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## Miscellanea

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## Miscellanea

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### Concordia Historical Series

By W. G. POLACK

Last year Concordia Publishing House issued from its presses a book entitled *Government in the Missouri Synod*, by Dr. Carl S. Mundinger. It was announced as Volume IV of the Concordia Historical Series. In the foreword of this book the editor explained the circumstances that led to its publication and also outlined the plan of the series, as follows:

"For some years there has been a growing demand for a complete, thoroughgoing, and well-documented history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States. The Literature Board of the Synod at various times attempted to supply this demand by calling on competent students of the history of the Synod to prepare a work of this kind. However, for one reason or another, the task remained undone. When the Literature Board requested the present editor of this series to undertake the task, he suggested the publication of a series of monographs instead of limiting the work to one volume, since in such a series the vast amount of material could be more adequately treated. The Literature Board thereupon authorized such a procedure. A general outline of the series was agreed upon, and individuals were commissioned to write the monographs. As several monographs had already been prepared, or were in process of being written, as doctors' dissertations in several universities of our country, the editor asked that these be included in the series, requests that were graciously granted by the schools and the authors.

"According to the plan agreed upon, the history of the Synod itself is to be covered in twenty-five year periods from 1847 to 1947. Two volumes will deal with the immigration of the Saxons and their settlements in Missouri. One volume will present the work of the Rev. William Loehe and his missionaries. In addition there will be individual biographies of C. F. W. Walther, F. C. D. Wyneken, and William Sihler. Another biographical volume will contain shorter biographies of men who in one field or another figured prominently in the history of the Synod.

"At the present writing, twelve volumes have been arranged for; more will be added later. Since each volume will constitute a unit, no special attempt has been made to publish the volumes in chronological order, as this would mean holding up the publication of those now ready. Nor will the volumes be of equal size. In the very nature of the case some will be much larger than others. However, there will be uniformity in binding and format.

"The editor is happy to be able to begin the series with this volume: *The Origin of Government in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States*, as its appearance will coincide with the centennial of the Synod. Originally this work, a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Minnesota, was entitled "The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod." Important statistics in the book were, at the request of the editor, brought up to date.

"It is with a sincere prayer for divine blessing that we send forth the first volume of this series. We earnestly hope that the study of it and its companion volumes will lead many to a renewed interest in the life and work of the men who have, under God, worked together in the building of our Missouri Synod. It will be seen that they were men with all the failings and frailties our flesh is heir to, men who

were as prone to make mistakes as are we in our day, yet at the same time men who were dedicated to a high and noble purpose namely, the establishment and propagation on American soil of historic Lutheranism, Lutheranism as represented in the great Confessions of our Church. In the measure in which they and their successors hewed the line, in that measure we may gauge the success of their labors. And, by the same token, in the measure in which the Missouri Synod during the second century of its existence, now looming on the horizon, adheres to these principles, in that measure will it remain true to its great evangelical heritage."

The Mundinger volume was reviewed by Dr. R. R. Caemmerer in *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, Vol. XVIII, p. 950.

The editor of this Concordia Historical Series has, since the publication of Volume IV, added several additional titles to those announced on the jacket of the Mundinger book, so that now the series includes the following:

1. Saxon Immigration to Missouri to 1841.
2. The Saxons in Missouri to 1847.
3. Wm. Loehe and the Saginaw Valley Settlements.
4. Government in the Missouri Synod (Published).
5. First 25 Years of Missouri Synod's History.
6. Second 25 Years.
7. Life of C. F. W. Walther.
8. Life of Wyneken.
9. History of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.
10. Organization of Synodical Conference.
11. History of Concordia Seminary, Springfield.
12. Union Movements in the Lutheran Church in America.
13. Third 25 Years.
14. Slovaks in America.
15. History of the Parochial Schools in the Missouri Synod.  
(the title is only suggestive).
16. Documents in the History of the Lutheran Church in America.
17. A Volume of Shorter Biographies of Leaders in the Missouri Synod.

The reader will undoubtedly realize that this undertaking is not an easy one, whether viewed from the editorial angle or that of the publisher, and it will take a number of years to complete. No one, we feel confident, will deny the necessity and importance of the series. The men chosen to write the various volumes are not men of leisure. They have their job in the Church and must do their research and writing in addition to their regular tasks. They are men, however, of recognized scholarship, and their work, when completed, will be a worth-while contribution to the historical literature of our Synod.

We are taking the trouble to tell our pastors in these pages

of **CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY** all about the plan of this series for two reasons. First, our pastors should know that an effort is being made to present adequately and fully the history of our Synod. Secondly, we would earnestly solicit their interest in the series itself. It goes without saying that every pastor and teacher should have these volumes in his library. If his congregation has a church or school library, this series belongs in it. Then, too, the public libraries of our land should have the series. We know of no better way to supply the latter than by having pastors or teachers see to it that one or the other organization of the congregations buy each volume as it comes from the press and present it to a local library.

