

9-1-1961

## The Historical Background of "A Brief Statement." (Concluded)

Carl S. Meyer

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Meyer, Carl S. (1961) "The Historical Background of "A Brief Statement." (Concluded)," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 32, Article 52.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol32/iss1/52>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

# The Historical Background of "A Brief Statement"

(Concluded)

By CARL S. MEYER

The union negotiations among the Norwegians served to take most of the Norwegian Synod's members out of direct fellowship with the Missourians. The consummation of the Norwegian union seemed, on the other hand, to direct the Ohio and Iowa synods toward each other and possibly toward the Missouri Synod. There were other factors, of course, which tended to bring about a partial temporary amelioration of the animosity between the synods. One of these factors was a series of free conferences held in the early years of the twentieth century.

Sporadic conferences were held in the 1890s. Two such conferences in Canada in 1892—perhaps there were more in later years—were regarded as being directed against the Missouri Synod.<sup>120</sup> Five years or so later free conferences were held between members of the Ohio Synod and the Missouri Synod, entirely private in character.<sup>121</sup> In May 1902, a free conference was held in Beloit, Wis.<sup>122</sup> These conferences

are insignificant when compared with the free conferences held in Watertown, Wis., in 1903, Milwaukee in 1903, Detroit in 1904, and Fort Wayne in 1905.

The first of these free conferences, held in Watertown, Wis., April 29 and 30, 1903, as is true of the others, was not sponsored officially by any synod. The Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan had the largest representation there—85 out of 205. The Rev. M. Bunge, a member of the Wisconsin Synod, was the leader in arranging the conference. Fifteen men each from the Iowa and the Ohio Synod attended; 62 were present from the Missouri Synod.<sup>123</sup> Prof. Francis Pieper lectured on the topic, "Die Grund-differenzen in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl." In five points he gave the Missouri Synod teaching: (1) Scripture teaches that the reason for the conversion and the salvation of those who are actually converted and saved is solely the grace of God in Christ; (2) Scripture teaches that when some are not converted and are lost, it is solely the fault of man in resisting the work of the Spirit; (3)

<sup>120</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, XLVIII (March 1892), 41; *ibid.*, XLVIII (Oct. 25, 1892), 176. F. P[ieper], "Zur kirchlichen Chronik," *ibid.*, XLVIII (March 29, 1892), 57; "Was sie zu Stande bringen wollen, ist nicht sowohl eine kirchliche Einigung der Lutheraner, als ein *Bund gegen Missouri*." (Italics in the original.)

<sup>121</sup> *Idem*, "Vorwort," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLV (January 1899), 2, 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIX (May 1903), 142; *ibid.*, XLVIII (July and August 1902), 234, 235.

A free conference between pastors of the Michigan Synod and the Missouri Synod on June 12 and 13, 1904, in Jackson, Mich., found

accord on the conditions for fellowship and on open questions. F. B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, L (September 1904), 420 to 422, citing the *Bericht* of the conference published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, in 1904.

<sup>123</sup> F. B[ente], "Die freie Konferenz von Watertown," "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, XLIX (May 1903), 142. Bente, however, gave the dates as May 29, 30.



What lies beyond these two truths belongs to the unfathomable ways of God; (4) There is no reasonable, logical (*vernunftgemäße*) answer to the question: *Cur alii prae aliis?* (5) The circumstance that the Gospel has not been preached to all peoples of all times does not contradict the truth of God's grace.<sup>124</sup>

As a result of this conference a committee was elected to arrange another free conference. The conference was commended because it sought unity of spirit in doctrine, did not gloss over differences, but aimed at removing the differences for a God-pleasing unity. Unity was not thought of as being dependent on externals. Holy Scriptures (this was a basic assumption) must be the source and norm of all doctrines in agreement with the Lutheran Symbols.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> F. P[ieper], "Freie Konferenz," "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, XLIX (May 1903), 143 f.

Idem, "Die Berichte über die Konferenz in Watertown," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLIX (May 1903), 129—132, defended himself against the report in the *Lutheran*, that he modified his (and the Missouri Synod's and the Synodical Conference's) position. He said (pp. 130, 131): "Ich habe in Watertown nichts modifiziert und nichts verdeckt, sondern unsere Stellung, wie ich sie seit 25 Jahren vertreten habe, unumwunden ins Licht gerückt."

F. B[ente] also found fault with Nicum's report in the *Lutheran* and cited other journals which did not agree with Nicum. "Die freie Konferenz in Watertown," "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLIX (July-August 1903), 232 f.

Pieper's essay was printed. *Die Grunddifferenz in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903), 48 pages. F. B[ente] closed his review of the essay: "Diese Schrift Dr. Piepers ist ein Eirenicon im besten Sinne des Wortes." *Ibid.*, XLIX (October 1903), 301.

<sup>125</sup> F. B[ente], *ibid.*, XLIX (May 1903), 142 f. Also see pp. 144, 145.

A second free conference was held in 1903, this one in Milwaukee, Sept. 9—11, attended by more than 700 persons. There were 500 persons who actually registered, of whom 377 belonged to the Synodical Conference. Two questions occupied this conference: "1. What is the relationship of the universal gracious will of God (*der allgemeine Gnadenwille Gottes*) to predestination (*Gnadenwahl*)? 2. Must those passages of Holy Writ, which *ex professo* deal with predestination (e.g., Eph. 1:1-6, 2 Thess. 2:13, Acts 13:48), be interpreted according to John 3:16 and similar passages on universal grace?"<sup>126</sup> The debate revolved around principles of Scriptural interpretation. However, another free conference was scheduled for Detroit in 1904.<sup>127</sup>

Between the Milwaukee and the Detroit conference a meeting of the Planning Committee was held in Chicago on Dec. 29, 1903. Present were: F. Pieper and G. Stoeckhardt, Missouri Synod; A. Hoenecke and A. Pieper, Wisconsin Synod; F. Richter and M. Fritschel, Iowa Synod; H. G. Stub, Norwegian Synod; H. A. Allwardt, H. Ernst, and F. W. Stellhorn, from the Ohio Synod. The Ohio Synod representatives wanted to make the 1877 theses (Northern District of the Missouri Synod) on the *analogia fidei* the subject of discussion, and the first two theses were actually discussed. The committee members agreed to formulate positions on this doctrine and to discuss the *analogia fidei* at the Detroit conference.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Idem, "Die freie Konferenz in Milwaukee," "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, XLIX (October 1903), 304.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 305.

<sup>128</sup> Idem, "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, I (January 1904), 35—37.



