nineteen-twenties cannot be fully understood without certain background information of the connections of these four groups. During the history of their developments frequent doctrinal differences arose which neither of them could simply ignore in their attempts to find a doctrinal basis for union in the Nineteen-twenties. This chapter shall strive to point up the early connections of the four synods involved, the doctrinal issues which separated them, and the results of their mutual activities.

The Missouri Synod and the Buffalo Synod

The Buffalo Synod was organized on June 25, 1845 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by Rev. J. A. A. Grabau, its earliest recognized leader, three other clergymen, and eighteen laymen.¹ Its membership was composed predominately of Prussians who left their homeland for the preservation of pure Lutheran doctrine which they were forced to sacrifice because of the Prussian Union of 1817. Prussian Germany was at the time of the Prussian Union chiefly composed of Lutheran and Reformed.

¹P. H. Buchring, The Spirit of the American Lutheran Church. (Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, c.1940), p. 20.

"King Frederick William III (1797-1840) conceived the idea of an external union of the two churches, in which both Lutheran and Reformed should be privileged to retain their respective confessions but carry on no controversies over the points in which they differed."² Such unionism especially a forced unionism, could not be tolerated by staunch Lutheran consciences. After numerous attempts to convince the government of the fallacy of this move, approximately 1000 souls under the leadership of Rev. Grabau, embarked for the new world arriving in New York City in October of 1839.³ The majority of these immigrants settled in upper New York State around Albany and Buffalo.⁴ During the following years several more dissenting Lutheran groups emigrated from Prussia under the leadership of Pastors Kindermann, Krause, and Ehrenstroem. A large percentage of this group, plus a few from the first emigration, pushed their way further inland and settled in the state of Wisconsin.⁵

Of the Wisconsin settlers there were some who settled in districts somewhat isolated from others of their group. Because of the acute shortage of pastors, some portions of the Prussian flock were left unserved. Most effected was a

²Ibid., pp. 15-16.

³Ibid., p. 20.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

group of about forty families who journeyed to Wisconsin under the leadership of one Captain von Rohr, settling in the neighborhood of Milwaukee.⁶ For nearly a year they lived without pastoral care. By means of letters they described their plight to Grabau in Buffalo. When several attempts failed to secure an answer, they took matters into their own hands and elected a teacher, Joachim Luck, to conduct their services and administer the sacraments until such time as a pastor could be secured.⁷ Upon hearing of this, Grabau became very alarmed since this procedure was a violation of what he considered to be the true ministerial office and the rights of the congregation. To inform his congregations of the correct teaching and procedure in this matter he sent out a circular letter (Hirtenbrief) to his congregations. This was the first public statement in which the theories, beliefs, and practices of Grabau were openly set forth and presented.

About this time a group of Saxons emigrants, who had settled in Missouri, became the object of Grabau's interest. Of the several Lutheran groups which had settled in America, this is the one to which Grabau felt the closest. Therefore

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷ Ibid.

he submitted one of his letters to them hoping to secure their criticism.⁸

It is interesting that the Saxons should receive Grabau's letter dealing with the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry only a short time before the Altenburg debate which found its focal point in the same two doctrines.⁹ The almost complete disillusionment which the Missouri Saxons suffered at the hands of hierarchial Pastor Stephan caused Pastor C. F. W. Walther and other pastors to formulate precisely a doctrine of the Church on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions, and embodied it in the Altenburg Theses. It was these theses which formed the substance of Missouri's answer to Grabau's Hirtenbrief.

Thus Missouri and Buffalo had their first formal contact; one which sowed the seeds for a history of parted ways. In a true ecumenical spirit reconciliation was attempted in 1866 at the Buffalo Colloquy where representatives of both groups met for discussion. Since the positions of both are of importance for understanding the union attempts of the twenties, a short synopsis of the controverted points are ^{here} included. The doctrines under discussion at the Buffalo

⁸Arthur Both, "The Missouri Synod and the Buffalo Synod," Ebenezer, Edited by W. H. T. Dau. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1922), p. 124.

⁹For future reference "Altenburg Debate," Lutheran Cyclopedia, Edited by Erwin L. Lueker. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 21.

Colloquy were the doctrines of the Church, the Ministry, and the Office of the Keys.

The Doctrine of the Church

Grabau's doctrine of the Church strongly emphasized its visibility. In his fifth pastoral letter he states, "that by it (the one holy Church of God) are not meant scattered believers and saints, but those who gather about the Word and Sacraments" and "that these church gatherings are such as have the Word and Sacraments in purity in the ministry."¹⁰ He even went so far as to say that outside the Lutheran church there is no salvation. This thesis he explained in his second pastoral letter in the following way: "When we say that outside the Lutheran Church nobody can be saved, we mean to say that a man must be a living member of this orthodox communion, and that he is in duty bound to flee all meetings of heretics and schismatics."¹¹ To make his thesis yet stronger he denied that Christians could be found where the Word and Sacraments, though obscured, are not altogether denied, but remain in essence.¹²

¹⁰Both, op. cit., p. 128.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²J. L. Neve, "Doctrinal Controversies of Missouri," A Brief History of the Lutheran Church in America, Revised Edition, (Burlington Ia.: The German Literary Board, c. 1916), p. 281.

Missouri, on the other hand, maintained on the basis of Luke 20,21 that the Church is invisible in every sense of the word. It held firmly to the words of Luther, namely, that "Christendom is scattered bodily but united spiritually."¹³ It would have it understood that according to the confessions there are yet children of God outside the Lutheran Church and that because of them, even communions holding false doctrines, but not denying God's Word outrightly, may still be called churches.¹⁴ Salvation, it stated, is not dependent upon any visible communion, but upon the sacrificial merits of Jesus Christ appropriated to the sinner by faith.¹⁵

The Doctrine of the Ministerial Office

In Grabau's estimation the chief criterion for a valid call is that a congregation be assisted by the ministerium in selecting a pastor and that it is not the congregation alone that calls but in a sense the entire Church.¹⁶ Ministers who are not called in this manner have neither right

¹³Both, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 131.

nor power to officiate, and the Lord's Supper, given by them, is merely bread and wine.¹⁷ He denied that the call alone makes a minister but stated that it is the call plus the rite of ordination.¹⁸

In his doctrine of the Ministry, Grabau found room for almost unlimited ministerial authority. To emphasize this position he set forth the belief that the ministry forms a separate and distinct class, that the layman must obey his minister, and that the congregation does not have the right to judge the doctrine of its pastor.¹⁹

Walther, representing Missouri, held views which were in strict opposition to the above. He held that the office of the ministry is conveyed by God through the congregation alone and that it is the call which makes a man a minister, ordination being merely an ecclesiastical rite which publicly witnesses to the acceptance of a call. In his interpretation every Christian is a priest of God who has the right of the office of the keys, to baptize, to bless and consecrate the holy bread and wine, to retain and remit sins, to offer sacrifice, to pray for others, and to judge doctrine. But since all Christians cannot exercise simultaneously these offices, God commanded that the many spiritual priests

¹⁷ Neve, op. cit., p. 282.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Both, op. cit., p. 131.

choose one among them as pastor, who, as a representative of the whole congregation, performs the ministerial rites.²⁰ A call is valid which is extended by a congregation, not the entire church, though it may seek the advice of another minister. He strongly abhorred the teaching that the ministry is a separate and holy rank and stated that a congregation must obey its pastor only in so far as he speaks the Word of God.²¹

The Office of the Keys

After studying Grabau's teaching on the office of the Ministry his doctrine regarding the office of the keys can take only one course. This course is, that the power to remit and retain sins is vested alone in the ministry. The congregation has the right to exhort a sinner, but the minister alone can forgive or retain his sins. Excommunication, he taught, is a mark of the true visible Church.²²

On the other hand, in line with his teaching on the office of the Ministry, Walther maintained that the office of the keys is given to the whole Church, each group of

²⁰C. F. W. Walther, "The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry," Walther and the Church, edited by Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1938) p. 76.