May the great Head of the Church, whose Kingdom we would serve also in an effort of this sort, bestow His divine benediction upon it and upon all those engaged in it, to the greater glory of His holy name.

### History of the Synodical Conference

This article continues the historical series currently published in the *Northwestern Lutheran* by Prof. J. P. Meyer of Thiensville, Wis.

#### Federations Declined by Our Wisconsin Synod

In previous studies we saw how our Synod dissolved its connections with the German Mission Societies in spite of the fact that these Societies had generously supported us in our difficult task of supplying the many Lutheran immigrants to our state, who were spiritually starving and dangerously exposed to the raids of heterodox churches and from glib-tongued self-seeking individuals who offered their services as Lutheran pastors. The feeling of genuine gratitude did not mislead our fathers into a denial of the Truth. They considered faithfulness to the Word of God as of greater importance. To accept further aid from the German Mission Societies would have involved a conniving at their Unionistic principles. With a heavy heart, obedient to the Word of God, our fathers severed connections.

The Spirit of the Lord does not create the believers as isolationists. He creates them as brethren and sisters in the faith. Together with faith the Holy Spirit implants in the hearts of the believers the urge to confess their faith, and to fellowship those of the same faith. Only in the case that fellowship would imply a recognition of a false confession and entangle one in error will an individual Christian remain alone, and a group of Christians will keep aloof from other groups. The Holy Spirit stimulated in our fathers the desire to find likeminded Lutherans in the country and to associate themselves with them.

Where could they find them?

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit our fathers were not looking for a Lutheran body where they might be received with open arms, where they might find a cordial welcome and receive

a kind, friendly treatment. They were looking for a body that was in harmony with themselves in the confession of the Gospel. They prized kindness and friendliness—who would not?—but they realized that that was not a sufficient basis of Christian fellowship. More than that. The Church is still here on this sin-infested earth, where friendliness may often be faked, where Christians are still encumbered with the Old Adam and where, as a result, frequently “raw deals” are pulled even by brethren in the faith. Our fathers therefore looked for just one thing: Lutherans who were one with them in the confession of the Truth.

When in 1866 a call was issued to Lutheran bodies in the United States and Canada to meet and discuss ways and means for organizing a conservative Confessional Lutheran general body, hopes ran high that an organization would result which would unite the Lutherans of our land both inwardly and outwardly. Our Synod became a charter member. But the hopes did not materialize.

We already heard that the General Council in its 1867 meeting declined to take a definite stand on the question of pulpit and altar fellowship with non-Lutherans, but referred this matter to the member synods; nor on the questions of lodgery, and of Chiliasm. Our Synod, after thoroughly discussing the sinfulness of practicing pulpit and altar fellowship with any but such as are genuinely Lutheran in their confession, sent notice to the General Council that we would have to consider our membership as ended if the Council did not share our stand in this matter. This was in 1868.

In the next year, 1869, President Bading's report contains the following paragraph on the meeting of the Council, which was held during November, 1868, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: “The well known four points (namely the three mentioned above plus the one raised by the Iowa Synod on the authority of the Council) were discussed, and one must give the convention credit that they fully recognized the importance of the matter. The points were discussed seriously and thoroughly, and a certain progress could be noticed both in the rejection of pulpit and altar fellowship, as also in the evaluation of Chiliasm and of the lodge, more so than was ever previously evident in the east. Nevertheless it remains deeply to be deplored that the convention was not able to adopt clear and unequivocal resolutions regarding those questions. On the contrary, the effort was painfully in evidence to find expressions which might satisfy both parties, without previous unity in thought, in faith, and in understanding.”

To support the correctness of this observation and to show that his adverse judgment did not rest on subjective preconceptions, President Bading referred to the public press, which put different constructions on the resolutions according to each one's predilections. He added: “But the most favorable interpretation is not sufficient to satisfy a conscience that is bound by Lutheran doctrine and practice.” To show the equivocation of the resolutions President Bading pointed furthermore to the sad fact that some of the

signers of the resolutions continued to practice pulpit fellowship with Presbyterians, and with others, as before.

In view of these things our President concluded this point of his report: "It still seems to be a far way before the hope that Lutheran doctrine and practice may be established in the Council will be realized; and in spite of the efforts of serious minded and energetic men within the Council the treatment of the lodge and the practice of pulpit and altar fellowship will for a long time to come remain practically unchanged.

"It can no longer be doubtful what under these conditions our Synod is duty-bound to do, if we do not wish to fail in the truth as we know it and in the course which we have begun to follow."

The General Council, naturally, deplored our resignation from membership, which it failed to recognize as justified.

