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The Development Background and Analysis of the Termination of Fellowship with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod

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THE DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF THE TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD BY THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

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CHAPTER I

WISCONSIN SYNOD'S DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND

The history of the Christian Church is a story of growth and expansion in obedience to our Lord's command in the Great Commission. Such history is a story of expansion and success as the Lord's blessings have been evident in many different ways. But that history of the Christian Church is also a story of conflict and controversy, tension and turmoil, fellowship mergers and divisions, unions and splits within Christendom. Such an historical account surely supports the truth and reality of the Church Militant. In its earthly existence the Body of Christ, the Church as it is described in God's Word, already possesses unity given by the Holy Spirit. However, our spiritual enemies and the forces of Satan attempt to ruin or strive to fractionalize that God-given unity.

Lutheranism is no exception to the historical account of the Christian Church. Since the Lutheran Church is part of the Church Militant here on earth, it, too, has experienced the way of toil and tribulation in fellowship mergers, splits and divisions. The topic of this particular thesis relates to a cherished part of our Lutheran heritage involving both the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods as they comprised the major part of the Synodical Conference.[1] This segment of

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[1]The Synodical Conference was a voluntary federation of such Lutheran Synods, congregations, and mission stations as take the same confessional stand and are united in doctrine and practice. The

confessional Lutheranism provides an excellent source of historical truth and application.

When the Synodical Conference was organized in 1872, the Ohio Synod, the Norwegian Synod, the Illinois Synod, the Minnesota Synod, the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod were the charter Synods. The founders of the Synodical Conference pledged themselves to pray and to work for a God-pleasing union of all Lutheran synods in this country. Because of the various doctrinal controversies later on within the Synodical Conference, and because of the withdrawal of some synods from the Synodical Conference during that time, in 1917 only four Synods made up the Synodical Conference--Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, Slovak Synod and the small Norwegian Synod.[2] In a comparison of size the Missouri Synod was about four times as large as the other three Synods combined.[3] This is a significant fact. Later on when conflicts occurred within the Synodical Conference between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, the size and membership representation of the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference received negative criticism.

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purpose of the Synodical Conference was to preserve doctrinal unity on the basis of Holy Scripture, to jointly serve the purpose of education and through its united efforts to promote mission work. It was organized in 1872 and after 1917 its membership comprised the Wisconsin Synod, Missouri Synod, Slovak Synod and the small Norwegian Synod. This Synodical Conference was a bond of fellowship for its own Synods, and it also served as a voice of Lutheran confessionalism. See Carl S. Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 260-262.

[2]Ibid., p. 260.

[3]Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955; revised ed., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 217.

The concern for doctrinal unity in the Synodical Conference was evident in two early Conference study papers. One essay dealt with the Synodical Conference's duty to the English-speaking population of the country. A second essay treated the doctrine of justification.[4] Doctrinal unity was something zealously coveted, and the participating Synods in the Synodical Conference wanted to preserve that type of fellowship. "Staunchly combating all forms of unionism, the Synodical Conference is an uncompromising foe of the lodges and ecclesiastical organizations which tolerate them."[5] Even in the practical matter of the lodges, unionism was not to be tolerated. This basic attitude and doctrinal position served as a uniform pattern in all areas of faith, doctrine and practice.

However, unsettled feelings and increasing dissatisfaction began to develop within the Synodical Conference. This situation was especially intense between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods regarding the definition and practical application of fellowship with other church bodies.[6] The Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod disagreed

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[4] J. T. Mueller, History of The Synodical Conference (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), p. 17.

[5] Ibid., p. 23.

[6] Although this thesis treats only the problem of fellowship and relations between the Wisconsin and the Missouri Synod, the real problem was much greater. "The question that had disturbed American Lutheranism since the twenties and the thirties--Does confessional unity require theological uniformity?--remained unresolved into the seventies. The United Lutheran Church and, after 1962, the Lutheran Church in America said no; the American Lutheran Church (1960) and the Missouri Synod said yes. There the problem posed by Lutheranism's confessional principle resided until the late sixties and early seventies." This is brought out by E. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 471.

on the doctrine of the church. This difference became more evident after the 1920's. A complete presentation of the doctrine of the church as held by the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods is presented in Chapter III.

From an historical viewpoint, the Wisconsin Synod became more conservative. "Since its founding, Wisconsin had moved from a moderate to a strict confessional position."[7] As the Missouri Synod increased its activity of cooperation and fellowship efforts with other Lutheran bodies, the Wisconsin Synod became more apprehensive of the fellowship within the Synodical Conference. This was particularly true with the situation of the fellowship discussions between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church after 1938.[8] As a result of such developments the Wisconsin Synod slowly began to react negatively and strengthened its position of doctrinal unity on the basis of God's Word.

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[7] Ibid., p. 248.

[8] Ibid., pp. 469-470. The year 1939 marked the significant agreement of the American Lutheran Church on the doctrine of verbal inspiration and inerrancy. Prior to this time there were two viewpoints on the nature of the Bible and its inspiration. Reu's statement supported the causal relationship between verbal inspiration and inerrancy. Jacob's statement focused on the relation between the Word of God and the Scriptures. The American Lutheran Church adopted Reu's statement and it became known as the Sandusky Declaration. "The Missourian orientation of the latter--the American Lutheran Church was simultaneously holding conversations with the Missouri Synod--was evident in the church's immediate offer of fellowship to the Missouri Synod: '...we believe that the Brief Statement (Missouri Synod) viewed in the light of our (Sandusky) Declaration is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses which are the bases of membership in the American Lutheran Conference.' This was a correct observation; all three statements reflected the 'orthodox' view of inspiration and inerrancy."

In 1939 there was the first official Convention business of the Wisconsin Synod dealing with dissension regarding the Missouri Synod and its questionable fellowship activities with the American Lutheran Church. At this time the report was given by a fledgling committee. However, within a few years this particular committee was given the status and recognition of a standing committee in the Wisconsin Synod.