²¹Ibid., p. 79-85.

²²Neve, Loc. cit.

Christians, to all spiritual priests, and the minister exercises them in their name.²³ Thus each Christian has the right and power to remit and retain the sins of another, though the minister often does it as his representative. Excommunication is not a mark of the true visible Church but only a duty of it.

Because of the wide divergency of beliefs on these doctrines, and because of the stern apologetics of both parties, bitterness of feeling grew between the two groups. The ultra-dogmatism of Grabau and his associates only tended to emphasize this feeling. When Buffalo applied its theories of the Church and the Ministerial Office to practice, it pronounced excommunication upon individuals, factions, and entire congregations which did not agree with their teaching.²⁴ Missouri did not hesitate to supply these congregations with ministers, and the bitterness grew yet more. The final break came in 1859 when Buffalo pronounced excommunication upon the entire Missouri Synod (over 200 congregations.)²⁵

The result of the Buffalo Colloquy was that Buffalo was divided into three factions. One faction of twelve ministers joined the Missouri Synod while the other two parted ways

²³Both, op. cit., p. 131.

²⁴Buehring, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁵"Buffalo Synod," Lutheran Cyclopedia, p. 148.

under the leadership of Grabau and von Rohr respectively.²⁶
 This split took place in the same year as the Buffalo
 Colloquy.

After 1866 a milder spirit gradually developed in the
 Buffalo Synod. P. H. Buehring in his book, The Spirit of
the American Lutheran Church, quotes Dr. E. Deneff, historian
 of the synod as saying,

The rigorous practice of banning and excommunication,
 of which so much was heard before, now disappears
 almost entirely from the synodical records. . . .
 Whereas formerly the theory was maintained that the
 Ministerium had the power to make regulations for
 congregations, we now soon read that congregations are
 requested to make their own rules, for example, with
 reference to collections: and in the synodical con-
 stitution adopted later, the sentence appeared, 'The
 congregations administer all their external and
 internal affairs independently' -- a statement which
 is also found in the congregational constitutions.
 At this time we have the impression that perhaps
 nowhere the rights of the congregations are guarded
 so anxiously and conscientiously as in the Buffalo
 Synod. . . ."27

The Missouri Synod, Loehe, and the Iowa Synod

One can hardly discuss either the Iowa or the Missouri
 Synods without mentioning the name of Wilhelm Loehe of
 Newendettelsau, for he is intimately connected with the be-
 ginnings of both. Through his interest in American

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Buehring, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

Lutheranism both money and personnel were sent over in generous amounts. His earliest connections with American Lutheranism were with the Michigan and Ohio Synods. This relationship was, however, of short duration, since he found both synods unsound in doctrine.²⁸

As early as 1844 Loehe sought to get in touch with the Saxons in St. Louis. Working through his men and by way of correspondence, and upon receiving issues of the Lutheraner, he concluded that the Saxons of Missouri were of sound doctrine and that he could thus work with them in harmony.²⁹

One of Loehe's primary interests was the education of the clergy and teachers of the Church. Only in this way did he feel that the Church could do an effective job of meeting the world. Upon the suggestion of Dr. Sihler, whom Loehe regarded highly, a theological school was established at Fort Wayne which was, in 1847, at the organization of the Missouri Synod in Chicago, turned over to Missouri.³⁰ This was a very generous gift considering the land and buildings involved.

When the Missouri Synod was organized (1847) certain of Loehe's men became a part of it. It is true that when Loehe

²⁸ John H. C. Fritz, "Missouri and Iowa," Ebenezer, op cit, p. 162.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

saw the draft of the first synodical constitution he did not agree with it in all respects; but nevertheless he permitted his men to continue within the new Synod. In 1851 Walther and Wyneken paid him a visit and discussed their differences. Loehe admitted that he could voice no objections but that he was not altogether satisfied with their Scriptural basis. He had a tendency to lean toward Grabau, although he was not nearly as extreme in his views. On the other hand, he dreaded the Missourian theory of congregational independence as "amerikanische Poebelherrschaft" (American mob-rule).³¹

The issue upon which Loehe and the few men who organized the Iowa Synod finally departed from the Missouri Synod, was that of the Church and the Ministry.³² The occasion for the split came in a private dispute between G. M. Grossmann and his pastor at Saginaw, Michigan. Grossmann had come to Saginaw under Loehe with several students to organize a teacher's seminary.³³ He joined the Missouri Synod congregation there which was ministered to by Pastor Cloeter. Grossmann, of course, held Loehe's views while Cloeter held Missouri's. Because Grossmann held different views, Cloeter

³¹Buehring, op. cit., p. 37.

³²Fritz, op. cit., p. 164.

³³Grossmann worked under Loehe and strongly advocated his views.

had him excommunicated from his congregation.³⁴ Grossmann was deeply effected by this move because he did not feel that his differences warrented such serious action.³⁵ To arbitrate in the matter the synodical president, Pastor Wyneken, was called in and a settlement was made, Grossmann being restored into the Saginaw congregation.³⁶

Nevertheless, President Wyneken together with a pastoral conference held in Saginaw, insisted that the founding of the teacher's seminary was a schismatic act, that Loehe and Grossmann must either give it up entirely, or turn it over to the Missouri Synod, or relocate in another part of the country.³⁷ In a private conversation with Grossmann, Wyneken suggested that Iowa might be a favorable place. Grossmann, Diedendorf, and a layman named Gottlieb Amman siezed on the idea and departed in a company of twenty people in September of 1853.³⁸

The Iowa Synod was organized on August 24, 1854, by

³⁴Buehring, op. cit., p. 138.

³⁵Grossmann was an early organizer of the Iowa Synod. His views on the Church and the ministry were held throughout the history of his synod.

³⁶Buehring, loc. cit.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 38-39.

four men in St. Sebald, Iowa.³⁹ Being but young men with limited experience they did not draw up an involved constitution for their body, but contented themselves with a brief confessional statement which read thus:

The Synod accepts all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, because it believes that all their symbolical decisions of disputable questions which had arisen before or during the time of the Reformation were made in accordance with the Word of God. But because within the Lutheran Church there are different tendencies, Synod declares itself in favor of the tendency which, by means of the confessions and on the basis of the Word of God, strives toward a greater completeness.⁴⁰

Missouri was immediately struck with the unspecific content of this confession. It pointed out that by it a considerable portion of our Lutheran Confessions were excluded and that especially the second part of the statement offered a wide open door to every kind of heresy. This accusation forced Iowa to formulate her views on the Church and the Ministry. A series of theses was drawn up and published in the synodical church paper, the Kirchenblatt, which at once drew fire from Missouri. About the same time Iowa befriended two former members of the Missouri Synod who had been suspended for holding rather chiliastic views. This caused Missouri to charge Iowa with eschatological errors in

³⁹The four were Grossmann, ^{Deindörfer} ~~Diedendorf~~, Fritschel, and Schueller. The last two were sent over by Loehe in July of 1854.