Our relations with Iowa were friendly, although mutual recognition had not been established officially. In 1867 a large delegation from Iowa was present in our convention, ten men, to be exact. One of them, Prof. S. Fritschel, delivered a convention sermon in the evening of the opening day. His text together with a brief outline of his sermon are recorded: Eph. 1, 3-7. "Two blessings according to our text: 1.) God has chosen us in Christ. 2.) He has also made us accepted."

In the meeting of the General Council in 1867 the Iowa delegation demanded as a condition of their synod's joining the Council that the Council reject pulpit and altar fellowship with non-Lutherans, and condemn lodgery; and that only advisory authority be granted to the Council. They were fully supported in their demand by the three representatives of the Wisconsin Synod.

In 1868 Iowa sent a report to our Synod on its attitude over against the Council. "Our relation to the Iowa Synod" was placed on the order of business, but our floor committee on the matter reported that it must refrain from making any specific recommendations, since the peculiar doctrinal position of the Iowa Synod was voiced only partially in the submitted report.

In the following year, after a thorough discussion on the floor of the convention between several members of our Synod and Prof. S. Fritschel of the Iowa Synod, a resolution was adopted to drop the entire matter since our Synod did not maintain official relations with the Iowa Synod.

What was the reason? The committee report of 1868, mentioned above, referred to the "peculiar doctrinal position" of the Iowa Synod. Every member of our Synod knew what was meant, since in the previous year this very question had been ventilated on the floor of the convention. Iowa taught "Open Questions." As such open questions they mentioned, for instance, the Ministry, Sunday, Chiliasm, Conversion of the Jews, Antichrist. They maintained that in these matters our Confessions had done no more than to lay down some general principles, and as long as these boundary lines were not transgressed every one must be granted the liberty to develop the doctrine as he saw fit.

In their argument they insisted that never in the history of our Lutheran Church complete unanimity in all points had been demanded as a prerequisite for church fellowship; rather, our teachers had made a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of doctrine. Fundamental, they said, are all articles which our Confessions determine formally by some preface like: "We believe, teach, and confess." Everything else must be considered as an open question.

In reply it was pointed out that it is an abuse of the distinction if one grants license in non-fundamentals to teach divergent doctrine. The distinction was made merely to ascertain how far some one might deviate and still be tolerated and endured in the Church. There is a vital difference, on the one hand, between a readiness to bear and, on the other, to grant *full right*. Using Chiliasm as an example, our fathers pointed out that an individual Chiliast might be tolerated, provided he holds fast to the foundation of faith; but the claim that Chiliasm is an open question and can demand recognition as being of equal right with the Biblical doctrine within the Lutheran Church must be decidedly rejected.

Pastor J. Brockmann, at the close of the debate, asked two questions: If Chiliasm were to be admitted, then what about the words of the Second Article: "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead?" and: what about the Church as a kingdom of the cross?

In 1867 all members of our Synod did not yet see clear in the matter. By 1869 progress had been made, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that the question of closer relations to the Iowa Synod was dropped because of the theory of "Open Questions."

## Steps Taken by the Wisconsin Synod in 1868 Towards the Founding of the Synodical Conference

By J. P. MEYER

(This is another article in the valuable series which Professor Meyer is publishing at present in the *Northwestern Lutheran*. — A.)

The diamond anniversary of the founding of the Synodical Conference, which is to be observed in August of this year in connection with the biennial convention of that body, should urge every member of our Synod to study somewhat more closely the conditions obtaining in the Lutheran Church of our country 75 to 80 years ago, particularly the developments which took place in our own Synod. For that purpose we recently took a look at the relation of our Synod to the German Mission Societies, which had sent men into our fields and had otherwise supported us generously in our work. Because those societies were unionistic, while we strove for confessional Lutheranism both in doctrine and practice, a severance of relations was bound to come sooner or later, the genuine feeling of gratitude on our part toward those societies

notwithstanding. The decisive step was taken by our fathers in 1867.

In 1867 the president of our Synod, Pastor W. Streissguth, reported to the convention that in December of the previous year a preliminary meeting had been held in Reading, Pennsylvania, with a view to organizing a new general body of Lutheran synods, a body that would represent conservative, confessional Lutheranism. He reported that the meeting in Reading had been attended by delegates from sixteen synods.

Our president attached great importance to the event and was very hopeful for the future. Here are his words: "Among the matters on which I must report in greater detail I mention, for valid reasons, in the first place the general church council held in Reading from December 12 to 14 last year, which was attended by delegates of sixteen separate Ev. Lutheran synods in the United States and in Canada. The meeting justifies the hope that there the foundation was laid for the successful building up of the Lutheran Church of our country as one that is united both inwardly and outwardly."