The Missouri Synod became the object of Wisconsin Synod's attention and the accusation of possible unionism was made against the Missouri Synod. The basic precipitating problem arose from the fact that the Missouri Synod in its June, 1938 Convention had approved a doctrinal agreement which was reached with the American Lutheran Church.[9]

> On the basis of its observations, deliberations, and discussions the Committee is of the opinion that the doctrinal basis established by the Missouri Synod and by the American Lutheran Church, particularly in view of the proviso by the American Lutheran Church that the Missouri Brief Statement must be viewed in the light of the American Lutheran Church Declaration is not acceptable. Not two statements should be issued as a basis for agreement; a single joint statement, covering the contested doctrines thetically and antithetically and accepted by both parties to the controversy, is imperative; and furthermore, such doctrinal statement must be made in clear and unequivocal terms which do not require laborious additional explanations. The sincerity of any theoretical statement must also be a clear church practice.[10]

This particular Convention Committee then recommended a number of resolutions to the Wisconsin Synod for adoption. Basically, these

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[9]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Twenty-Fifth Convention, August 2-9, 1939 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1939), p. 59.

[10]Ibid., p. 60.

resolutions pointed out the fact that there was no real doctrinal basis for church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod believed that the Sandusky Declaration and the Pittsburgh Agreement gave sufficient proof for the lack of doctinal unity.[11]

The Wisconsin Synod felt further negotiations would involve a denial of the truth and cause only more confusion and disturbance in the Church. It was hoped that the fellowship negotiations would be suspended. The basis for such hope was that when the real and resultant implications had been given to the entire Synodical Conference, basic confidence and trust would be restored to later resume negotiations. The ultimate goal was to remove the former obstacles to fellowship and establish true, doctrinal unity.[12] Already there is evident the concern expressed by the Wisconsin Synod against the actions of the Missouri Synod.

Two years later in 1941 the Wisconsin Synod re-affirmed its previous position as had been delineated at the 1939 Convention. The Missouri Synod Committee dealing with this matter had not accepted the position of the Wisconsin Synod. More specifically, then, the Wisconsin Synod voiced its further dissatisfaction on several points,

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[11] E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutherans in North America, p. 470. When the American Lutheran Church adopted the Sandusky Declaration, it aligned itself with the Missouri Synod on the doctrine of Scripture. Then the American Lutheran Church reached a compromise agreement with the United Lutheran Church on the doctrine of Scripture. This was called the Pittsburgh Agreement. However, some individuals in the United Lutheran Church soon termed the agreement, "the Pittsburgh Disagreement."

[12] The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Twenty-Fifth Convention, August 2-9, 1939 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1939), p. 61.

First of all, the union resolutions of St. Louis drawn up in 1938 to negotiate fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church also affected the sister Synods of the Synodical Conference. This relationship was obvious because Missouri Synod was in fellowship already with the other Synods in the Synodical Conference. Those Synodical Conference Synods had not been given a previous opportunity to examine the contemplated, new confession. Secondly, in a sense the Wisconsin Synod had been ignored in the initial negotiations, and they felt the close cooperation within the Synodical Conference had been violated.[13]

The fellowship within the Synodical Conference was established on a doctrinal and practical basis. The doctrinal union consisted of acceptance of the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the verablly inspired Word of God and the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church constituting the Book of Concord of 1580. In addition, membership in the Synodical Conference specified that the doctrinal basis must be upheld in practice.

The Wisconsin Synod expressed the concern that the Missouri Synod did not seem to realize all the implications of its fellowship with the other Synods of the Synodical Conference. "The unity of the Synodical Conference seems endangered by the action of Missouri."[14] In addition, the Wisconsin Synod enumerated more specific concerns.

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[13]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Convention, August 6-13, 1941 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1941), p. 75.

[14]Ibid., p. 77.

The Missouri Synod was viewed as independently chartering its own course of procedure, and the Wisconsin Synod requested a definition of the term, co-ordination, as it was used by the Missouri Synod in describing its relationship to the American Lutheran Church. Furthermore, some remarks by more forward-looking leaders coming into position of power and influence in the Missouri Synod troubled the brethren in the Wisconsin Synod. Proper steps should be taken in time to check the danger.[15] These steps included the request that the Missouri Synod cease chartering its course of independent activities in external co-operation with other Lutheran bodies. In addition, the Missouri Synod was asked to seek doctrinal unity with the American Lutheran Church before continuing further negotiations for church fellowship.

As a result, an invitation was extended to the Missouri Synod to meet and discuss with other Synodical Conference Synods the matters that were endangering the unity of spirit within the Conference. Ideally there was the optimistic hope that in some manner the Synodical Conference could serve as a mediator to resolve the problems. However, realistically that never did occur because the membership and nature of the Synodical Conference prevented it. The Synodical Conference served only as an advisory body and did not have any authoritative power in itself apart from the constituent synods. An additional barrier to the effectiveness of the Synodical Conference was the general division of the synods. The Missouri and the Slovak Synods were usually aligned against the Wisconsin and small Norwegian Synods. In a way, the

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[15] Ibid.

Synodical Conference provided more opportunity for additional and unnecessary public debate, and later on the Synodical Conference was itself divided among its constituent Synods.

By 1943 very little had been done to change the earlier position of the Wisconsin Synod.

> At the last session the Missouri Committee informed the other representatives that pursuant to the resolutions of their Fort Wayne Convention (1941) they would soon resume negotiations with the Commissioners of the American Lutheran Church, and urgently invited the representatives of its sister synods to participate in whatever capacity they might see fit. Your committee has declined, being still fully persuaded of the soundness of the position taken by the Synod at Watertown in 1939, especially as it is reiterated and supported by Scripture in the 1941 resolutions of Saginaw.[16]

The Wisconsin Synod believed its position was sound because of doctrinal reasons based on Holy Scripture. Its Doctrinal Committee therefore recommended that the Wisconsin Synod should reaffirm its previous positions of 1939 and 1941 stating that negotiations should be suspended by the Missouri Synod. From the viewpoint and understanding of the Wisconsin Synod the proper basis for doctrinal unity between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church was inadequate and unclear. The Missouri Synod was to again be informed of the position of the Wisconsin Synod, and they were also to be informed regarding the reasons supporting the Wisconsin Synod's position.[17]

In a positive and understanding manner the Missouri Synod acknowledged the position of the Wisconsin Synod and made an attempt to clarify the situation.

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[16]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Twenty-Seventh Convention, August 4-11, 1943 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1943), p. 65.

[17]Ibid., p. 67.