On April 5, 1904, this committee met again in Detroit prior to the conference. It set up two questions: 1. What is the analogy of faith? 2. How is the analogy of faith to be used? The two-day discussion in the free conference (April 1904) raged about these questions, the doctrines of election and conversion receiving references most frequently. In spite of lack of agreement the large assembly (about 500 men) voted to meet in Fort Wayne in the following year to discuss the doctrine of predestination.<sup>129</sup>

The Detroit Free Conference did not have the opportunity to discuss the areas of agreement and disagreement regarding *analogia fidei* as set forth for each side respectively by Stellhorn (Ohio and Iowa) and by Pieper (Synodical Conference and Norwegian Synod). The committee, at the request of the Ohio Synod, had substituted the two general questions which were discussed.<sup>130</sup> Subsequently Pieper formulated sentences on hermeneutical principles in their relationship to the *analogia fidei*.<sup>131</sup>

In 1905 (Aug. 8—10) the fourth of the free conferences was held. This one took place in Fort Wayne, attended by 200 to 300 men. Eph. 1 was discussed; this led to a discussion of Art. XI of the Formula of

<sup>129</sup> G. St[oekhardt], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, I (April 1904) 174—176. Average attendance, 500, of whom 305 were clergymen; 124 from the Missouri Synod, 10 from the Wisconsin Synod, 97 from the Ohio Synod, 23 from the Iowa Synod, etc.

<sup>130</sup> F. P[ieper], "Ueber die Analogie oder Regel des Glaubens," *ibid.*, I (September 1904), 405—410.

<sup>131</sup> *Idem*, "Schriftauslegung und Analogie des Glaubens," *ibid.*, LII (November 1906), 481—486; *ibid.*, LIII (January 1907), 11—18; *ibid.*, LIII (February 1907), 70—77; *ibid.*, LIII (April 1907), 153—160; *ibid.*, LIII (December 1907), 529—534.

Concord. The issue was joined. Does this passage speak of God's universal plan of salvation or of God's eternal decree of election? No agreement was reached, although arrangements were made for another free conference in the coming year.<sup>132</sup>

The Missourians, it was admitted, had little zeal for further meetings, because of the uncomplimentary reports circulated about their Synod. They were certain that the free conferences were not successful in convincing their opponents of the error of their position. Dr. Pieper was attacked by the Ohio church papers. However, the Missourians were reluctant to break off the conferences.<sup>133</sup> Missouri was blamed for the 50 years of disunity in the Lutheran church since the organization of the General Council.<sup>134</sup> It was branded as a sect.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> G. St[oekhardt], "Freie Konferenz in Fort Wayne," in "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LI (August 1905), 368—372.

See *idem*, "Was lehrt St. Paulus Epheser 1:3-14 von der Gnadenwahl?" *ibid.*, LI (October 1905), 433—446; *ibid.*, LI (November 1905), 481—489.

F. B[ente], "Die intersynodale Konferenz in Fort Wayne," *ibid.*, LII (December 1906), 529 to 545; *ibid.*, LIII (January 1907), 18—33; *ibid.*, LIII (February 1907), 77—87.

See also *idem*, "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LIII (January 1907), 36—38.

F., "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LIII (March 1907), 127—129.

<sup>133</sup> *Idem*, "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LI (November 1905), 512, 513.

See *idem*, "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LI (August 1905), 373—375, for the attacks on Dr. Pieper's presidential report in Detroit, who found fault with the Ohio Synod for its position on conversion as synergistic and its *analogia fidei* doctrine. The Iowa Synod, too, F. B[ente] declared, was continually arousing hatred against Missouri.

Also see his [Bente's] "Vorwort," *ibid.*, LII, (January 1906), 1, 2.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.



The loose position on Scripture within the General Synod<sup>136</sup> and the refusal or inability to acknowledge the basic nature of the differences between Ohio and Missouri (analogy of faith, election, conversion) brought on, Bente stated, the charges against Missouri of causing the disunity in the Lutheran Church of America. Thus the failure of the free conferences led to new strictures of the Missouri Synod. Once more the doctrine of election was the subject of the debate and with it the question of the principles of Biblical interpretation.<sup>137</sup>

Bente asked, "Wie kann die Einigkeit unter den Lutheranern in Amerika hergestellt werden?" He did not agree with the *Lutheran Observer* that the different Lutheran bodies were the various species within the genus Lutheranism. To agree on the universal in Lutheranism meant acceptance of the symbols. The Missouri Synod did not demand acquiescence in the inferences drawn from the symbols.<sup>138</sup>

Deindoerfer of the Iowa Synod in 1904

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., LII (March 1906), 106—119; *ibid.*, LII (April 1906), 160—173; *ibid.*, LII (May 1906), 193—211. Also see F. B[ente], "Ohioische Entstellungen und Verleumdungen," *ibid.*, LII (May 1906), 226—228.

<sup>137</sup> G. St[oekhardt], "Zum Schriftbeweis für die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl," *ibid.*, LII (July 1906), 289—303; *ibid.*, LII (August 1906), 337—345; *idem.*, "Ein Nachtrag zum Dogmengeschichtlichen über die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl," *ibid.*, LII (September 1906), 385 to 399; *ibid.*, LII (October 1906), 433—446; [Th.] G[raebner], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LX (February 1914), 79—80.

<sup>138</sup> F. B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, XLIX (October 1903), 305, 306. He says, p. 306: "Die Missouri-Synode fordert keine Zustimmung zu bloßen Schlussfolgerungen, sondern ausgesprochenermaßen nur zu solchen Lehren, von welchen sie bewiesen hat, dass sie ausdrücklich, *expressis verbis*, in Gottes Wort gelehrt werden."

detailed seven points of difference between Iowa and Missouri. Briefly summarized they pertained to the questions:

1. What constitutes a divisive doctrine?
2. What is the correct doctrine of the church?
3. What is the Scriptural doctrine of the ministry?
4. What about the teachings concerning Sunday?
5. What about eschatological questions? The Antichrist?
6. The millenium?
7. The first resurrection?

Soteriological questions and questions pertaining to conversion remained as major points of difference.<sup>139</sup>

In the controversy with the Ohio Synod, Bente remarked: "Klare Bibelstellen machen auf die Ohioer and ohiosche Auslegungen machen auf Missouri keinen Eindruck."<sup>140</sup> Ohio limited the *sola gratia*, Bente maintained.<sup>141</sup>

There were other free conferences held after these four from 1903 to 1905. They were relatively unimportant. Those between the Missouri Synod pastors and the General Council pastors in the New York City area around 1909 died out, although the Missouri Synod pastors declared their

<sup>139</sup> G. St[oekhardt], "Die Lehrdifferenzen zwischen Missouri und Iowa," *ibid.*, I (October 1904), 439—450; *ibid.*, I (November 1904), 488—497; *ibid.*, I (December 1904), 533 to 546; with reference to Stellhorn's "Weshalb versagt die lutherische Synode von Missouri (und ihre Bundesgenossen) der lutherischen Synode von Iowa die Kirchengemeinschaft?" in the 1904 *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*.