⁴⁰Buehring, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

addition to its other faults.⁴¹

In its convention of that same year (1858) Iowa discussed two papers dealing with the proper attitude toward the confessions, the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry, and of the Last Things. With regard to the proper attitude toward the Confessions, Iowa stated that the Confessions are historical documents and can only be interpreted in the light of their times. Hence their doctrinal statements can only be considered binding in so far as they apply to issues in their own time or to similar issues today.⁴² This historical interpretation than also contains the corollary that the doctrinal development of the church is not complete and must be enlarged upon on the merits of each new situation on the basis of Scripture.

In the framework of the above, Iowa concluded on eschatology that since the confessions are not specific on this matter, it is probable that conflicting views will prevail and should be tolerated, provided that they are not contrary to the Word of God, until such time as the Church may set forth a confessional declaration.⁴³

It must be noted that Missouri and Iowa differed severely on this point. Missouri was a strict confessional

⁴¹Ibid., p. 42.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁴³Ibid., p. 43.

synod because she believed that the lax and divergent theology of American Lutheranism was due to its de-emphasis on the Confessions. To her the Confessions were as pertinent to her time as they were to the sixteenth century and should not be departed from one iota.⁴⁴ Had Iowa and Missouri come to agree on this issue, they would possibly have agreed on all the others as well, for this basic disagreement lay at the foundation of all their differences. While Missouri said that for Church unity there must be complete agreement on all doctrinal issues unless they were neither dealt with in Scripture nor the Confessions, Iowa said in its Toledo convention (1867), "There never has been an absolute doctrinal unity in the Church and it ought not to be made a condition of church-fellowship."⁴⁵ C L T

At the same convention, in view of the existing differences between herself and Missouri, it was resolved that a colloquy be held with Missouri for the purpose of discussing doctrinal differences. This colloquy was held November 13-18, 1867, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁴⁶ At this meeting the attitude of both synods to the Confessions and to "open questions" and some points on eschatology were

⁴⁴Neve, op. cit., p. 286.

⁴⁵Fritz, op. cit., p. 166.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 167.

discussed. Time did not permit discussion of the Church and the ministerial office, on which the two synods had originally separated.⁴⁷ The results of this colloquim are stated very well by Buehring. He says

. . . while a complete agreement was not arrived at, unquestionably it resulted in the clarification of several important issues. Iowa agreed that the obligation of the confessions extends over all articles of faith, no matter in what form they appear in the Symbolical Books. It also agreed to drop the terms "open questions", while both sides agreed that there are certain "theological or exegetical problems", i. e., matters which are not clearly set forth in the Holy Scriptures or are not touched upon at all, and that such "problems" are not to be considered divisive in the church. On several other points a reproachment was achieved, mainly because the Iowans showed a readiness to modify some of their more extreme eschatological statements of former years, and explained others in a manner that seemed tolerable to Missouri.⁴⁸

It goes without saying that the two young synods moved closer together in their Milwaukee discussions. However, there were still many other things which kept them apart. The reader will take note of Buehring's comment on "open questions." This was the issue which separated Missouri and Iowa more than anything else. It echoes back to what was said previously about the Iowan interpretation of the Confessions.] What could not be fully stated and

⁴⁷"Iowa and Other States, Ev. Luth. Synod of," Lutheran Cyclopedia, op. cit., p. 520.

⁴⁸Buehring, op. cit., p. 44.

what was regarded by them in the Confessions as speaking only to the historical situation of the sixteenth century, was labeled an "open question." This appeared as crass liberalism to Missouri. The Milwaukee Colloquy succeeded in softening the tone of this disagreement but never solved it completely.)

In 1873 the Northern Iowa Conference of the Iowa Synod requested its Synod, in session at Davenport Iowa, to state its position over against Missouri, especially for the sake of those pastors who had recently joined their ranks and hence were not acquainted with the course of the controversy. As a result twenty theses were adopted which sought to specify to what point the two synods had progressed in their differences up till that year (1873).⁴⁹ The document was called the Davenport Theses and treated the following doctrines: Church and the Ministry, Confessions, Antichrist, Chiliasm, and "Open Questions."

In order that the differences of the two synods might be clearly seen, each major doctrine will be discussed, and on the basis of the Davenport Theses, the differences will be pointed up.

⁴⁹"Davenport Theses," Lutheran Cyclopedia, op. cit., p. 283.

Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry

The differences on the doctrine of the Church are almost negligible. For a time Iowa and Loche emphasized more of the visibility of the Church than Missouri. Thesis two stated:

. . . we maintain that the Church is, indeed, chiefly the communion of the Holy Ghost and of faith in the heart, but it is also the communion of the Word and the Sacraments, and that in this sense it is at once visible and invisible.⁵⁰

Missouri found this tolerable since it too taught the visible communion of the Word and Sacrament but continued to emphasize that for salvation communion with the invisible Church was alone necessary.

It was on the doctrine of the Ministry that there was a wide margin of difference. Iowa sets forth its position in thesis four when it says:

On the doctrine of the ministry, we cannot concede that, according to the confession of our Church, the ministry originates through the transference of the rights of the spiritual priesthood possessed by the individual Christian.⁵¹

It was emphatically stated that the office was conferred by Christ upon the Church as such by the call of the congregation and the ordination.⁵² The ordination was, according

⁵⁰ Neve, "Davenport Theses," Thesis 2, op. cit., p. 440.

⁵¹ Ibid., thesis 4.

⁵² Ibid., thesis 5.

to Scripture, the liturgical form of the transference of the call.

Missouri stated to the contrary that the office of the ministry has been conferred upon the Church in the spiritual priesthood of all believers and is transferred upon an individual by the individual members of the congregation. The Church (the ministerium and the congregation) does not hold the authority of the ministry but the individual members of the priesthood banded together in a congregation. God works through the congregation (laymen and pastor as part of one body, being brothers in the faith) in choosing men for the office of the ministry.⁵⁴

Attitude toward the Confessions

The differences on attitudes toward the confessions has been discussed previously. However, by this time (1873) the attitudes of both had been somewhat modified. It is significant to note that in thesis six, where Iowa points out her differences with Missouri, she speaks in the past tense. Evidently she is recounting the disagreement as it existed before the Milwaukee Colloquy. At the time of the writing of the Davenport Theses her view had come to a point of compromise with Missouri. To illustrate this, thesis

⁵³Ibid., p. 294.

⁵⁴Ibid.

six is here reproduced.

At the colloquium in Milwaukee, Missouri abandoned the assertion that each and every doctrine which occurs in any manner in the symbols is on that very account binding: and we on our part abandoned the attempts, by means of a distinction between confessional statements and elaborative or demonstrative statements, to define the boundary between what is binding and what is not binding in the symbols. An agreement was reached, in accordance with which both sides designated all the articles of faith contained in the symbols as confessionally binding.⁵⁵

The Antichrist

By her own admission Iowa accepted everything which the Symbolical books had to say on the doctrine of the Antichrist. She openly asserted, with the confessions, that the anti-christian character of the pope, and she acknowledged that all the characteristics of the Antichrist agree with the Popes kingdom and members. She, however, felt that the exegetical side of this problem still had room for development and therefore questioned whether the prediction of the Antichrist, as foretold in Daniel 11, refers to a specific individual.

Missouri did not disagree with Iowa on this point but rather accused her of not going far enough. She held that in the predictions of Daniel 11 a specific person, namely the existing Pope and succeeding Popes, are referred to. By her standard the Antichrist of the last times existed in the

⁵⁵Ibid., thesis 7. p. 441.

living person of the Pope, alone and exclusively.