> That means, of course, that we fully recognize our obligation toward our brethren in the Synodical Conference and that no union agreement will be entered into on our part with any other Lutheran Church body until the matter has been submitted to our sister synods, and they have acted favorably, even as we expect the American Lutheran Church to come to an agreement with its constituent synods in the American Lutheran Conference before any final action can be taken.[18]

However, the efforts of the Missouri Synod left something to be desired. Even though the Missouri Synod realized its obligations of fellowship with the sister Synods of the Synodical Conference, the main issue had not as yet been dealt with. The doctrinal questions and concern for doctrinal unity posed by the Wisconsin Synod had actually been evaded.[19]

The Wisconsin Synod was quite specific about its position on cooperation in externals without doctrinal agreement and unity.

> No, we are frank to state that we see a great danger to our Lutheran Church in the cooperation in externals that is being advocated so strongly in these days. A violation of love in the founding of a mission may here or there disturb a community, but the propaganda for cooperation in externals by bodies not one in doctrine and practice reaches much wider circles and, wrong in principle as it is, works much greater harm by confusing and misleading our people.[20]

In 1945 the conflict between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod remained unresolved, and the entire matter of fellowship

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[18]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Convention, August 1-6, 1945 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1945), pp. 72-73.

[19]Ibid. A lengthy background is given to the problem of doctrinal disunity and cooperation in externals. The Wisconsin Synod appeared to exhibit an almost extreme fear of unionism in any manner, fashion or form.

[20]Ibid., p. 78.

was the basic issue. It was quite evident that the Wisconsin Synod was dissatisfied with the past actions of the Missouri Synod.

> We feel constrained to state at this time that we have been seriously perturbed by numerous instances of an anticipation of a union not yet existing, or, as it has been put, not yet declared, which in our opinion is in conflict with the above agreement and contrary to the best interest of the Synodical Conference.[21]

In 1947 the Church Union Committee of the Wisconsin Synod gave much attention to the problem of Missouri Synod's activities with the American Lutheran Church. In order to impress upon Missouri Synod the intensity of the entire issue, some concerns were expressed about the present situation of doctrinal disunity. Continued negotiations and attempts to resolve the fellowship problem had met with little success or lasting results. Although the efforts had been sincere and serious, they only complicated the basic issue more. Both the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod were in a state of change and fluctuation which made negotiations very difficult. On the other hand, the Wisconsin Synod experienced the security more of a status quo situation.

In October, 1946, the American Lutheran Church had rejected the Doctrinal Affirmation as not generally acceptable.[22] This event

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[21] Ibid., p. 74.

[22] See Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, pp. 347-349 for a detailed historical background of fellowship activities between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. In 1938 the Missouri Synod accepted the Brief Statement and the Declaration as the doctrinal basis for future church fellowship. However, the continued effort would be for full agreement. The Doctrinal Affirmation was an attempt to combine the Brief Statement and Declaration and have one document of doctrinal agreement. The Missouri Synod viewed the Doctrinal Affirmation as not definite and precise enough to prevent the possibility of misunderstanding. The American Lutheran Church saw nothing really new in the Doctrinal Affirmation and many refused to even study it seriously.

was significant in that the Doctrinal Affirmation was about the only option open for an attempt for the Missouri Synod to reach a doctrinal consensus with the American Lutheran Church.

These developments then merely confirmed what the Wisconsin Synod had been stating during the past years. In the meantime both the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church hoped to continue their doctrinal conferences perhaps also including other Lutheran bodies.[23]

The Wisconsin Synod again held firm to its position that Missouri Synod's basis for doctrinal unity was inadequate.

> It appears from the foregoing that the question which faces the Missouri Synod and therefore also the other Synods of the Synodical Conference is whether the Brief Statement together with the Declaration actually constitutes a sufficient basis for church fellowship. It is the considered judgment of your committee that this basis is inadequate and must be rejected.[24]

The Wisconsin Synod at this time in 1947 did not believe that the old controversies were settled by the Declaration.[25] In addition, the Declaration proposed a dangerous principle of fellowship when it called for toleration of divergent views on certain doctrines which were not divisive of church fellowship. The Wisconsin Synod could not subscribe to such fellowship negotiations, and they refused to tolerate it in silence.

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[23] Ibid., p. 349

[24] The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Twenty-Ninth Convention, August 6-12, 1947 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1947), p. 101

[25] See Nelson, The Lutherans in North America, pp. 469-470 for a more thorough background of the progression of doctrinal agreement within the American Lutheran Church. The Declaration was the American Lutheran Church's acceptance of Missouri Synod's Brief Statement. It was this basis of doctrinal unity that the Wisconsin Synod viewed as inadequate and unclear.

At this time it is significant to note another tangent development of unionism as viewed by the Wisconsin Synod. It indicated the tremendous sensitivity as exhibited by the Wisconsin Synod towards unionism. This time the problem was scoutism.[26] After a thorough study of the whole subject of scoutism, the Wisconsin Synod believed unionism was present in the program. Later on, scoutism also became a subject of disagreement between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. The trend is being developed as the problem appears to be what actually does or does not constitute fellowship.

A new area of attention developed when the National Lutheran Council requested the Missouri Synod to join. That venture was not acceptable to the Wisconsin Synod for the same reasons it opposed fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod was well aware of the situation and alerted the Missouri Synod to be very alert in the intended cooperation with the National Lutheran Council.[27]

As a result of these past developments as well as failures to resolve earlier concerns, the strain between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods was becoming more intense. This was naturally also evident within the Synodical Conference. A number of issues added to the problem. There was the unresolved fellowship question between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, the out-reach effort by the Missouri

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[26] See Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1947, pp. 101-103. As involved as the Wisconsin Synod was in the fellowship problem with the Missouri Synod, here the matter of scoutism received even greater emphasis in coverage than that of the fellowship activities of the Missouri Synod.

[27] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1947, p. 113.

Synod to cooperate with the National Lutheran Council, the matter of scoutism as being a form of unionism and the general trend of the Missouri Synod to be willing to cooperate with other church bodies. The Wisconsin Synod consistently maintained that none of those activities should be taking place unless there initially was doctrinal unity in all areas.

Therefore, a few of these concerns begin to surface in the official business of the Wisconsin Synod. In 1949 the subject of doctrinal matters is introduced with the topic of scoutism. An attempt was being made to reach an understanding with the Missouri Synod on scoutism. However, the discussions were tenuous and inconclusive. "We cannot, however, venture a prediction as to the outcome of these discussions."[28]

In addition, further inter-synodical problems received considerable attention at this time. The Wisconsin Synod observed that within the Missouri Synod there had been incidents of joint worship and work under conditions that were contrary to God's Word. Even official representatives of the Missouri Synod had been involved in such joint worship activities, and private efforts to deal with those particular individuals had met with little success.