<sup>140</sup> F. B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, LVI (May 1910), 226.

<sup>141</sup> *Idem.*, "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *ibid.*, LVI (July 1910), 315, 316.



willingness to further them.<sup>142</sup> The question of unity preoccupied the Synodical Conference in these years,<sup>143</sup> without, however, bringing about steps toward union. During the period between the close of the Fort Wayne free conference (1905) and the convention of the Missouri Synod in 1917 the conviction came to the leaders of the Missouri Synod that free conferences and doctrinal essays at conventions would not be enough to further the cause of Lutheran union.

The free conferences, however, were by no means abandoned. Between 1914 and 1917 such conferences were held in widely separated places, seemingly without any concerted efforts to promote or co-ordinate their efforts. On June 25, 1914 (the 384th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession), a free conference was held in Baltimore. Lutheran pastors in and around Baltimore from the Synodical Conference, the Ohio Synod, and the General Synod were present for a discussion of Art. VII of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>144</sup> In May 1916 an important conversation was held between pastors of the Ohio and Iowa synods and of the Synodical Conference in St. Paul.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, LV (January 1909), 32; *ibid.*, LV (April 1909), 178.

<sup>143</sup> In 1908 Francis Pieper read the essay at the Synodical Conference convention on "Das herrliche Gut der glaubensbrüderlichen Gemeinschaft," *Proceedings*, Synodical Conference, 1908, pp. 5—38; the essay in 1906, by J. Koehler, dealt with the theme, "Seid fleissig zu halten die Einigkeit im Geist," *Proceedings*, Synodical Conference, 1906, pp. 5—40; in 1912 the opening sermon was delivered by Franz Pieper on Rom. 16:16, 17, on the theme "Des Apostels Paulus Unterricht über die Trennung in der christlichen Kirche," *Proceedings*, Synodical Conference, 1912, pp. 7—14.

<sup>144</sup> *Lutheran Witness*, XXXIII (July 28, 1914), 126.

The doctrines of conversion and election were the topics of conversation. The theses presented there, it was declared, were not, like the Norwegian *Oppgøer*, a compromise.<sup>145</sup> Yet the conferees did not arrive at a conclusive formulation (*abschliessende Formulierung*) of the doctrinal differences.<sup>146</sup> Again in 1917 a free conference was held in St. Paul;<sup>147</sup> in that year other conferences were held in Kansas<sup>148</sup> and Nebraska.<sup>149</sup> In the midst of these con-

<sup>145</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXII (September 1916), 423—426.

<sup>146</sup> F. Pieper, "Die St. Pauler Vereinigungsthesen," *ibid.*, LXIII (January 1917), 1—6; *idem*, "Weitere Verhandlungen über Vereinigungsthesen," *ibid.*, LXIII (March 1917), 97 to 102.

They were found defective, too, by the Ohio Synod *Theologische Zeitblätter*, December 1916, according to [Th.] G[raebner], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXIII (January 1917), 40.

*Zur Einigung: Leitsätze, die auf der intersynodalen Konferenz in der ev. luth. Dreifaltigkeits-Kirche zu St. Paul, Minn., am 3. und 4. Mai 1916 angenommen wurden* (publisher and date not given) has a roster of 555 names of men who subscribed to the "St. Paul Theses," distributed among the synods as follows: Iowa (167), Missouri (163), Minnesota (81), Ohio (65), Wisconsin (50), Michigan (6), Nebraska (3), and others whose affiliation is not identified.

<sup>147</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LXXIII (April 24, 1917), 138; a notice to meet on May 9, 10.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXIII (Aug. 28, 1917), 284; the notice was a call for the "second intersynodical conference in Kansas" to meet at Ellinwood, Sept. 11, 12. Another notice, almost a year later, called for the "second intersynodical conference of Kansas" to meet in Ellinwood from July 31 to Aug. 1, 1918. The discussion on the question, "Who are the elect according to the Formula of Concord?" was to be continued according to the notice.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXIII (Oct. 23, 1917), 360; the notice stated that the "next intersynodical conference" would be held on Nov. 6 and 7, in Sterling, according to a resolution passed in



ferences Missouri's leading spokesman declared that setting aside the differences between the Synodical Conference on the one hand and the Ohio, Iowa, and other synods on the other hand ought to be easy if only the latter would acknowledge that nothing in man is responsible for his conversion.<sup>150</sup> He feared that these conferences tended to discuss so many theological questions extensively that the real issue, as he saw it, was at times obscured. The issue? The grace of God in conversion.<sup>151</sup>

For all that, the thought that the Missouri Synod and the Ohio-Iowa groups would unite was not a foreign one in 1917; it was bruited about in wider circles. The intersynodical conferences between 1914 and 1917 were regarded as being fruitful.<sup>152</sup> It was then that Friedrich Bente asked the question, and the question became the title of a book, *Was steht der*

---

Fremont. The meeting was to be held in an Iowa Synod church (H. E. Wunderlich, pastor). Three papers were scheduled on the topic "Who are the elect according to the Formula of Concord?"

<sup>150</sup> F. P[ieper], "Eine dreifache Frage und eine dreifache Antwort," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXII (November 1916), 481—484.

<sup>151</sup> Idem, "Zur Einigung," *ibid.*, LXII (April 1916), 150; see pp. 145—150 for the discussion of Thesis XII of the Ohio Synod's *Zeugnisse zur Einigung*.

<sup>152</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXIII (November 1917), 517—520. In the report of the 1917 convention of the Missouri Synod published in *Der Lutheraner*, LXXIII (July 3, 1917), 217, it was stated: "In den letzten Jahren sind besonders im Nordwesten auf privatem Wege Verhandlungen mit Gliedern der Iowasyndode und Ohiosynode begonnen worden, die darauf abzielen, die bestehenden Lehrdifferenzen zu beseitigen. Diese Verhandlungen haben einen löblichen Zweck und sind auch bisher nicht ganz erfolglos gewesen. Sie haben aber einen solchen Umfang angenommen, dass sie nicht länger als Privatsache behandelt werden sollten."

*Vereinigung der lutherischen Synoden Amerikas im Wege?*<sup>153</sup> He surveyed the various Lutheran church bodies in America in their historical development and detailed the points of difference between each and the Missouri Synod. Bente's book caused a minor controversy, an editorial give-and-take between church papers of the Ohio Synod and the Missouri Synod.<sup>154</sup>

The controversy was not of such a nature as to disrupt the steps toward formal union negotiations between Missouri and Wisconsin on the one hand and Ohio and Iowa on the other. The free conferences that were being held, especially in 1916 and 1917, exercised a strong influence, it may safely be said, in bringing about more official negotiations among the synods. Especially the intersynodical conferences in the Northwest (e.g., St. Paul on May 9, 1917) brought pressure on the Missouri Synod to elect an intersynodical committee to examine the theses proposed by such an intersynodical conference.<sup>155</sup> Thus, in 1917, the year of the Norwegian merger, two years before the Wisconsin Synod formally consolidated its forces, the year before the organization of the United Lutheran Church in America, the year in which union plans among the Lutherans in America were more prominent than in

---

<sup>153</sup> Published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, in 1917; 110 pages.