The personalized element in Missouri's doctrine Iowa could not accept. In thesis number eight she says,

Missouri maintained that the Antichrist, in the real sense of the word, is the pope alone and exclusively; but with this assertion we cannot agree.⁵⁶

That this question, however, should be divisive to church fellowship was something completely foreign to the thinking of Iowa. The Iowans considered it an "open question" while Missouri did not.⁵⁷

Chiliasm

Missouri accused Iowa of chiliasm when she befriended two of its ministers who held such views. This accusation was not at all far fetched since Diedendorf, the historian of the Iowans, admits in his history, that in 1858, many members of the Synod held chiliastic views though this was by no means the official doctrine of the synod.⁵⁸ Another argument in support of the Saxon accusation was that Loehe had expressed himself several times as holding views in

⁵⁶ Ibid., thesis 8.

⁵⁷ Missouri eventually abandoned its stand when in 1876 one of its pastors took Iowa's position. A debate in the Western District resolved to regard the "personalized" interpretation of the Antichrist as an open question. Thus, in essence, Missouri also came to regard this phase of the doctrine of antichrist as an open question. Ibid., pp. 297-298.

⁵⁸ Buehring, op. cit., p. 43.

agreement with the "Biblical Chiliasts." In consequence of this many of the men who had been sent from Germany to the Iowa Synod concurred with him in this belief.⁵⁹

Through Missouri's efforts and the efforts of some of the Iowans, these views were all but abandoned. Iowa herself states, in thesis eleven, her agreement with Missouri.

As regards the so-called Chiliasm, we agree with our opponents in rejecting every doctrine of a thousand years' reign which would at any time rob the spiritual kingdom of our Lord of its characters as a spiritual kingdom of grace and the cross, and convert it into an outward, earthly and worldly kingdom.⁶⁰

But, while Iowa did not disagree with Missouri on this issue, she did say that the belief in Christ's thousand years reign, as it is prophecied in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation of St. John, is still a matter of fulfillment in the future, and is regarded as an opinion which the church may tolerate.⁶¹ This Missouri could not accept. Discussions between the two, however, did tend to modify Missouri's view and to make her more tolerant of this opinion as not being a point for exclusion from church fellowship.

The chief divisive issue at stake then was the resurrection spoken of in Revelation twenty. Walther and Missouri maintained that a double resurrection could not be found

⁵⁹Neve, Loc. cit.

⁶⁰Ibid., thesis 11. p. 442.

⁶¹Ibid., thesis 12.

in the passage and that any interpretation other than a complete single resurrection was a denial of the one general resurrection.⁶²

Iowa did not go as far as Missouri on this point but stated that she was not ready to be dogmatic in either direction since she felt that there could possibly be room for a dual interpretation. The only heresy she saw was if someone would specify "how and where this reign of the risen saints shall take place."⁶³

This question was never entirely settled and became a point of suspicion in the union attempts of the nineteen twenties.

Open Questions

Differing teachings on "open questions" continued to lay at the basis of the Missouri-Iowan controversy. If complete agreement could not be reached on a doctrine discussed either in Scripture or in the confessions, Iowa termed it an "open question" and tolerated the difference on the theory that not enough basis could be found (though future and further exegetical study might reveal it) to unquestionably support either view.⁶⁴

⁶²Ibid., theses 13-14.

⁶³Ibid., thesis 15.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 290-291.

Missouri, on the other hand, held that to allow two different views to exist on any doctrine of Scripture was an indication of disloyalty to the Word of God. In her opinion, the Church was to decide which view it would hold when there was disagreement. Not to do this she regarded as a schismatic act.⁶⁵

The many controversies which clustered around these doctrines resulted in feelings of bitterness between the two groups.⁶⁶ At its twenty-fifth anniversary (1879) Iowa drew up several theses, number 10 of which shows definite traces of animosity towards the Missourians, particularly because of their strict intolerance.⁶⁷ What feelings they possessed were certainly shared by Missouri although time and the grace of God had somewhat healed them by the time of the negotiations of the nineteen twenties. Nevertheless, some of them no doubt still existed at that time and played into the deliberations. It must be emphasized that the feelings

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Minor discussions were also held on the question of Sunday and usury but since they are of minor importance we will omit them here. Iowa also played a part in the predestinarian controversy. Since, however, it was Ohio who played the major part with Missouri on this dispute, predestination will be considered under the next chapter.

⁶⁷ Fritz, op. cit., pp. 168-169.

were not personal but were reactions against the differing types of feelings which existed within the two groups.⁶⁸

The Missouri Synod and the Ohio Synod

In the latter part of the eighteenth and early half of the nineteenth centuries when industrious Americans set their eyes westward across the Allegheny Mountains in quest for land and opportunity, there was among the many thousands of migrators a goodly portion of Lutherans. Ohio was referred to in those days as part of the great northwest and into this area, especially from Pennsylvania, came many members of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. As settlements began to spring up several far seeing pastors, serving in Pennsylvania, saw the need for their services among these newly settled brethren in the faith. Some of these men settled in Ohio while others made missionary journeys among the Lutheran settlers.

During most of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, this new field was referred to as a branch of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. Conferences among the ministering pastors were held yearly and in 1816 a petition was sent to the mother synod asking for permission to organize a separate ministerium.⁶⁹ By 1818 final plans were completed

⁶⁸These feelings being, namely, that Iowa resented Missouri's strict intolerance while Missouri resented Iowa's liberalism.

⁶⁹Buehring, op. cit., p. 61.

and on September 14, ten clergymen, two candidates, and eight lay delegates met at Somerset, Ohio and organized what was later called the Joint Synod of Ohio.⁷⁰

Thus the joint Synod of Ohio was mothered and nurtured by the Pennsylvania Ministerium. It was, then, not at all unnatural that she should inherit and for a time carry some of its characteristics. One of these characteristics was a tendency toward a liberal unionism. If one would examine Ohio's first constitution, he would be surprised to find not a trace of a confessional statement. The reason for this was that young Ohio had adopted verbatim the constitution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.⁷¹ The succeeding years of its existence, however, show a trend toward a more confessional and conservative theology especially through the influence of the small conservative Tennessee Synod and later, most particularly, of the Missouri Synod. Thus it came about that in 1831, when a constitution for their young seminary in Columbus was drafted, it contained the following statement:

It is also the object of this institution to teach in the courses in theology the doctrines of our Church as they are contained in the Augsburg Confession and in the other Symbolical Books of our church, purely and without any adulterations.⁷²

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 62.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 70.

⁷²Ibid., p. 71.

This trend continued until, in 1836, Ohio demanded that all its pastors adhere strictly to the Lutheran confessions. Finally in 1882 it adopted almost word for word the strict conservative confessional statement of the Missouri Synod in its new constitution of that year.⁷³ Another definite indication of this trend was its refusal to unite with the somewhat "liberal" General Council at its organization in 1866.⁷⁴

Although various contacts between Missouri and Ohio were made during the Eighteen-forties, its most important first contacts were made in a series of free conferences held between 1856 and 1859.⁷⁵ The Augsburg Confession was discussed at these meetings and invitations were extended to all who subscribed unconditionally to this confession.⁷⁶ Ohio felt the influence of Missouri very strongly at these meetings and it can be safely said that here were sown the seeds for the Synodical Conference.

During this period and all the way up until 1880 the relations between the two synods were indeed happy. The free conferences of the Fifties brought about a mutual

⁷³Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁷⁴Neve, op. cit., p. 350.

⁷⁵Conferences were held at Columbus, Ohio (Oct. 1-7, 1856), Pittsburgh, Penn. (Oct. 29-Nov. 4, 1857), Cleveland, Ohio (Aug. 5-11, 1858), and Fort Wayne, Ind. (1859). "Free Lutheran Conferences," Lutheran Cyclopedia, op. cit., p. 390.