The Wisconsin Synod had repeatedly protested against the unionistic practices and activities of the Missouri Synod.[29] Earlier when the National Lutheran Council had invited the Synodical Conference

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[28]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Thirtieth Convention, August 3-9, 1949 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1949), p. 110

[29]Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, p. 383.

to participate in cooperative activities, the Wisconsin Synod gave a firm negative reply. "The Wisconsin Synod promptly rejected the National Lutheran Council's invitation to a general consultation."[30] There now developed within the Wisconsin Synod a more intense study and discussion of issues relating to unionism.

It was to the credit of the Wisconsin Synod that they wanted to avoid two extremes of dealing with the issue of unionism. On the one hand there was the temptation and even internal Synodical pressure to act hastily and take immediate and drastic action in its relationship of fellowship with the Missouri Synod. On the other hand there was the danger for the Wisconsin Synod to do nothing about the unionistic activities of its sister Synod and thereby be guilty of inaction.

Using wise discretion the Wisconsin Synod decided to pursue a balanced approach to hopefully resolve the problem. The Synod avoided hasty and drastic action, and instead, was still optimistic of reaching an agreement with the Missouri Synod. In order to make some positive progress to remove the tension and the sources of disagreement, the Wisconsin Synod proposed six questions that were to be considered by the Missouri Synod in 1950. The subsequent answers of the Missouri Synod to these questions would determine future inter-synodical relations.[31]

> In our efforts we have, however, been handicapped by the fact that members and sometimes official representatives and organizations of your Synod have been involved in what seem to be obvious violations of these principles. Efforts to remedy this situation by dealing with the individuals involved have met with little or no

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[30] Ibid., pp. 383-384.

[31] Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1949, pp. 110-111.

> success. Official discussions in an Intersynodical Forum have been equally futile. On the other hand, the positive testimony that we have tried to give has been to a considerable extent neutralized by the silence of your Synod. The inevitable result has been serious confusion and offense.
>
> In an endeavor to clarify this confused and confusing situation, which, if not corrected, will vitiate the spiritual life within both your Synod and ours, we address to you the following questions on the basis of the mutual fellowship of our synods.[32]

The six questions detailed the areas of fellowship activity, co-operation and doctrine that together were adding to the confusion.[33]

In response to some of the efforts of the Wisconsin Synod, the Council of Presidents of the Missouri Synod initiated a series of free conferences, and this method of dialogue was mutually acceptable to both Synods. However, during this time the Missouri Synod was also working toward the establishment of a national inter-Lutheran committee. The Wisconsin Synod stated its lack of support and enthusiasm for that new venture.

> We are not convinced that there is today a compelling need of an all-out effort to bring all Lutheran bodies together and that we are divinely called to support such a movement.[34]

Unfortunately, another new topic of discussion and disagreement came to the forefront. This one involved the Army and Navy Chaplaincy program as well as other matters relating to the entire Biblical doctrine of the call. Basic to this problem was the issue of unionism

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[32]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-First Convention, June 21-30, 1950 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 666.

[33]Ibid., pp. 666-667. These questions are contained in appendix I.

[34]Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1949, p. 115.

again. So instead of the two Synods slowly resolving some of the issues and removing the already existing confusion, new additional issues were straining the relationship of their mutual fellowship.

At the conclusion of the Church Union report in 1949, the Wisconsin Synod expressed its disagreement with the Missouri Synod.

> With deep concern we note that the ties which have united us particularly with the Synod of Missouri are being loosened. In order that certain disturbing factors may be clarified, and with the hope that the bond of unity may be strengthened, we move that a letter be addressed to the Synod of Missouri.[35]

The Wisconsin Synod brought the problem of the Army and Navy Chaplaincy program to the Synodical Conference for doctrinal study and discussion.[36] It is significant to note that in all major parts of the Chaplaincy presentation the Wisconsin Synod differed radically with the position of the Missouri Synod. Although both were members of the Synodical Conference, here was another instance of increasing disagreement between the two Synods.[37]

From this time on more serious, frank and specific statements were made by the Wisconsin Synod that reflected the increasing tension between the two Synods as well as within the Synodical Conference. The decade of the 1950's was to mark the climax of the basic issues. In 1951 the report of the Church Union Committee was accepted which outlined more concisely the issues that troubled the Wisconsin Synod as

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[35] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[36] Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers, pp. 425-426. A detailed outline of the Wisconsin Synod's position on the Chaplaincy program is contained in appendix 2.

[37] Ibid., p. 425.

well as stating again the position of the Synod. Some rather indicting statements were made in the Committee's report regarding the response of the Missouri Synod to the problems voiced by the Wisconsin Synod. "Missouri Synod is in part conditional, in part incomplete, and sometimes evasive, and that the conclusions of the standing Committee on Church Union are correct."[38]

At that same time a further resolve stated that the Missouri Synod President is to be informed, and if appropriate action was not forthcoming, the Wisconsin Synod would be forced to carry the issue to the Synodical Conference.[39] Significant is the fact that at that time the Wisconsin Synod unanimously adopted the various parts of that Church Union Committee report, and then finally, the entire report.[40] Such a procedure gives evidence of the seriousness of the situation as well as the deliberation and discussion given to the various matters.

Two years later in 1953 three main areas of disagreement were highlighted. First of all, the response of the Missouri Synod to the letter sent by the Wisconsin Synod was unsatisfactory and incomplete. The main doctrinal issues had been evaded. Secondly, the topic of discussion between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod now

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[38]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-First Convention, August 8-15, 1951 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), p. 145.

[39]Ibid., p. 148.

[40]Ibid., p. 149.

centered on the Common Confession.[41] This Confession was the focal point of doctrinal discussions and disagreement.

> The Common Confession, although accepted by the Missouri Synod, could not be this one document because of the opposition of other synods within the Synodical Conference.[42]

The Wisconsin Synod believed the Common Confession was not a satisfactory statement of doctrinal agreement. It lacked precise phraseology and was viewed as a compromise of the truth and purity of God's Word. Thirdly, the Wisconsin Synod had decided that scoutism in the Lutheran Church was now also a main issue as a segment of the sin of unionism.[43] Earlier discussions and studies made by the Synod supported this position regarding scoutism.