<sup>154</sup> [M.] S[ommer], "One Preventive of Union," *Lutheran Witness*, XXXVI (May 29, 1917), 158, 159.

Not part of the controversy but of some interest is the fact that J. Schaller of the Wisconsin Synod stated that he did not agree with all of Bente's conclusions, but did not detail his points of disagreement. *Theologische Quartalschrift*, XIV (April 1917), 171.

<sup>155</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1917, Germ. ed., pp. 153, 154; Engl. ed., pp. 76, 77.



any year before 1959, the Missouri Synod had its first unity or union committee. The committee was named by that name; it was regarded, if not so named, as the Committee on Intersynodical Matters. Geo. Mezger, J. G. F. Kleinhans, and O. L. Hohenstein were elected (by ballot) to the committee. They were instructed to "be prepared to treat with similar committees representing other Lutheran Synods."<sup>156</sup> It may be noted that Pieper was not elected to this committee nor was any member of the Springfield faculty.

The other synods also elected or appointed committees for intersynodical relations. The committees of the respective synods (Iowa, Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin) held a meeting in St. Paul on Feb. 6, 7, 1918, and agreed to meet again from July 23 to 25 in Milwaukee.<sup>157</sup> A series of six meetings was held between 1917 and the 1920 Detroit convention of the Missouri Synod. The Intersynodical Board (*Intersynodale Kommission*)—the official title of the committee elected in 1917—reported that ten theses on conversion had been agreed on. Progress was being made toward agreement in the doctrine of election, but agreement had not yet been achieved. The Synod was ready to continue these meetings and expressed a prayer for unity with the Ohio and Iowa synods.<sup>158</sup>

The Committee on Intersynodical Matters reported that our committee and the committee of the Wisconsin Synod has since 1918 carried on doctrinal discussions with

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LXXIV (Feb. 26, 1918), 84.

<sup>158</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1920, Germ. ed., pp. 239—241 (the report of the committee in full); Engl. ed., pp. 83, 84.

committees of the Ohio Synod and of the Iowa Synod, and that agreement in the doctrine of conversion had been reached. This report was received with joy, and it was voted that the discussions be continued on such other points of doctrine as are still in controversy.<sup>159</sup>

Synod resolved also that the theses were to be printed and discussed in the conferences of the Synod. The same committee was re-elected to carry on the negotiations with the other synods.<sup>160</sup> The Ohio Synod, too, expressed its joy over the progress made and resolved to spread the theses on which agreement had been reached on its minutes.<sup>161</sup> Optimism, therefore, in 1920, was not altogether out of order. Buffalo and Iowa had reached agreement; Iowa and Ohio had arrived at that point earlier; Missouri and Wisconsin had reached accord with Ohio and Iowa on the doctrine of conversion. "Are we too sanguine if we hope that, the better our position is known," it was said, "the greater the number of our friends will become?—that in the end a majority of all Lutherans will enter into relations of fellowship with us on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions?"<sup>162</sup>

Between 1920 and 1923 three or four meetings were held annually by the representatives of the five synods (Wisconsin, Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo, and Missouri). Their work was slow; no attempt was made to

<sup>159</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "The Story of the Convention," *Lutheran Witness*, XXXIX (July 6, 1920), 213.

<sup>160</sup> E. E., "Bericht über unsere Delegatensynode," *Der Lutheraner*, LXXVI (July 13, 1920), 233.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., LXXVI (Sept. 21, 1920), 312.

<sup>162</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "Prospects for Lutheran Church Union," *Lutheran Witness*, XXXIX (Sept. 14, 1920), 294.



gloss over doctrinal differences. The doctrines of conversion and election were at the center of the discussions.

Wir können die Sachlage so zusammenfassen: Zu wahrer Einigung in der christlichen Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl gehört unzweideutig festzustellen, ob man in dem Satz von der "gleichen Schuld" und dem "gleich üblen Verhalten" einig ist, wenn die Menschen, welche bekehrt und selig werden, mit den Menschen, welche unbekehrt bleiben und verloren gehen, *verglichen werde*. . . . Wenn man diese beiden Menschenklassen miteinander vergleiche, *müsse* man ganz notwendig lehren, dass Bekehrung und Seligkeit *nicht* allein von Gottes Gnade, sondern auch von seinem "verschiedenen Verhalten," seiner Selbstbestimmung, seiner Selbstsetzung, seiner geringeren Schuld, seiner Unterlassung des mutwilligen Widerstrebens usw. abhängen.<sup>103</sup>

Earlier, unionistic practices were regarded as "the chief hindrance to unity among Lutherans in America."<sup>104</sup> Now also it was said, "No union without unity."<sup>105</sup> Again: "The cause for disunion in the Lutheran

Church is found in false doctrine and harmful, destructive practices based upon this false teaching."<sup>106</sup>

The Intersynodical Committee with the corresponding committees of the other synods, in the meanwhile, agreed on theses and antitheses regarding the doctrines of conversion and election. However, a number of protests were lodged against them at the convention of the Missouri Synod in 1923. A *Prüfungskommission*, so designated by the Synod, was elected and was given until the end of 1925 to examine and judge these theses and antitheses. In the meanwhile the Intersynodical Committee was to continue its discussions with the other synods.<sup>107</sup> Th. Graebner replaced Hohenstein on this committee; Kleinhaus continued to serve.<sup>108</sup> Mezger, although reappointed to this committee, could not serve because of his transfer to Germany and was replaced by Wm. Arndt.<sup>109</sup> Th. Engelder, R. Neitzel, professors at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, and Pastor P. Schulz of Springfield were elected to the *Prüfungskommission*.<sup>170</sup>

Discussion of the differences was regarded as the only way in which agreement between Lutheran bodies could be achieved. The Intersynodical Committee and unofficial conferences were helpful toward this end. In 1923 a note of quiet but genuine optimism was still discernible

<sup>103</sup> F. P[ieper], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXVII (July 1921), 214.

<sup>104</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "Why Lutherans Cannot Unite," *Lutheran Witness*, XXXVI (Jan. 9, 1917), 6; idem, "The Greatest Hindrance to Lutheran Unity," *ibid.*, XXXVI (Feb. 20, 1917), 54 f.; idem, "Why Lutherans Cannot Unite," *ibid.*, XXXVI (Aug. 21, 1917), 263 ("Unionism is a bar to true unity"); idem, "Unionism Defined," *ibid.*, XXXVII (Oct. 29, 1918), 346 ("It [unionism] lays the ax at the root of Lutheran church life").