These hopes did not materialize. By accepting the doctrinal confession and the constitution of the Council our Synod had become a constituent member; but the advisability of continuing as a member in that body became doubtful in the very next year. Three delegates attended the meeting of the Council in Fort Wayne (November 20, 1867), besides President Bading the two professors Hoenecke and Martin. We quote a few pertinent remarks from President Bading's report.

"By the grace of God many things were done to give outward expression of church unity. . . . In addition several other expressions of church fellowship were arranged. But if we were to declare that true unity prevailed in all questions of confession, that would be saying too much. The Ohio Synod requested an answer to the questions: What attitude does the convention take concerning pulpit and altar fellowship with non-Lutherans? What opinion does it hold about secret orders? How would it deal with Chiliasm?" Although the questions were discussed in committee meetings and on the floor of the Council, unanimity could not be attained. These matters were referred to the constituent synods for further deliberation.

Since the Council had referred the three questions raised by the Ohio Synod, plus a fourth one on the authority of the Council over against its member bodies, to the constituent synods, our Synod considered it as its duty to discuss them at once without even waiting for a special committee report. (The committee consisted of the professors Martin and Hoenecke, the pastors Streissguth and Gausewitz, and the lay delegates Sommer from Princeton and Reul from Helenville.) The question of pulpit and altar fellowship, being considered as of urgent importance, was taken up without delay.

It was pointed out at the very beginning that there could



be no question about the attitude which the Synod must take, since in the previous year it had given a decided testimony against the Prussian Union. Pulpit and altar fellowship being an essential element of the Union, a testimony against the Union is in itself a testimony against pulpit and altar fellowship. Yet during the debate pro-unionistic arguments were heard which have a familiar ring even today.

One man expressed himself against unconditional and indiscriminate pulpit and altar fellowship on the basis of some synod resolution, but favored an optional selective fellowship, by which an individual pastor might admit non-Lutherans to Communion *nach Auswahl*.—Another one would not consider it as a denial of the Lutheran Confession if a member of the Reformed Church were admitted to our Communion, provided he held the Lutheran faith.—Others urged that, since our Synod was a mission church, absolute correctness of practice could not be demanded.

In answer it was admitted that we rejoice because the Reformed agree with us in many points, but, so it was pointed out, that for that reason we may not ignore the differences which separate them from us; which frequently are more serious than may appear on the surface. Even the doctrine of justification as taught by the Reformed is different from ours.—If a member of the Reformed Church holds the Lutheran faith, then he should give expression to it by severing his connections with the Reformed. If in certain cases, for instance, in the imminence of death, one cannot inquire about the denominational confession, but merely about the personal faith of the person desiring Communion, such cases dare not be made the basis for establishing a general rule.

At the end of the debate the Synod adopted the following resolution:

"In agreement with the entire orthodox Lutheran Church the Synod rejects every form of pulpit and altar fellowship with dissenters and heterodox as contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Lutheran Church."

In his annual report President Bading had inserted the remark: "An incidental private discussion with pastors of the Missouri Synod, who just as sincerely desire peace with us as we with them, justifies the hope that our relation to that church body will develop more and more into a friendly and brotherly one."

Among the matters announced for discussion and placed on the order of business the second one (among 14) was: "Our relation to the Missouri Synod." It was referred to a committee consisting of the pastors Mayerhoff, Brockmann, Bartelt (and Huber), and the lay delegates Wickert from Watertown and Garnatz from Burlington.

This committee handed in the following report:

"Since there were no memorials submitted, your Committee can do no more than present general principles.

"1.) According to the best information available to your Committee there are no differences in doctrine, but the controversies

concern practical questions, encroachments of individual members of both synods, articles in the public press that frequently convey the impression of spite and sarcasm, rather than true concern, about the abuses, voiced in the spirit of tender correction. Your committee sincerely deplores the rift.

"2.) We recommend that the Synod instruct our honorable President to take suitable steps toward establishing peace that may lead to a mutual recognition of both synods as Lutheran, and to brotherly relations between the members of both synods in the spirit of truth and on the basis of pure doctrine."

A motion was made from the floor of the Synod to insert the word "divisive" in part 1, to make it read that "there are no *divisive* differences in doctrine." Sorry to say, the motion was carried against the protest of Prof. Hoenecke and Pastor Lange (from Lebanon).

Regarding membership in the General Council the hope was voiced that the Council might soon take a clear and decided stand on the four questions mentioned above; and a statement was added that, if the Council failed to give an answer at its next convention in agreement with our resolution on pulpit and altar fellowship, we could no longer retain membership in said body.

A request by a member of the Buffalo Synod that we establish a similar relation to Buffalo as the one toward Missouri was tabled till the next year's meeting, because the development of the two synods (Buffalo and Missouri) regarding their doctrinal differences was still too much in flux to permit final action.

Thus the way was cleared for action leading, first, to a mutual recognition by the two synods of Wisconsin and Missouri, and then to a federation in the Synodical Conference.