At that same time, in 1953, the Wisconsin Synod outlined the situation. The Missouri Synod was deviating to an increasing extent from the position held earlier that supported the doctrinal unity and purposes of the Synodical Conference. The Missouri Synod had also failed to heed admonition in the matters of scoutism, joint prayer and

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[41] See Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America, pp. 470, 498-99. Initially the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod relied on the Brief Statement (Missouri) and the Declaration (The American Lutheran) as a basis of doctrinal unity to work towards fellowship. However, it was most desirable to formulate one document of doctrinal unity. Both Churches adopted Part I of the Common Confession in 1950, the American Lutheran Church adopted Part II in 1953 and the Missouri Synod accepted it in 1956, not as a doctrinally operative document but as a significant historic statement. The Common Confession met with disagreement in the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod and the entire Synodical Conference.

[42] Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers, p. 418.

[43] The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Second Convention, August 5-12, 1953 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1953), p. 98.

suspension of negotiations for fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. More pointedly, the Missouri Synod had declined early action on the objections to the Common Confession voiced by the Wisconsin Synod.[44]

As a result, the Wisconsin Synod believed the Missouri Synod had disrupted the fellowship within the Synodical Conference. With such an existing condition it was impossible for the Wisconsin Synod to continue affiliation with the Missouri Synod and carry on joint labors in the service of the Lord.[45] Consequently, the relations between the two Synods had reached a new development. The Wisconsin Synod declared itself in protesting fellowship with the Missouri Synod.[46] The Synodical Conference was informed of such action in 1953.

This was, by far, the strongest stated position in the entire development and history of the difficulties between the two Synods. It gave evidence of the severity of the situation as well as indications of future developments if the sources of conflict and confusion were not dealt with satisfactorily. Past dialogue, patience and varying means of communication had not resolved any of the basic issues between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. From the viewpoint of the Wisconsin Synod, the real problem was still the lack of doctrinal unity in all areas as the Missouri Synod negotiated fellowship with the American

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[44] Ibid., p. 101.

[45] Ibid.

[46] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, August 10-13, 1954 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 193-194.

Lutheran Church and also cooperated in externals. Unless total doctrinal unity existed the Wisconsin Synod sincerely believed there should be no fellowship or cooperation between church bodies.

In 1956 the Wisconsin Synod sent a communication to the Missouri Synod. It contained the preamble, the report and resolutions of the Wisconsin Synod's Floor Committee on Church Union. It was an excellent presentation of the distressing situation and brought the areas of conflict and misunderstanding into clearer focus.

> For years our Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States has patiently admonished the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in the fear and love of God, seeking to win her from the path that leads to liberalism in doctrine and practice.
>
> Without entering upon the question of whether the present charges of our Synod against the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod do not already constitute the accusation of false doctrine, we believe that it should be reiterated in no uncertain terms that a specific charge of false doctrine is not a Biblical prerequisite for separation from a church body. A church body which creates divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies and practices not in accord with Scripture also becomes subject to the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies and practices created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference. Such divisions and offenses are of long standing.[47]

In addition that same Church Union Report presented detailed items which had caused the divisions and offenses.[48] The Preamble of

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[47]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, June 20-29, 1956 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), pp. 505-506.

[48]Ibid., p. 506. Here the Committee on Church Union affirmed that they declared the actions of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod were threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference a) by reaffirming its acceptance of the Common Confession as a settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled, and b) by its persistent adherence to its unionistic practices (The Common Confession, joint prayer, scouting, Chaplaincy, communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, cooperation with unorthodox church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals; negotiating with lodges and

the Report of the Floor Committee was adopted by a unanimous Convention vote, and the Resolution that called for a recessed session of the 1956 Convention was adopted by a majority vote of 94 to 47. The purpose of the recessed session was to take final action on the resolution to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod.[49]

Meetings were held to discuss the issues confronting the two Synods but no real positive results were achieved. Finally in 1959 the Convention material of the Wisconsin Synod contained fifty pages of material on the topic of Church Union as it related to the Missouri Synod and the entire Synodical Conference. The report covered a variety of issues: the joint Union Committees of the Synodical Conference, the continued offenses given to the Wisconsin Synod by the Missouri Synod, the possibility of the Missouri Synod's membership in the National Lutheran Council, the frank serious questions addressed earlier to the Missouri Synod, the report of the Protest Committee, various memorials on the question of fellowship and a statement of Scripture and church fellowship.[50]

Boy Scouts of America with the plea that this gives opportunity to bear witness, under the same plea taking part in unionistic religious programs and in activities of unionistic church federations; negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters of doctrine and which contends for an allowable and wholesome lattitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God) has brought about the present break in relations that is now threatening the existence of our affiliation with the sister Synod.

[49] Ibid., p. 508.

[50] The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention, August 5-12, 1959 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1959), pp. 164-212.

In the midst of this situation and the continuance of discussions with the Missouri Synod, a new development surfaced in the Wisconsin Synod. Actually it came as no surprise. The Wisconsin Synod began experiencing increased internal pressure to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The internal pressure within the Wisconsin Synod was realized as some of its pastors, teachers and congregations were withdrawing their membership from the Synod because of its tolerance of the activities and practices of the Missouri Synod. Naturally, this activity increased the pressure to come to a definite decision with the Missouri Synod and the matter of continued fellowship.

The formulation of a definite decision began to materialize in May, 1960. The doctrinal committees of both Synods had been meeting to resolve some of the issues. However, in view of the lengthy and involved controversy, and in the light of further complications of the problem, the Wisconsin Synod decided to end any further discussions.[51]

> The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod through its Commission on Doctrinal Matters in May 1960 declared an impasse in discussions and declined to be represented at future meetings of the doctrinal committee of the Lutheran Synodical Conference.[52]

Consequently, no future efforts were realized to arrive at a mutually satisfying resolve to the controversy. Without a doubt the 1961 Convention of the Wisconsin Synod officially sounded the death toll as the Wisconsin Synod formally stated its withdrawal of fellowship with the Missouri Synod. Earlier at the recessed session, the vote to

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[51]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Convention, June 20-29, 1962 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 103-104.