<sup>105</sup> [M.] S[ommer], "Union Without Unity," *ibid.*, XXXVI (Dec. 25, 1917), 406; [Th.] G[raebner], "Unionism Without Unity Is Treason," *ibid.*, XL (March 29, 1921), 104; [Wm.] A[rndt], "The Aim of the Synodical Conference: Unity Rather than Union," *ibid.*, XLI (July 4, 1922), 216.

<sup>106</sup> [M.] S[ommer], "Who Is Guilty of Keeping Lutherans Apart?" *ibid.*, XLII (Jan. 2, 1923), 5.

<sup>107</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1923, Germ. ed., pp. 227—229; Engl. ed., p. 92.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* Germ. ed., p. 240; Engl. ed., p. 92.

<sup>109</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1926, Germ. ed., p. 223; Engl. ed., p. 136.

<sup>170</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1923, Germ. ed., p. 229.



—agreement might be reached between the Ohio and Iowa synods and the Synodical Conference.<sup>171</sup> There was a readiness even to stress the fact that doctrinal differences still existed. A "Lutheran Forum," for instance, in Chicago heard William Dallmann speak on "Things Which Dis-unite" in October 1924.<sup>172</sup> In this same year Pieper delivered an essay at the Oregon and Washington District of the Missouri Synod on "Unionism." He said:

Holy Scriptures teach very emphatically and in manifold ways that all fellowship (*sic*) with false doctrine is forbidden of God and detrimental to the Church.<sup>173</sup>

In applying this proposition he rejected union with the Reformed denominations, "both such as teach that God does not desire the salvation of all men, as well as those that maintain that God does not by grace alone wish to save and convert men." Then he added: "It is a regrettable fact that the latter false doctrine has found

a home within the Lutheran Church. . . ."<sup>174</sup> He said that "certain elements within the American Lutheran Church espouse this error [that the conversion of man is not brought about solely by the gracious operation of God, but that the co-operation of man is essential] with such determination that they have not refrained from branding the Missouri Synod and affiliated synods Calvinists. . . ."<sup>175</sup>

The question of church union was aired also from the pulpits of the Missouri Synod during this period (1917—1932). Paul Lindemann, for instance, wrote:

The wave of unionistic tendencies which has swept over our country and over the world is plainly of satanic origin. It is one of the two methods of Satan to despoil the Church of Christ. . . . Every union that is not based on a unity of faith has in every case proved disastrous, and all its splendid promises have turned out to be vain delusions.<sup>176</sup>

Unionism, Theo. Graebner wrote, violates the clearness of Scripture. A unionistic Lutheran makes of Lutheranism a sect.<sup>177</sup> Unionism was condemned in an article in *THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY* by William Arndt.<sup>178</sup> He pointed out: "That the question of unionism has been one of the chief

<sup>171</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "Lutheran Union," *Lutheran Witness*, XLII (Aug. 14, 1923), 263. He said: "For this purpose [to bring about agreement] our Synod has an Intersynodical Committee. For this purpose, too, unofficial conferences between our men and the representatives of other bodies have been held and are being held. These negotiations have not been without blessed result, and the hope is bright for the removal of differences which have been a cause of schism and disunion."

Also see [M.] S[ommer], "'Ohio,' 'Iowa,' and 'Missouri,'" *ibid.*, XLII (Oct. 23, 1923), 341: "Entire agreement has not yet been achieved, because all the points of controversy have not been fully discussed, but progress has been made, and the effort will be continued."

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIII (Nov. 18, 1924), 420.

<sup>173</sup> F. Pieper, *Unionism: What Does the Bible Say about Church-Union?* trans. J. A. Rimbach and E. H. Brandt (Oregon City, Ore.: Oregon City Enterprise for the Oregon and Washington District of the Missouri Synod, [1925]), p. 5. In italics in the original.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. In italics in the original.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>176</sup> Paul Lindemann, "Church Union," A sermon delivered at the convention of the Norwegian Synod, June 6, 1920, at Minneapolis, Minn., on John 10:16, *Magazin für evang.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie*, XLIV (October 1920), 465 f.

<sup>177</sup> [Th.] G[raebner], "Letters to a Young Preacher," Tenth Letter, *Magazin für evang.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie*, XLIV (December 1920), 566.

<sup>178</sup> W. Arndt, "The Lutheran Church and Unionism," *Theological Monthly*, VI (November 1926), 321—328.



rocks on which the past hopes for unification of the Lutheran Church in America came to grief is well known."<sup>170</sup> "Unionism is not only one of the chief obstacles to Lutheran harmony, it is one of the greatest evils that are harassing the body of Christ these days."<sup>180</sup>

Just at this time, between 1923 and 1926, the Ohio and Iowa Synods advanced toward organic union—a union that was consummated also with the Buffalo Synod in the formation of the American Lutheran Church in 1930. The initiative had come from the Iowa Synod in 1919. A year later a joint committee got to work; in 1922 a larger committee came into being, which drew up detailed plans for an organic union. The recommendation for such a merger came in 1924. In 1925 the Buffalo Synod voiced a readiness to join with Iowa and Ohio. In 1926, however, the demands of the Iowa Synod for a change in wording of the confessional paragraph caused a delay in effecting the union.<sup>181</sup>

Some good might come out of the efforts to unite the Iowa and the Ohio synods, Pieper declared, after the Ohio Synod had rejected this proposed amendment to the doctrinal paragraph of the proposed constitution.

Aus den neuen Vereinigungsbestrebungen kann etwas Gutes kommen, wenn sie erneute Untersuchungen darüber veranlassen, was wirklich lutherische Lehre ist und was bisher noch immer fälschlich dafür ausgegeben wurde.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>181</sup> Wentz, *Lutheranism in America*, pp. 298, 299.

<sup>182</sup> F. P[ieper] in "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXXII (October

The Missouri Synod leaders were more concerned, however, by the fact that these synods were negotiating with the Norwegian Lutheran Church and had agreed on the *Minneapolis Theses* in 1925. These theses dealt with the following topics: the Scriptures; the Lutheran Symbols; Church Fellowship; the Chicago Theses of 1919 (the work of Christ, the Gospel, absolutism, Baptism, justification, faith, conversion, and election); the lodge question; and a declaration of mutual recognition.<sup>183</sup>

Meetings were continued also between the representatives of the Synodical Conference and of the Ohio and Iowa Synods (but not the Norwegian Lutheran Church). When the Missouri Synod committee reported to the convention in St. Louis in 1926 it could state that agreement had been reached with the committees of these synods on many points: the doctrines of the Scriptures (deemed necessary because of its importance for unity, although no controversy had raged on this point except on the question of *analogia fidei*), attitude toward the Confessions, church fellowship, the church, the spiritual priesthood, the ministry, Antichrist, chiliasm, Sunday, and open questions. The adequacy of these theses was to be Synod's decision on the basis of the report of the Examining Committee. In any eventuality continued discussions with the other Synods were urged.<sup>184</sup>

The convention rejoiced over the prog-

1926), 310. Cf. *ibid.*, LXXII (November 1926), 342, 343 re these differences.