⁷⁶Ibid.

recognition on the part of both, in 1866, as orthodox Lutheran Synods.⁷⁷ Ohio has always maintained an ecumenical spirit which reached out to other Lutheran groups who were one in faith and confession with her. Therefore, it was that she very willingly became a part of the Synodical conference with Missouri and other participating synods, in 1872.⁷⁸ So interested was Ohio in a genuine Lutheran union of the various orthodox bodies in America that Neve tells us, "Ohio stood ready to sacrifice its identity and its seminary to a general genuinely Lutheran Synod."⁷⁹

Although an orthodox Lutheran union of the various orthodox synods was in the minds of many, it was the Eastern District of the Joint Synod of Ohio, convening in Youngstown, Ohio in 1870 which gave the first incentive to the Synodical Conference. Unanimously this district acknowledged Missouri as orthodox and resolved to ask its synod to appoint a committee to meet and discuss union with them.⁸⁰ In October of that same year Ohio accepted the resolution of its Eastern District and resolved to appoint a committee of five pastors to continue correspondence with the Missouri

⁷⁷ Bushring, op. cit., p. 67.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 68.

⁷⁹ Neve, Loc. cit.

⁸⁰ A. W. Meyer, "The Organization of the Synodical Conference," Ebenezer, op. cit., p. 326.

Synod and to open correspondence with other orthodox synods (meaning the Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, and Norwegian Synods).⁸¹ The response was favorable so that in 1871 the approached synods met twice and adopted a draft for the proposed union "declaring that the organization of a new general body along strictly confessional lines, free from all unionistic and lax practices, was necessary for the preservation and spread of Lutheran unity."⁸² The organizational convention met July 10-16, 1872, in Milwaukee at which time a constitution was drawn up and adopted.⁸³

The relations between Ohio and Missouri, as joint members of the newly organized body, grew in cordiality. In 1877 Ohio instructed the board of its college to confer the degree of Doctor of Divinity on Walther, and in 1880 called a Missouri man, Prof. F. W. Stellhorn, to fill a vacancy in the faculty of their seminary.⁸⁴ But what might be called the calm before the storm was soon to end. The calm ended and the storm broke over a paper delivered by Dr. Walther to the Western District of the Missouri Synod on the doctrine

⁸¹A. P. Voss, Editor in chief. Continuing In His Word. (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Northwestern Publishing House. c.1951), p. 74.

⁸²"Synodical Conference of North America, The Ev. Luth.," Lutheran Cyclopedia, op. cit., p. 1030.

⁸³Meyer, op. cit., p. 327.

⁸⁴Neve, op. cit., p. 351.

of Predestination.⁸⁵ Here certain differences appeared which had not been discovered before, and Ohio immediately took up the refutation. Walther and Missouri were accused of crypto-calvinism. A heated controversy on predestination and conversion followed which eventually resulted in the withdrawal of Ohio from the Synodical Conference in 1881.⁸⁶ Conferences were held in September 1880, January 1881, and May 1881, but all were unsuccessful in healing the breach.

The controversy centered chiefly around the following four points.

1. Missouri affirmed that God, from eternity, out of pure mercy and for the sake of the pure merits of Christ, elected certain of his children unto salvation and consequently to everything that pertains to it, namely, to faith, repentance, and conversion.⁸⁷

In opposition, Ohio held the intuitu fidei which teaches that God does not elect unto faith, repentance, and conversion, but in view of them.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ J. T. Mueller, "The Predestinarian Controversy," Ebenezer, op. cit., pp. 408-409.

⁸⁶ C. V. Sheatsley, "Efforts at Lutheran Union," History of the Joint Synod of Ohio (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, c. 1919), pp. 159-184.

⁸⁷ Mueller, op. cit., pp. 409-410.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 411.

2. Missouri held that God does not elect because of a general benevolent will for such an election could at best generate only a temporary faith.

Ohio countered with the teaching that God does elect because of His benerous benevolent will because of the faith which He foresees in man.⁸⁹

3. Missouri accused Ohio of a subtle synergistic view of conversion because the latter denied that God has decided by an absolute decree who and how many must be saved. The Missourians based this on the Ohio stand that God elects in view of faith, namely because he could foresee some good in man. It was felt that Ohio was here allowing man to cooperate in his conversion.

Ohio denied this on the ground that it teaches from beginning to end that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that man can do nothing to promote it, though he can hinder it. She opposed Missouri on this score because she felt that Missouri was inserting into this doctrine an irresistible grace and was thus bordering on Calvinism.⁹⁰

4. Missouri held that a man who has been brought to faith can be completely sure of his salvation.

⁸⁹Neve, op. cit., p. 354.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 355.

Ohio argued that he could not be completely sure.

Between the years 1903 and 1906 four intersynodical conferences were held with Ohio in the hope of reconciliation, but they all failed to accomplish reunion.⁹¹ The question of predestination and conversion thus could play nothing but a very large part in the union negotiations of the Nineteen-twenties.

⁹¹Mueller, op. cit., pp. 410-411.

CHAPTER III

UNION ATTEMPTS RESUMED -- 1917 TO 1929

The reader by now has noted that, generally speaking, the orthodox Lutheran Synods of America have never gone into union hastily. Even where union has been achieved it has been the result of careful and thorough mutual examination of the doctrines and practices of the Synods involved. For strongly confessional groups to unite satisfactorily, this is always necessary.

Equally as important for an orthodox body to enter into union cautiously, is that she does attempt at all times to unite with those who are one with her in faith. Orthodox Christianity, while remaining separate from error, must at the same time reach out to the erring in order that she might bring them to the truth. So, in each case, whether a body be one with her in faith or separate from her, she must witness to them in an outreach of love, purging error with divine truth.

Thus the four Lutheran groups, which have been thus far considered, did not end their attempts to unite in the nineteenth century. They continued on into the twentieth century and are continuing down to this present day. After these intersynodical conferences held between 1903 and 1906, formal attempts between Missouri, Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio were interrupted for about a decade. Private negotiations

were held between individual members of the synods but no official committees were appointed until 1917.

The trend to resume negotiations was stirred already in 1916 when committees of the interested synods met in St. Paul, Minnesota. The product of their meeting was a document in thesis form which set forth the Scriptural doctrine of conversion and was signed by 555 Lutheran pastors of various synods. In January of the next year a treatise "Die Lehre von der Bekehrung," written by an Iowa pastor, Ermisch, was read and adopted by this same central committee. A third meeting in May of 1917 heard and adopted a paper entitled "Begriff der Wahl in der Lehre von der Gnadenwahl," written by a Missouri Synod pastor named Seltz. Both works were printed and circulated among the interested synods for the purpose of study.¹

The above events stirred up a thirst for further union negotiations. Thus the Missouri Synod, in delegate Synod at Milwaukee in 1917 appointed Prof. G. Mezger, President G. Kleinbans, and Pastor Hohenstein of Peoria as its official intersynodical committee.² Wisconsin, Iowa, and Ohio appointed similiar committees which were quick to arrange

¹"Present Status of Union Endeavors," Proceedings of the seminar for Pastors, Concordia Teachers College, June 6-13, 1945 (Seward: College Book Store, 1945), p. 16, (mimeographed).