[52]Ibid.

terminate fellowship had failed to secure the majority votes. But, such was not the situation in 1961.

The Wisconsin Synod Proceedings of 1961 presented the doctrinal problems on pages 168-200.[53]

A detailed background presented the results from the various meetings and conferences held since the last Convention. There were meetings of the Joint Doctrinal Committees of the Synodical Conference, a theologians' conference, July 20-30, 1960, the Synodical Conference Convention held on August 2-5, 1960, a sharing and study of the Theology of Fellowship, fellowship as it was and now is, meetings with missionaries and the overseas brethren, and supplements to the presentation on fellowship.[54] All of these attempts substantiated the fact that thorough efforts had been made to reach an understanding or a resolve to the conflict.

Floor Committee No. 2 brought the doctrinal matters to the Convention. It is significant to note that this particular Committee was not in unanimous agreement in its report and resolution.[55] The thrust of this report was to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod.

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[53]The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention, August 8-17, 1961 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1961), pp. 168-200.

[54]Ibid., p. 168.

[55]Ibid., p. 197. Love, patience and perhaps some uncertainty are evident as the Committee members made the decision. "All our committee members but one agreed to present this as our report to the Synod in Convention. Pastor Hugo H. Hoenecke formally dissents from the majority opinion expressed in the report. Yet truthfulness requires this to be said: The agreement mentioned above does not mean that all members of Committee 2 are in full accord with everything said in this report. Several expressed reservations, but did not wish to enter a

The actual Convention action took place with Resolution No. 1.[56] It was a lengthy Resolution with twelve "whereas" and ten "resolves." Particularly decisive was the first resolve.

> Resolved, a) That we now suspend fellowship with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17-18 with the hope and prayer to God that The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself.[57]

The Resolution to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod was adopted by the Wisconsin Synod in 1961. The vote to suspend such fellowship was carried by a vote of 124 to 49.[58] It is noteworthy to recognize even at this time the number of minority votes. Although the controversy had been of long standing and had involved doctrinal questions and unity, yet not all of the Wisconsin Synod favored the majority decision. However, the decision was official and binding upon the entire Wisconsin Synod.

The termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod concludes the developmental background of the controversy as presented from the viewpoint of the Wisconsin Synod. The next two chapters will treat the developmental background from the position and viewpoint of the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference.

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formal dissent. Others did not express themselves. No pressure was exerted in the committee to secure such an expression. All but one agreed that this is the report that ought to be presented to the Convention."

[56]Ibid., pp. 197-199. The complete resolution is contained in appendix 3.

[57]Ibid., p. 198.

[58]Ibid., p. 199.

Analysis of the background developments will be presented in Part II of this thesis. In conclusion, the Wisconsin Synod, convinced of its position on doctrinal unity by the Word of God, believed it was resisting the broad, sweeping, powerful trend toward unification which was so characteristic of the day.[59]

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[59]Edmund C. Reim, Where Do We Stand?, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1950), p. 16.

CHAPTER II

MISSOURI SYNOD'S DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND

In striking contrast to the status quo situation and doctrinal security of the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod exhibited outreach activity and interest in its attempts to negotiate fellowship with other Lutheran bodies and initiate cooperation in externals. In the controversy with the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod reflected a spirit of ecumenism with other Lutheran bodies which the Wisconsin Synod saw as violations of fellowship within the Synodical Conference. However, Missouri Synod was following the trend of that time.

> After 1930 there were three chief moves toward Lutheran union, one from the United Lutheran Church, one from the Missouri Synod, and one, the most promising of all, from a group of church bodies in the American Lutheran Conference.[1]

In its efforts to work for Lutheran unity, the Missouri Synod followed the historic approach to unity through free conferences. These were meetings that dealt with the study of God's Word, and they were also beneficial as doctrinal questions and concerns were discussed. Beginning in 1938 there were more frequent inter-synodical

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[1]Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955; revised ed., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 344.

conferences.[2] Up until this time the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod had enjoyed a mutual, satisfying fellowship.

But, the Missouri Synod was embarking on a new venture. "After the 1930 merger forming the American Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod continued to seek doctrinal agreement with a view to pulpit and altar fellowship."[3] Ironically, though, it was the American Lutheran Church that sought to establish altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod.[4] Since both Lutheran Bodies shared the same goal, it was natural that progress be made in pursuit of that goal.

The hallmark achievement for the Missouri Synod was reached in 1938. At its triennial Convention in St. Louis the Missouri Synod accepted the Brief Statement and the Declaration as the doctrinal basis for future church fellowship. This official action guided the Missouri Synod into further negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. However, there was no total doctrinal agreement between the Missouri Synod

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[2]Carl S. Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 415-416. An excellent presentation of the historic approach to unity through free conferences is presented in an article, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856-1859" by E. L. Lueker in the Concordia Theological Monthly, 15 (August 1944: 529-563. The fact of differences existing among Lutherans is pointed out. However, the significant fact is that the differences also existed among confessional Lutherans. Since such differences of opinion still existed, Walther believed that conferences dealing with doctrinal discussions would be most helpful. Such free conferences were set up in order to reach doctrinal unity. Three of these conferences were held with varying success. It was this approach to unity that the Missouri Synod favored again in the 1940's to achieve doctrinal unity among Lutherans. Meyer in Moving Frontiers refers to this parallel procedure in the Missouri Synod.

[3]Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, p. 348.

[4]Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers, p. 418.

and the American Lutheran Church.[5] These 1938 resolutions were to be known later as the St. Louis resolutions, and they provided some rather positive conditions to establish future church fellowship.[6]

It is important to note that as far as the Missouri Synod was concerned the whole matter of fellowship would have to be submitted to the sister Synods of the Synodical Conference for approval as required by the Constitution of the Synodical Conference. However, the Wisconsin Synod was never satisfied by that overture to seek approval, and they felt that the Missouri Synod was often times more reticent rather than informative. In addition, while the Wisconsin Synod viewed the 1938 doctrinal agreements as inadequate and confusing, the Missouri Synod as indicated by its Convention action saw no major barrier in the basis of doctrinal unity. This significant difference of understanding at this time marked the beginning of a conflict of understanding between

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[5] In the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention, June 15-24, 1938 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 228-231, the various areas of doctrinal agreement are listed as inspiration, predestination, conversion and the office of the public administration of the means of grace. Non-fundamental doctrines on which there was still some disagreement were the Last Things, doctrine of the Anti-Christ, conversion of the Jews, physical resurrection of the martyrs and meaning of the thousand years of Revelation 20. The Missouri Synod stated the earlier position of the Synodical fathers that deviation in these non-fundamental doctrines need not be divisive of church fellowship. The differences between the fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines are outlined on pp. 228-231. The position of the synodical fathers stated they considered some non-fundamental doctrines as not necessarily divisive of church fellowship. A helpful historic background can be found in Lehre und Wehre, Vol. 19, 1873, p. 290 and Lehre und Wehre, Vol. 25, 1879, pp. 35-40.