<sup>183</sup> *Doctrinal Declarations*, pp. 20—23; Bruce, pp. 81—83; *Theological Monthly*, VII (April 1927), 112—117.

<sup>184</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1926, Germ. ed., pp. 223, 224.



ress which had been made. It found that "the Lutheran doctrine has not yet in all points received such expression as is clear, precise, adequate, and exclusive of all error." Pastoral conferences were to study them. It re-elected the personnel of the Intersynodical Committee, with instructions to remove other obstacles toward unity and union, among them the differing concept of Christian fellowship.<sup>185</sup> This convention also heard the report of the Examining Committee, which had been appointed to review the products of the Intersynodical Committee. It recommended about 24 changes, both in the theses on conversion and election submitted in 1923 and the additional theses agreed on between 1923 and 1926. It found these changes "necessary" (*nötig*).<sup>186</sup>

With the encouragement of the convention the Missouri Synod Intersynodical Committee (Th. Engelder had replaced Th. Graebner) continued meeting with the committees of the other synods. The revisions of the Missouri Synod *Prüfungskomitee* were presented to this joint committee. Most of them were accepted; none were rejected for doctrinal reasons. Important additions were made, especially a section treating election *intuitu fidei*, and one expanding the section on chiliasm.<sup>187</sup> The final formation was the well-known "*Chicago Theses Concerning Conversion, Predestination, and Other Doctrines*," adopted by representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin

synods, and revised and formally adopted on Aug. 2, 1928, in St. Paul.<sup>188</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the *Chicago Theses* developed within the Missouri Synod. Pieper feared that they harbored "*verschiedenes Verhalten*," i. e., that the difference in conversion can be accounted for by the variant dispositions in different people.<sup>189</sup> Other voices were raised in more decided disagreement.

When the Intersynodical Committee reported to the Missouri Synod convention in 1929 it made no specific recommendation for adoption or rejection of the *Chicago Theses*. It did recommend that the action on the theses be separated from the question of fraternal relations with Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo, because of the ties the latter had made *mit nicht bekenntnistreuen Lutheranern*.<sup>190</sup>

So, too, in spite of the declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship by the Ohio and Norwegian synods on the basis of the *Minneapolis Theses*, John Meyer of the

<sup>188</sup> A. C. Haase, secretary, "Schlussbericht des Intersynodalkomitees," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, XXV (October 1928), 266; see pp. 266—288. The English version is *ibid.*, XXVI (October 1929), 250—273. The German text was declared the official text. They were reprinted separately in both the German and the English. The English version can be found conveniently in *Doctrinal Declarations*, pp. 24—59.

<sup>189</sup> F. P[ieper], "Vorwort," *Lehre und Wehre*, LXXIII (January and February, 1927), 3: "Ein Versuch zur Beseitigung dieser Plage ist in der jüngsten Zeit wieder in den sogenannten 'Intersynodalen Thesen' gemacht worden, die von den Vertretern der Synodalkonferenz einerseits und von Vertretern der Synoden von Iowa, Ohio und Buffalo andererseits zusammengestellt sind. Sie sind zu genauer Prüfung an die genannten Kirchenkörper verwiesen worden."

<sup>190</sup> *Reports and Memorials*, Mo. Synod, 1929, p. 131.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227—229; Engl. ed., pp. 140 f.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, Germ. ed., pp. 225, 226; Engl. ed., pp. 135—137.

<sup>187</sup> *Reports and Memorials*, Mo. Synod, 1929, pp. 130, 131.



Wisconsin Synod asked that the Chicago Theses "be prayerfully considered on their own merit."<sup>101</sup> He said of the committee's work:

In heilsamem Horror vor aller Union-isterei war das Komitee stets bestrebt, jeden Ausdruck, der etwa zweideutig erscheinen könnte, zu vermeiden, so dass die resultierende These immer von allen im gleichen Sinn verstanden wurde und in ihrem klaren Wortlaut das Herzensbekenntnis eines jedes Komiteegliedes ist. Der Segen des Herrn blieb den Bemühungen des Komitees nicht versagt. Das lebendige Wort unsers Gottes bewies seine einigende Kraft. Der Heilige Geist, der die ganze Christenheit auf Erden sammelt, trieb sein Werk der Einigung mit Macht in den Herzen der Komiteeglieder, so dass sie sich zusammenfanden in dem wahren Glauben und nun mit den angenommenen Thesen ein einmütiges Bekenntnis vor der Kirche ablegen.<sup>102</sup>

However, the Examining Committee (Neitzel, Schulz, Wenger) of the Missouri Synod found itself "compelled to advise Synod to reject these theses as a possible basis for union with the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate." The insertion of the paragraph on *intuitu fidei*, for instance, made that chapter "less clear than it was before." The report of this committee concluded:

Your Committee considers it a hopeless undertaking to make these theses unobjectionable from the view of pure doctrine.

<sup>101</sup> "Kirchengeschichtliche Notizen," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, XVI (January 1929), 58. Meyer's plea for "an unbiased examination of the Chicago Theses" was endorsed in *Theological Monthly*, IX (March 1929), 81.

<sup>102</sup> [John] M[eyer], "Kirchengeschichtliche Notizen," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, XXV (October 1928), 288.

It would be better to discard them as a failure. It now seems to your Committee a matter of wisdom to desist from intersynodical conferences. *By entering into a closer relationship with the adherents of the Norwegian "Opgjøer," the opponents have given evidence that they do not hold our position in the doctrines of conversion and election.* In view of this action further conferences would be useless and only create the impression as if *(sic)* we were endeavoring to come to an understanding, which is not the case.

It ought now also to be apparent that the manner of conducting these conferences, to wit, the exclusion of all historical matters, is wrong (*keine weise war*). As a result the opponents hardly understand each other.<sup>103</sup>

The Northeast Special Conference of Iowa [of the Missouri Synod] protested against the inadequacies of the theses and found them "unserviceable for purposes of union." This group, too, wanted to break off entirely from further conferences.<sup>104</sup> Other documents and letters which dealt with the reports of these two committees were also on hand.

The Committee on Intersynodical Matters of the 1929 (River Forest) convention of the Missouri Synod—Committee 19—acknowledged that "some progress in the presentation of doctrine on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confes-

<sup>103</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1929, pp. 110 to 112; the quotation is from p. 112. Italics added. The German report, which is much smoother than the English, is in *Reports and Memorials*, Mo. Synod, 1929, pp. 131—134.

The Chicago Theses will be examined in more detail in Section IV of this essay.