²Ibid.

for meetings. By June 1920, at its convention in Detroit, Missouri's committee reported that it had, during the three intervening years, held six meetings with representatives of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Ohio and that among the joint group a desire for true unity was evident. It further reported that a series of ten theses on conversion had been drawn up, were considered by the committee to be acceptable, and recommended that they be given wide and earnest study. They also reported that they had discussed the doctrine of the election of grace but had arrived at no definite conclusions.³

Missouri was encouraged in its efforts when its inter-synodical committee reported that not only the members of the Synodical Conference, but also the members of the other committees had one goal before their eyes. This goal was not only to come to an external union by setting aside certain pertinent doctrines, but also with God's gracious assistance to come to a genuine union in the spirit and in the truth on the grounds of Scripture and the Confessions. It thus strongly recommended that further negotiations be held and likewise asked the convention to bring this matter before the throne of Grace in prayer.⁴

³"Intersynodale Angelegenheiten," Synodal Bericht der Evangelisch Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten, 1920 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), p. 239.

⁴Ibid., pp. 239-240.

At the same Synodical convention, Committee number twenty-two, the Committee on Intersynodical affairs, was charged with the duty of examining the product of the Intersynodical conferences. In its report the committee offered its praises to God for bestowing His blessings upon the doctrinal deliberations. It unanimously endorsed the ten theses on conversion and recommended that further negotiations be held. It also requested that the same three men be permitted to carry on the work of the Intersynodical Committee. [Synod adopted these recommendations and requested that all members present carry this high and important matter prayerfully in their hearts.⁵]

At the next Missouri convention in Fort Wayne (June 1923) the Intersynodical committee could report that joint meetings had been held annually with the result that theses and antitheses had been drawn up on conversion and election and that discussion had begun on the older doctrinal controversies which had for so long separated especially the Missouri, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods. It also reported that Buffalo had requested to join the intersynodical negotiations and permission was granted. It petitioned synod to circulate the documents for examination and to appoint a special examining committee to test and examine all theses and

⁵Ibid., pp. 240-241.

antitheses drawn up by the negotiating committee.⁶

Although certain protest had been lodged against the theses on conversion and election from various corners of synod, the convention Committee on Intersynodical Affairs did not thoroughly examine the theses but merely seconded the recommendation of the Intersynodical Committee to appoint a permanent examining committee to examine all documents and honor all protests that shall be lodged till the end of 1925 and come to Synod with recommendations. To serve on this committee it proposed Th. Engelder, R. Neitzel, and P. B. Schulz. [Again it suggested that Synod continue its union negotiations and gave thanks to God for His guidance.⁷]

The recommendations were adopted.

In 1926 when the Intersynodical Committee reported to Synod in convention at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in St. Louis, one new name appeared on the roster. Prof. Mezger, who had a prominent part in drawing up the theses on conversion and election had been detained in Europe. Since he was unable to serve on the committee Prof. W. Arndt was appointed to serve in his place. Prof. Graebner also joined the committee in 1926 in the place of Pastor Hohenstein.

⁶"Intersynodale Angelegenheiten," Synodalbericht der 32 regelmässigen der Evangelisch Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten, 1923 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), pp. 226-228.

⁷Ibid., p. 229.

The committee report stated that although certain additions had been made to the theses and antitheses on conversion and election their chief task, however, "consisted in discussion and coming to an agreement on those doctrines which had been under controversy since 1880."⁸ In this connection theses were drawn up on the following points: The Scriptures, Attitude to the Lutheran Confessions, Church fellowship, The Antichrist, Chiliasm, Sunday, Open Questions. The completed theses on these doctrines was called the Chicago Theses of 1925. It further stated, "To be sure, the doctrine of the Scriptures had not been under controversy among the participating synods. The committee, nevertheless, considered it necessary to declare its unity in this important doctrine."⁹

It was also stated that the members of the several committees were in agreement. The question now remained, can the participating synods adopt the Theses as a basis for union? At that particular date the committee did not feel that its synod could because of a differing attitude on church-fellowship. [In its report it stated the following:

⁸"Chicago Theses," Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 193.

⁹"Report of the Intersynodical Committee," Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Regular Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, 1926 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1926), p. 136. (translation)

In the present instance, however, we fear that further obstacles must be removed, since, for example, touching the articles of church-fellowship a different conception evidently obtains in the synods concerned. At all events a different practice is followed.¹⁰

Because of this situation it recommended that further negotiations be held with Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio before a formal adoption of the Chicago Theses be made.¹¹

The report of the Examining Committee which followed contained numerous changes and additions which were to be inserted into the intersynodical theses. This was done in response to complaints which had been voiced against the theses, and in order that the sentences and phrases in question might receive clearer expression. The substance of the chief recommendations of the committee were:

1. More emphasis should be placed on conversion as being solely the work of divine grace which man can only resist and by nature does resist. Such resistance can only be overcome by the work of the Holy Spirit.¹²

2. More emphasis should be placed on non-conversion as being solely and exclusively the fault of men. The committee recommended the following formulation: "they are not converted because they resist God--who earnestly desires to perform and finish the work of conversion:

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 137.

¹²"Report of Examining Committee," Loc. cit.

in all men--and persist in their resistance to Him."¹³

3. In the "intuitu fidei finalis" statement the committee re-emphasized and strengthened the Scriptural teaching that man is not elected in view of faith or because God foresaw in him a non-resistance and good conduct, but that he through the merits of Christ, is elected unto faith and non-resistance.¹⁴

4. More strength is put into the statement on the question, Cur alii prae aliis? If the question is put to indicate a particular grace for the elect, then it must be rejected. But if it is put to point up the unsolvable mystery as to why some are elected and others are not, than it is in place.¹⁵

In view of the foregoing, Committee 17, in charge of intersynodical matters, came to the floor with the following recommendations:

1. That Synod should express its joy over the intersynodical conferences and the progress which has been made in the name of true Lutheran doctrine.
2. That Synod not accept the intersynodical theses in their present form because the changes recommended by the Examining Committee are well founded.

¹³Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 138-139.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 139.

3. That all members of synod, conferences, and districts, who have not yet had the opportunity, study the theses thoroughly.

4. That Synod retain the present Intersynodical committee and continue discussions with Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo for the purpose of effecting a more exact formulation of the points in question.

5. That synod retain the present Examining Committee.

6. That "all Christians of our Synod diligently. . . beseech the Lord of the Church that a God-pleasing, perfect union in the truth and in love be achieved to the glory of His name and the welfare of His Church."¹⁶

The recommendations were adopted.

What up till 1926 may have seemed an eventual union of Missouri with Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo now takes a turn in the other direction. Throughout the synodical reports of the 1926 convention there seems to be a feeling of scepticism over against the outcome of the negotiations. There nowhere appears a fatalistic attitude, but, nevertheless, one of unsureness. This can be seen in the report of the Intersynodical Committee which stated that there were differences in what constituted true church-fellowship,¹⁷ and in the

¹⁶"Report of Committee 17 on Intersynodical Matters," Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁷This is, of course, the same issue which caused so much trouble with Iowa in the Milwaukee Colloquy in 1867. (See Chapter II.)

suggested changes of the Chicago Theses made by the Examining Committee which were, in a sense, a judgement of the inadequacy of the Theses,¹⁸ and finally also in the report of Committee 17 which recommended that the theses not be accepted at that time.

The next three years of deliberations merely watered this feeling of scepticism toward the outcome of the union endeavors. As more pastors and conferences found it possible to study the Theses, memorials of protest were lodged against them.¹⁹ The Northeastern Pastoral Conference of the Iowa district submitted in 1929 a formal protest to the convention against the Theses and requested that they be labeled unacceptable.²⁰ The climate of feeling seemed to be predominantly against the theses so that they were finally rejected at the 1929 convention assembled in River Forest, Illinois.