[6] Ibid., pp. 231-233. The resolves of the 1938 St. Louis resolutions are contained in appendix 4.

the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod that was to last over two decades.

In 1941 the Missouri Synod noted the attitude of the other Synodical Conference Synods.

> In the mean time we held several meetings with representatives of our sister synods in the Synodical Conference and found that the brethren of the Wisconsin and the Norwegian Synod considered the basis adopted in St. Louis, June, 1938, for the establishment of fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and our body inadequate.[7]

Meanwhile the adoption of the Pittsburgh Agreement in February, 1939, between the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church dismayed many Missouri Synod Lutherans.[8] The Missouri Synod did not share the consensus on lodges, pulpit and altar fellowship, and the inspiration of the Scriptures as indicated by the Agreement between the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church. This unfortunate event placed Missouri Synod in a most difficult and uncertain

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[7]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Convention, June 18-27, 1941 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 279.

[8]Ibid., pp. 278-279. This Pittsburgh Agreement implied that the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church agreed in areas where the Missouri Synod did not share agreement. "In February, 1939, the news was published in the daily press that the Fellowship Commissions of the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church of America, after having previously adopted a mutually satisfactory statement on the lodge question and on unionism, had now succeeded in drafting a declaration acceptable to both sides with respect to the one remaining point in dispute, the doctrine of inspiration. The paragraphs adopted are now known as the Pittsburgh Agreement. The news disturbed us because we thought we were in full harmony with the American Lutheran Church on the doctrine of inspiration, while the United Lutheran Church of America commission had definitely refused to endorse what our Brief Statement says on this subject. The question was, How could the American Lutheran Church commission accept our position and at the same time find itself in harmony with the United Lutheran Church of America commissioners? In response to an invitation

situation. If the other two Lutheran Bodies shared agreement, Missouri Synod was to struggle with the exact nature of its fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. This untimely event was indicative of a number of later developments which also seemingly caught Missouri Synod by surprise and caused subsequent misunderstanding and confusion with the Wisconsin Synod.

In addition, voices of disagreement over the St. Louis resolutions of 1938 were heard not only outside the Missouri Synod but within the Synod itself.

> In the Missouri Synod a storm of protest arose against the St. Louis resolutions, as passing over far-reaching differences of doctrine between the Brief Statement and the Declaration.[9]

In a sense the Missouri Synod was caught in the center, and regardless of which direction it took, there was bound to be some tension and conflict. The commissioners of the American Lutheran Church asked the Missouri Synod for a formal statement enumerating the obstacles which still hindered the establishment of fellowship between the two Lutheran Bodies. The Missouri Synod was happy to provide the American Lutheran Church with such a statement.

> a) The membership of the American Lutheran Church in the American Lutheran Conference, inasmuch as we cannot unite with the American Lutheran Church unless its sister synods in the American Lutheran Conference occupy the same position as the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod;

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two members of the American Lutheran Church commission came to St. Louis for a conference. They declared: In their view the United Lutheran Church of America commission had receded from its opposition to verbal inspiration as taught in the Brief Statement and had accepted the Biblical doctrine. We on our part found the Pittsburgh Agreement not adequate because it contains loopholes for a denial of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures."

[9]Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, p. 348.

b) Our membership in the Synodical Conference, inasmuch as we cannot enter into fellowship with a church-body if our sister synods cannot share the new relationship;
c) The points in the Sandusky Resolutions and the one sentence in the Declaration mentioned above;
d) The apparent approach between the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church of America, inasmuch as the American Lutheran Church would make it impossible for us to enter into fellowship with it if it established fellowship with the United Lutheran Church of America, which as a body does not share our common doctrinal position;
e) The matter of church practice, inasmuch as there does not seem to exist at present sufficient uniformity in this respect to assure wholesome relations if we should acknowledge each other as brethren.[10]

From some of the statements made in this formal presentation given to the American Lutheran Church, it is important to note that the Missouri Synod was concerned about doctrinal questions and doctrinal unity in its attempts to negotiate and establish fellowship. The Missouri Synod even expressed its concern about differences in practical questions.[11] Furthermore, the Missouri Synod made it quite clear that any fellowship it established, the sister synods in the Synodical Conference would have to approve.

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[10]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States, Proceedings, 1941, pp. 279-280.

[11]See Ibid., pp. 282-283. In comparing the position of the American Lutheran Church to its own position in matters of church practice, the wise discretion of the Missouri Synod is evident. Unless there would be greater harmony in some of these matters, the result would be endless difficulty and disagreement. "Our commission still is of the opinion that the situation with respect to the practical questions touched on here is such at present that unless greater harmony is attained, there would be no end of friction and irritation if church-fellowship should be established between our two bodies. With respect to prayer-fellowship we state as our position what we stated to the American Lutheran Church commissioners: 'Generally speaking, prayer-fellowship involves church-fellowship. There may be cases, however, where the question whether common prayer means fellowship belongs to the field of casuistry'."

The Synodical Conference had also been involved in informative discussions with the Missouri Synod regarding the areas of concern and disagreement. However, the fraternal advice of the Synodical Conference was not supportive of continued fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church at this particular time.

> Finally we have to report that on January 3 and 4, 1941, we held a meeting with the representatives of all three of our sister synods in the Synodical Conference and with them discussed quite thoroughly the results of the Detroit and Minneapolis conventions. It was the opinion of the brethren of the Norwegian and Wisconsin synods that for the present our negotiations with the American Lutheran Church should be discontinued.[12]

No doubt, the Missouri Synod was also aware of the difficulties involved in negotiating fellowship at this time. The report of the Committee on Lutheran Church Union mentioned the fact that the American Lutheran Church had no intention of leaving the American Lutheran Conference.[13] The Missouri Synod expressed its regret and dissatisfaction with that decision. There is evident in the Missouri Synod's Committee report a strong concern for loyalty to the Word of God.[14]

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[12]Ibid., p. 285.