<sup>104</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1929, p. 112; *Reports and Memorials*, 1929, p. 134, where the protest is given in full in German.



sions has been made." In other respects, too, it toned down, as best it could, the raspiness of the report of the Examining Committee. Committee 19 did not, however, recommend the acceptance of the *Chicago Theses*. Nor did it recommend that all negotiations be broken off. It recommended that a committee be appointed by the President of Synod "to formulate theses which, beginning with the *status controversiae*, are to present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple manner." In other words, this committee was to draw up a brief statement on doctrines in controversy. The recommendations of Committee 19 were adopted. The report stated:

It was emphasized that future discussion be contingent on the following two conditions:

a) That the move toward fellowship between the Ohio and Iowa synods, on the one hand, and the Norwegian Lutheran Church, on the other, be first adjusted according to the Word of God;

b) That future deliberations proceed from the exact point of controversy and take into account the pertinent history.<sup>105</sup>

Between 1929 and 1932, therefore, there were no intersynodical conferences. Unilateral action was taken to formulate *A Brief Statement* by the committee appointed by President Pfotenhauer. This committee consisted of F. Pieper, W. Wenger, E. A. Mayer, L. A. Heerboth, and Th. Engelder. With only a few stylistic changes and with the elevation of the English version to co-equal official position with the German, the theses were adopted in 1932

<sup>105</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1929, pp. 112, 113.

"as a brief Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod."<sup>106</sup>

The Synodical Conference as such was not involved in the conferences and theses of the years 1917 to 1929, although the Wisconsin Synod representatives participated. Nor did the Synodical Conference accept *A Brief Statement*—it was never asked to do so.

Now 29 years later, in almost another generation and in the midst of another round of union movements, it has become a symbol of controversy within the church body that fathered it.

We must look at its period of literary gestation before we can conclude.

#### IV

#### MAJOR DOCTRINAL FORMULATIONS WITHIN THE MISSOURI SYNOD 1887—1932

Only against the backdrop of the movements within the Missouri Synod, major theological movements of the period and Missouri's reaction to them, and the developments within Lutheranism in America can the form and phraseology of the *Brief Statement* of 1932 be understood. The literary genesis of this document must also be considered. What does it owe to its predecessors, if any? Who is its major author?

The second question can be answered very simply. It was Francis Pieper, professor of theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1878 to 1931 and its president from 1887 to 1931. After the death of Dr. C. F. W. Walther he was regarded as the "Elisha" on whom Walther's mantle had fallen. His essays at synodical and dis-

<sup>106</sup> *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1932, pp. 154, 155.



trict conventions and in *Lehre und Wehre*, his shorter treatises, and then his *Christliche Dogmatik* substantiated his prestige as a theologian. His duties as president of Concordia Seminary and as President of the Missouri Synod from 1899 to 1911, his activities within the Synodical Conference, his membership on various boards and committees made it mandatory for him to be a churchman as well as a theologian. He, then, was the chief author of *A Brief Statement*.<sup>1</sup>

He was also the author of other doctrinal formulations that preceded the *Brief Statement*. These are "*Ich glaube, darum rede ich*"<sup>2</sup> (1897) and *Was die Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten während ihres fünfundsiebzigjährigen Bestehens gelehrt hat und noch lehrt* (1922).<sup>3</sup> The first of these was issued in a second unaltered edition;<sup>4</sup> it was translated into English when first published.<sup>5</sup> These are direct progenitors of *A Brief Statement*

<sup>1</sup> L. Fuerbringer, "F. Pieper als Theolog," CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, II (October 1931), 721—729; *ibid.*, II (November 1931), 801—807; W. H. T. Dau, "Dr. Francis Pieper, the Churchman," *ibid.*, II (October 1931), 729—736; T. Laetsch, "D. Pieper als Prediger," *ibid.*, II (October 1931), 761 to 771.

<sup>2</sup> The subtitle is: "Eine kurze Darstellung der Lehrstellung der Missouri-Synode. Zum Jubiläumsjahr 1897." Presumably this was published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1897, although these data are not given.

<sup>3</sup> St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Pieper, *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, in the Year of Jubilee, 1897*, translated from the German by W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [1897]).

of 1932. Two other formulations must also be noted. Both are from the pen of Francis Pieper; both appeared in 1893. The one is the essay read at the convention of the Missouri Synod, giving a survey of the doctrine and practice of the Synod.<sup>6</sup> The second is in English, a contribution to a symposium on the distinctive doctrines of the individual Lutheran church bodies in America.<sup>7</sup>

In his 1893 synodical essay Pieper began with the position of the Missouri Synod toward the Holy Scriptures. He noted the attacks on Holy Scriptures.

Die heilige Schrift soll nicht mehr das unfehlbare Gotteswort sein, dem sich alles, was Mensch heisst, im Glaubensgehorsam zu unterwerfen hat, sondern ein Buch, das auch irrige Menschenmeinungen enthalte, an dem daher die Menschen Kritik üben könnten und müssten.<sup>8</sup>

He called this position to the Scriptures *gottlos*.<sup>9</sup> Higher criticism was treated, in Pieper's own phrase, without a compliment.<sup>10</sup> The doctrine of God was discussed

<sup>6</sup> Francis Pieper, "Überblick über unsere Stellung in Lehre und Praxis, welche wir als Synode dem uns umgebenden Irrthum und Missbrauch gegenüber einnehmen," *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1893, pp. 26—53.

<sup>7</sup> The six essays in the volume are by M. Loy on the Ohio Synod, M. Valentine on the General Synod, S. Fritschel on the Iowa Synod, H. E. Jacobs on the General Council, E. T. Horn on the United Synod of the South, and F. Pieper on the Synodical Conference. See F. Pieper, "The Synodical Conference," *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1893), pp. 119—166.

<sup>8</sup> Pieper, "Überblick," *Proceedings*, Mo. Synod, 1893, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



by him before he proceeded to a discussion of the doctrines of conversion, justification, election, and the church. He talked about the visible and the invisible church as well as orthodox and heterodox church bodies. Chiliasm and the Antichrist came in for treatment, the latter longer than the former. Under "practice" he discussed church discipline and the position of the Missouri Synod toward the union movement (*Ver-einigungsbestrebungen*) of the day. He referred briefly to Missouri's position on lodges.<sup>11</sup>

The second of his essays in 1893, this in English—possibly translated by W. H. T. Dau, although this is nowhere stated—borrowed heavily from the first, and it was in some respects a simple rewrite of the German essay. The German essay had about 13,000 words; the English, about 10,000. It brought out in an evangelical fashion the points on which the Missouri Synod differed from other Lutheran church bodies.