¹⁸Since most of these were on conversion and election it indicates that Missouri and Ohio stood somewhat where they did in 1881.

¹⁹"English Version of the Report of Committee 19," Proceedings of the Thirty Fourth Regular Convention of the Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), pp. 112-113.

²⁰"Protest gegen die Intersynodalen Theses," Reports and Memorials for the Nineteenth Delegate Synod, 1929 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p. 134.

Whatever views might have been held by some were certainly not shared by the Intersynodical Committee. On the floor of the 1929 convention they recommended adoption of the Chicago Theses.²¹ The committee reports stated that the recommendations of suggested changes in the theses, handed to them by the Examining Committee in 1926 were discussed and mostly accepted. Those which were not accepted did not receive this treatment because of any doctrinal differences but on account of external points, since these suggested changes, to the majority of the delegates, seemed to be either liable to be misunderstood or superfluous. Important changes, however, were made in the theses concerning conversion and chiliasm, strengthening them both in their Scriptural position.²²

Moving on to the report of the Examining Committee one is struck with the completely negative tone of their presentation. In stern difference with the Intersynodical Committee it recommended that the theses not be accepted as a possible basis of unity with Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo because "it finds them in all chapters and in the majority

²¹Between 1926 and 1929 Th. Engelder moved from the Examining Committee to the Intersynodical Committee in the place of Dr. Graebner while F. Wenger took his place on the Examining Committee.

²²Ibid., p. 130.

of the paragraphs faulty."²³ One even finds a trace of bitterness in the statement, "By far the most of the suggestion advanced by your committee of examination three years ago, have remained unconsidered, although they touched extremely essential points."²⁴ It criticized the theses on the basis that it is more unclear than it was before and that it is not phrased simply enough to be understood by a layman, a must in a confessional thesis of this type.²⁵ Criticism with regard to doctrinal content are here set forth in order that the reader might gain some insight into the sum of the Examining Committee's report.

1. The doctrines of the "general will of grace" and the "election of grace" are not purely divided.
2. The explicit statement that God, in Christ has elected certain persons to faith, sonship, endurance, and eternity is nowhere to be found.
3. The difference between natural and willfull resistance has not been satisfactorily extinguished.
4. The declaration about the question, Cur alii prae aliis? is suspected as dangerous and misleading since it could be inferred from the presentation that

²³"Bericht des Komitees zur Prufung der Intersynodalen Thesen" Ibid., p. 131.

²⁴Ibid., p. 132.

²⁵Ibid.

the mystery of election can be solved by reason, while this is, in reality, impossible.

5. The old differences on the Antichrist, chiliasm, Church, the ministry, and Sunday are not removed but are merely disregarded. Rather they should be set down as well defined doctrines of Scripture and the Confessions.²⁶

In view of these shortcomings the committee felt that it was hopeless to improve the theses so that they would become faultless from the viewpoint of orthodoxy. It therefore recommended that the intersynodical conferences be concluded.²⁷

One could draw numerous hasty conclusions on the differing recommendations of the Intersynodical Committee and the Examining Committee but to do this would be unfair to both. There is every reason to believe that each committee based its opinion on good evidence and that the recommendations which they made were built upon firm and honest Christ-centered convictions. However, in defense of them both there is submitted one simple observation. It seems clear that the two committees based their judgements on two different sets of standards. The Intersynodical Committee

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 132-133.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

had for over ten years sat in conference with committees of the other three participating synods. Through these deliberations its members had come to know the theological thoughts and emphases of the various members of the other committees. With them they had worked out the theses and on this basis knew exactly how each group interpreted them. With this experience, in all probability, they had good reason for judging them theologically sound. The Examining Committee on the other hand, had never sat with the other synods. The judgements of the members of this committee were based on the printed page and their conclusions were drawn strictly from the finished document. They were thus in no position to interpret the theses in the light of what they knew the convictions of the various men-enolved. This method of judgement is the only one that anyone, except the Intersynodical Committee, could use, and therefore must be the one employed. If the theses could not stand this test, then they were inadequate. To anyone not on the Intersynodical Committee, the printed theses could be the only criterion for judgement. Therefore if it was too unclear to be appraised orthodox by this means, it could not stand as a document for union.

Although the two committees did not agree on the acceptance of the Chicago Theses, they did agree that union could not be effected at that time. These were the recommendations of both committees for similiar reasons. The

Intersynodical Committee made this recommendation because the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo had, while negotiating with Missouri, also been working for union with certain non-confessional Lutherans (the Norwegian Lutheran Church) and had on the basis of the Minneapolis Theses, entered into fraternal relations with them.²⁸ This meant that while Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo had said one thing in the Chicago Theses, they had said something else by uniting openly with a liberalistic group, thus causing Missouri to suspect them of dishonesty.

Yet a third reason comes to light for Missouri's withdrawal from the attempted union. Farther on in the synodical reports there appear the recommendations of the conventions Committee on Intersynodical Affairs. In their recommendations this committee stated that, the negotiating committees, in drawing up the Chicago Theses, did not start from the "status controversiae."²⁹ This meant that in drawing up the theses, the committees disregarded the doctrinal differences as they existed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Examining Committee also referred to this but it was stated much more emphatically by the Committee on Intersynodical affairs.

²⁸ Loc. cit., p. 131.

²⁹ op. cit.

In view of the foregoing reports of the Intersynodical Committee and the Examining Committee, the Committee on Intersynodical affairs came to the floor of the convention with the following recommendations:

1. That the present theses not be accepted in its present form.

2. That before further negotiations be held, the latest historical developments, namely, the move on the part of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo toward the Norwegian Lutheran Church, be taken up and adjusted according to the Word of God.

3. That a new committee be formed to draw up documents in negotiations with the other three synods, this time starting from the "status controversiae," which, not having been done in the present negotiations, seemed to be one of the causes of their failure.³⁰
The recommendations were adopted.

Thus the union endeavors between the Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo synods conducted during the Nineteen twenties, ended in failure. In some respects it can be said that the four synods were drawn closer together through their mutual efforts, but not nearly close enough to establish a union. This, however, was not to be their

³⁰Ibid.

last attempt. The early thirties saw them opening new negotiations which have continued down to this present day.

RECENT HISTORY OF MISSOURI'S NEGOTIATIONS FOR UNION

The preceding chapter followed the union attempts of the nineteenth-century showing what efforts were put forth by the two syndicates involved and the ultimate outcome of the attempts as far as they pertained to Missouri. This chapter reviews the withdrawal from the attempted union have already been stated but since it is the goal of this thesis to point out exactly why Missouri did not unite with Ohio, Iowa, and Kentucky, it is felt that these reasons should be set forth clearly and concisely.

The first reason which can be cited for Missouri's failure to unite with the three interested syndicates is that, the Chicago Treaty of 1837, which was the document drawn up by the joint inter-syndicate committee as a basis for union, was defective. This was strongly pointed out by the Kentucky Committee in 1836 and was referred by the convention of 1837 when it accepted the recommendations of the Committee on Inter-syndicate Affairs. Even if there would have been a large enough majority of the convention to accept the Chicago Treaty it could have been revised to do so, since a part of the syndicate was strongly opposed to it. The report of the Inter-syndicate Conference of 1837

CHAPTER IV

RESTATEMENT OF MISSOURI'S REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL

The preceding chapter followed the union attempts of the Nineteen-twenties showing what efforts were put forth by the four synods involved and the ultimate outcome of the attempts as far as they pertained to Missouri. This synod's reasons for withdrawing from the attempted union have already been cited but since it is the goal of this thesis to point out exactly why Missouri did not unite with Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, it is felt that these reasons should be set forth clearly and precisely.