Pieper began this English essay with a discussion of the doctrine of the church. He defined the term and showed the importance of the doctrine. He spoke of the invisible and the visible church, the universal church and particular churches, orthodox and heterodox churches. The "Four Points" commanded his attention: chiliasm, pulpit fellowship, altar fellowship, and secret societies. Then he turned to the doctrine of the ministerial office; under this caption he included the topic of ordination, the right of judging on questions of doctrine, the obedience due to the ministerial office, and the relation of synods to congregations. "Of Church-Union" was the cap-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

tion of the next major division, after which Pieper turned to the topic "On 'Open Questions.'" He dealt with the position of the Synodical Conference on the questions of Sunday, the Antichrist, and absolution before he turned to the major doctrines of justification, conversion, and predestination. This last doctrine received rather extensive treatment, including "objections to this doctrine" and the assurance of election.<sup>12</sup>

The doctrine of predestination was treated more extensively in the English essay than in the German one. The "Four Points," too, received more extensive treatment in the former. Oddly, it may seem, the doctrine of Scripture was not treated in the English essay, although it had been treated first in the German essay. Of thirteen major topics treated in the two essays five were treated in both; three in the German essay only; five in the English essay only.

However, the parallels and the differences between *A Brief Statement* of 1897 and *A Brief Statement* of 1932 are of greater significance. The 1922 version has some variations in language, but it is not as significant as either the 1897 or the 1932 document. All of the topics treated in the 1897 document were treated also in the 1922 and 1932 statements; the 1932 took up four other topics, of which three had been treated by Pieper in his 1893 English essay. Table II provides an overview of the topics treated in each of the presentations.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Pieper, "The Synodical Conference," *Distinctive Doctrines and Usages*, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> G-1893 is the document referred to in footnote 6; E-1893 is the document referred to in 7.



Table II

TOPICS TREATED IN FIVE MISSOURI  
SYNOD DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS  
1887—1932

	G	E	1897	1922	1932
	1893	1893			
Of the Holy Scriptures	X		X	X	X
Of God	X		X	X	X
Of Creation			X	X	X
Of Man and Sin			X	X	X
Of Redemption			X	X	X
Of Faith in Christ			X	X	X
Of Conversion	X	X	X	X	X
Of Justification	X	X	X	X	X
Of Good Works			X	X	X
Of the Means of Grace			X	X	X
Of the Election of Grace	X	X	X	X	X
Of the Church	X	X	X	X	X
Of the Public Ministry		X	X	X	X
Of the Millennium			X	X	X
Of the Antichrist	X	X	X	X	X
Of Church and State			X	X	X
Of Sunday		X			X
Of Open Questions		X			X
Of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church					X
Of Church Fellowship		X			X
Of Church Discipline	X				
Of Absolution		X			

To give a detailed textual criticism of the 1897, the 1922, and the 1932 documents would seem to serve little purpose. One illustration might suffice, that on the article on justification. The 1932 document adds the clause "that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ, Rom. 7:19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 4:25; . . ." Instead of saying (as did the 1897 and 1922 statements), "who believe in Christ, that is, believe that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven," the 1932 version says, "who believe in Christ, that is, believe, accept, and rely on {*darin berubem*}, the fact that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven."<sup>14</sup> There are one or two other variations. The greatest variation

<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 17.

comes in the last paragraph. Here the 1932 reading is different in its phraseology throughout, noting the Unitarians and the synergists specifically and condemning those, too, who "again mix human works into the article of justification by ascribing to man a cooperation with God in the kindling of faith. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Thus in including "objective justification" and warning against the *Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Verhaltens* it was meeting two of the issues that had been raised since 1887.

*A Brief Statement* of 1932 was not intended to be a summary of the beliefs held by the Missouri Synod, at least not according to the 1929 resolutions. It became that in effect because it relied so heavily on the 1897 statement with the *appendage* of four sections. The intention was that it should deal primarily with the questions which were *in statu controversiae*. Since the resolutions came in connection with the rejection of the *Chicago Theses*, it would seem that the new document should set forth in detail the Missouri Synod on the points on which there was disagreement with these theses. Such was not the case, however. *A Brief Statement* of 1932 weaves into an existing document the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod on questions that had been discussed in the years following the original framing of that document. So, for instance, the article on the Scriptures brings an echo of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy, the article on creation reflects opposition to evolutionism, the article on justification repudiates those who deny *universalis gratia*.

The question remains, In how far did

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 19.



*A Brief Statement* deal with the same questions with which the *Chicago Theses* dealt? Again, a tabular overview may be helpful in arriving at a quick, satisfactory answer. Table III makes it evident that the doctrines of conversion and election,

Table III

COMPARISON OF A BRIEF  
STATEMENT (1932) WITH THE CHICAGO  
THESES (1928)

Topic	Chicago Theses	Brief Statement
Of the Holy Scriptures	D, 1-3	1-3
Of God		4
Of Creation		5
Of Man and of Sin	A, 1 *	6, 7
Of Redemption	B, 1-4 †	8
Of Faith in Christ		9
Of Conversion	A, 1-10	10-16
Of Justification	B, 1-4 †	17-19
Of Good Works		20
Of Means of Grace		21-23
Of the Church	D, 14-15	24-27
On Church Fellowship	D, 9-13	28-29
The Spiritual Priesthood	D, 16-17	30
Of the Public Ministry	D, 18-20	31-33
Of Church and State		34
Of the Election of Grace	C, 1-8	35-40
Of Sunday	D, 25-26	41
Of the Millennium	D, 23-24	42
Of the Antichrist	D, 21-22	43
Of Open Questions	D, 27-29	44
Of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church	D, 4-8	45-48

quite properly, bulked largest in both documents. Almost 50 per cent of the space in *A Brief Statement* and 75 per cent of

\* Section A is headed "Conversion."

† Section B is headed "Universal Will of Grace."

the space in the *Chicago Theses* was occupied by these two doctrines. In view of the happenings from 1880 to 1928 this was not altogether surprising. What is surprising is that *A Brief Statement* deals with topics with which the *Chicago Theses* are not concerned. Even more surprising, at least to some individuals, is the lack of any direct refutation—if refutation was needed—of the *Chicago Theses*. However, *A Brief Statement* is a reaction to the total theological climate of the 1880s to the late 1920s, particularly to the events in Lutheranism in America.

The 1897 document spoke in more universal tones—it does not need to be read in reverse to see the questions to which it was addressed—than did the 1932 document. It spoke with an evangelical, confessional voice, but it was not a polemical product. The 1897 *Brief Statement*, in the opinion of the present writer, answers the need of the 1960s better than does its 1932 offspring, because it has less of an *ad hoc* character. The 1932 document seems to him an illustration of pouring new wine into old bottles. The church might have been served better if modifications had been made in the *Chicago Theses* where they may have been necessary. Be that as it may. If the 1932 *Brief Statement* is indeed a product of the Middle Period of the Missouri Synod, can it serve as an adequate statement of her beliefs at the close of the third period of her history?

St. Louis, Mo.