The first reason which can be cited for Missouri's failure to unite with the three interested synods is that, the Chicago thesis of 1925, which was the document drawn up by the joint intersynodical committees as a basis for union, were inadequate. This was strongly pointed out by the Examining Committee in 1929 and was endorsed by the convention of Synod when it accepted the recommendations of its Committee on Intersynodical Affairs. Even if there would have been a large enough majority at the convention to accept the Chicago Theses it would have been unwise to do so, since a part of the synod was strongly opposed to it. The request of the Northeastern Pastoral Conference of Iowa

to Synod to reject the theses and the feeling of the examining committee is ample testimony of this fact. Had it been accepted it would have created internal difficulties within Synod itself which may have ended in misfortune.

Secondly, the union attempts failed because the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods, had during the course of the negotiations, established fraternal relations with The Norwegian Lutheran Church. This series of events built itself up around a document called the Minneapolis Theses of 1925.¹ It was on the basis of these theses that the American Lutheran Church and also the American Lutheran Conference was formed in 1930. This document was quite brief and general in tone. This is attested by the fact that The Norwegian Lutheran Church, a somewhat liberalistic and non-confessional group, was able to accept it. On the strength of this acceptance, they were received into fraternal relations with Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio in 1928 and later entered the American Lutheran Conference in 1930.²

This chain of events caused Missouri to look upon her co-deliberators with suspicion. Could they (Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo) agree to the Chicago theses which were comparatively thorough and precise, and at the same time endorse the

¹"Minneapolis Theses," Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 692.

²Ibid.

Minneapolis Theses which, because of its brevity, invited unionism? ~~Where~~ were they being truthful when they told Missouri one thing and then seemed to say something altogether different to the Norwegians? Were they one with Missouri in their estimation of what constitutes true church-fellowship when they fraternized with groups who were not in complete agreement with them? Had they really discarded the old Ohio teaching on "intuitu" fidei" (God elects--unto faith) when they tolerated the Norwegian Lutheran Church which maintained it?³

In March 1927, in its official theological journal, the Theological Monthly, Missouri expressed her rejection of the Minneapolis Theses when she criticized them as being too incomplete and indefinite. In what the theses actually said they were commendable. They were, however found unsatisfactory because of what they failed to say, especially on such questions as the lodge, church fellowship, and election. The fact that nothing at all was said about Chiliasm, the Church, and the office of the ministry, confirmed Missouri's disapproval.⁴

This was probably one of Missouri's strongest reasons

³J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer," Theological Monthly, VII (March, 1927), 117.

⁴Ibid.

for not uniting with the three other participating synods. Had Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo not entered into fellowship with the loosely confessional Norwegian Lutheran Church, and had not adopted the Minneapolis Theses, Missouri would perhaps have merely recommended further revision of the Chicago Theses rather than rejecting them. The weight which this reason held can be seen from the fact that both the Intersynodical Committee and the Examining Committee expressed this as one reason why The Missouri Synod could not enter union at that time.⁵

The final reason for the failure of Missouri's union attempts of the Twenties was, that the Intersynodical Committees, in drawing up the Chicago Theses, did not start from the "status controversiae." Missouri's Examining Committee stated this as one of the reasons for rejecting the Chicago Theses.⁶ The consequence of this approach was that there was hardly any mutual understanding between the negotiating committees. Had the doctrinal differences of the four synods been dealt with and theses drawn up from there, the result would have been much different. As it was, the joint committee drew up theses which were only an

⁵"Bericht des Komitees zur Prufung der Intersynodalen Thesen," Reports and Memorials for the Nineteenth Delegate Synod, 1929, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), pp. 131-133.

⁶Ibid., p. 133.

expression of mutual doctrine but did not speak against the errors which existed at the time of the last previous negotiations. Consequently, one could not fully determine whether these errors still existed or not.

In summary, then, the chief reasons why the attempts on the part of Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo to unite during the nineteen twenties ended in failure are the following:

1. The Chicago Theses, the union document, was considered by Missouri to be inadequate for union.
2. Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo established relations with the Norwegian Lutheran Church and were thus suspected of insincerity by Missouri.
3. The Intersynodical Committee, in formulating the Chicago Theses, did not start from the "status controversiae," but completely disregarded the historical differences of the four negotiating synods.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

It has been the goal of the foregoing thesis to state the reasons why Missouri found it impossible to unite with Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo in the union attempts of the nineteen twenties. Since one of their reasons was that the negotiating committees did not start from the "status controversiae" but drew up their union theses without first considering the doctrinal difficulties between the four synods in the previous years of their history, chapter two points up the historical connections of Missouri and the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods and the doctrinal differences which stood between them. In doing this it went back primarily to the second half of the nineteenth century and recounted the differences there. This was necessary since the differences between these groups in the Nineteen-twenties have their roots in the disputes of that period.

In the case of Buffalo there was wide differences on the doctrines of the Church, the Ministry, and the Office of the Keys. Reconciliation was attempted in the Buffalo Colloquy of 1866 but without success. The disagreements were brought to light in Grabau's Hirtenbrief which he sent to the Missouri Saxons for their criticism already in the early eighteen forties.

The connections with the Iowa Synod were more involved and centered around a greater number of doctrines. Difficulties arose with Missouri on the proper attitude toward the Confessions, the doctrines of the Church and the ministry, the antichrist, chiliasm, Sunday, and open questions. It was pointed out that it was on the Iowan conception of open questions that the greatest difference actually arose. Had agreement been reached on this question, other disagreements may have vanished as well. The Milwaukee Colloquy was held in 1867 in hope of reaching an agreement but none was reached.

The Davenport Theses, drawn up by Iowa for showing her newly admitted pastors just where Missouri and Iowa stood in their doctrinal difficulties were used to show the doctrinal differences of the two synods.

Missouri enjoyed its most cordial relations with the Joint Synod of Ohio. They mutually recognized one another as being orthodox in 1866 as a result of the series of free conferences held between 1856 and 1859. It was also Ohio who gave the first incentive to the Synodical Conference in which organic union Missouri also participated.

This happy relationship was broken in 1881 when Ohio withdrew from the Synodical Conference. Her reason for this action was on account of a differing doctrine on conversion and election. Ohio, at that time, held to the

teaching that God elects in view of faith while Missouri taught that God elects unto faith. Discussions on this doctrine were held between 1903 and 1906 but they failed to accomplish agreement.

With this background material as a basis, the history of the union attempts of the nineteen twenties were discussed in chapter three. In this chapter it was shown how the new negotiations started, who took part in them, and the progressive results of the efforts, especially as they pertained to Missouri. Throughout it was shown just how Missouri reacted to these attempts and the efforts she put forth to effect a lasting union. Though it looked for a time like success was in the offing, Missouri rejected the intersynodical theses (Chicago Theses) in 1929 and did not enter into the A. L. C. merger of 1930. Since it was the goal of this thesis to answer the question, why did Missouri not enter into the A. L. C. merger of 1930? chapter four pointed up these reasons very precisely on the basis of the reasons which Missouri herself gave in 1929. The reasons which she gave were: 1. The Chicago Theses, the union document, were inadequate. 2. During the negotiations, Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo established fraternal relations with the unionistic Norwegian Lutheran Church. 3. The Intersynodical Committee, in formulating the Chicago Theses, did not start from the "status controversiae."

Since 1930 new deliberations have been effected and new theses have been formulated. As the negotiations continue, even in this present day, we pray God that He will bless them abundantly and establish between these groups a firm and lasting union.

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