[13]Ibid., p. 284.

[14]Ibid., pp. 284-285. What is significant in this Report is the strong statement in support of loyalty to the Word of God and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. At this time the negotiations for fellowship did not always follow the pattern of easy compromise. "It is this turn of events which fills us with disappointment and alarm. In all sincerity we had hoped that the American Lutheran Church would join us in our endeavor to hold high the banner of uncompromising loyalty to the Word of God and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, both with respect to doctrine and practice, and that through our joint testimony greater things might be accomplished than have been attained thus far. However, it seems now that many of the leaders of the American Lutheran Church do not share this position which opposes the making of compromises with error and insists on unbending loyalty wherever the principles of God's Word are concerned. If in one or the other minor

In order to resolve some of the present difficulties, the Missouri Synod proceeded in several different ways. The Committee on Doctrinal Unity in the Lutheran Church was again established, and the sister Synods in the Synodical Conference were asked to send representatives to the joint meetings of the Committee. Another important step was the recognition of a confessional objective. Even though the hope was for organic union, yet the Synod realistically advocated that the immediate goal was to be doctrinal unity.[15]

A decision was also made to consider framing one document of agreement between the Missouri Synod and The American Lutheran Church. Up until this time the basis for fellowship negotiations had been the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod and the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church. As was previously pointed out, this duality of doctrinal agreement had been the source of much conflict within and outside the Missouri Synod. It is rather important to note the suggested guidelines that were to be followed in framing the one document of doctinal unity. Past controversies and weaknesses were to be avoided.[16]

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point some members of the American Lutheran Church do not as yet fully share our doctrinal position, this situation does not necessarily make fellowship impossible; but we hold it to be indispensable that, if we are to have fellowship with each other, there must be in our church-bodies not only in theory the same attitude toward the authority of God's Word and the obedience which we owe it, but the same determination to achieve acceptance of what the Scriptures teach."

[15] Ibid., p. 302

[16] See Ibid., pp. 302-303. The one document was to be clearly written that there could be no misunderstanding. The teachings of the Anti-Christ, the conversion of the Jews, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, and the fulfillment of the thousand years were to be

Invitations were extended by the Missouri Synod to the sister synods in the Synodical Conference to participate in the joint discussions in formulating the platform of the one document of agreement. However, only the Slovak Synod returned an acceptance. The representatives of the Wisconsin Synod declared it was impossible for them to participate.[17] The Wisconsin Synod believed there was no real basis of doctrinal agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. Therefore, it would be a denial of the truth of God's Word for the Wisconsin Synod to participate in such joint discussions of negotiations for church fellowship. In addition, the Wisconsin Synod had requested the Missouri Synod to suspend such negotiations for the present time.

In 1944 Missouri Synod received a communication from the Wisconsin Synod.

> We are in full agreement with the thought that the continued affiliation of the American Lutheran Church with the other synods of the American Lutheran Conference constitutes a very real obstacle to the proposed union.[18]

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given study on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Again, the fact was stated that after favorable action had been taken by the Synod, the entire matter would have to be submitted to the sister synods in the Synodical Conference. Finally, cautionary procedures were also outlined to avoid hasty and premature action. Congregations and pastors were urged to respect the fact that the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church were not yet united.

[17]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention, June 21-29, 1944 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 228.

[18]Ibid., p. 239.

The Missouri Synod was requested to respond to four major questions posed by the Wisconsin Synod.[19] It was the hope of the Wisconsin Synod that the answers given would dispel the confusion that was disturbing the Church as well as weakening the bonds of common faith and unity. However, a new venture of Missouri Synod's activity surfaced, and it was to add to the confusion and controversy. Efforts were made to promote fraternal cooperation with the National Lutheran Council.

> As has been observed, common calamity had opened the door to better relationships with the Missouri Synod. The initiative displayed by the National Lutheran Council in embarking on such an ambitious program in 1941 had received solid encouragement from an All-Lutheran Conference held two days prior to the council meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Called at the instigation of the American Lutheran Conference, which was eager to include the Missouri Synod, the so-called First Columbus Conference produced a policy statement by John W. Behnken for the Missouri Synod. Behnken said that he had genuine misgivings about affixing his signature to the call for this meeting and that his church could not cooperate "in any form in the dissemination of the gospel." Before this could be done, he said, there must be agreement in such doctrines as the verbal inspiration of Scripture, the doctrine of conversion, and the concept of the church. Therefore, cooperation must be confined to such "externals" as physical relief to orphaned missionaries and work among soldiers and sailors.[20]

Significant to note again is the doctrinal stand taken by the Missouri Synod. In addition, specific doctrinal concerns were mentioned

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[19] See Ibid., pp. 238-240. Question 1 presented the matter of the American Lutheran Church's inaction to strive for doctrinal discussions in the American Lutheran Conference. Question 2 focused attention on the anti-Missouri feeling within the American Lutheran Church because of the Missouri Synod's insistence on purity of doctrine. Question 3 sought clarification on the status of doctrinal discussions and agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. Question 4 reiterated the concern that because of the unionistic attitude of the American Lutheran Church negotiations to establish union should be discontinued for the time being.

[20] E. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 478.

which had a history of disagreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. However, also important to note were the qualifications given to the extent of cooperation. Although the contacts and activities of the Missouri Synod with the National Lutheran Council appeared rather minimal, they were nonetheless most significant.[21]

The Missouri Synod's Convention in 1944 officially declined to hold membership in the National Lutheran Council.

> WHEREAS, According to the best information available, membership in the National Lutheran Council, as at present constituted and in accordance with the proposed constitution, would apparently involve our Synod in unionistic principles and endeavors beyond a mere cooperation in externals and thus violate Scriptural principles which we are bound to observe; therefore be it
> Resolved, That we decline the request contained in Memorial No. 617 and others of the same intent and therefore do not direct our officers to make application for membership in the National Lutheran Council.[22]

The Committee on Lutheran Unity was granted a request to study the constitution of the National Lutheran Council and secure more information as to the projected cooperation in externals. Activity and cooperation were to hopefully take place except in such matters that would involve a denial of the truth.

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[21] Ibid., John W. Behnken's contact with fellow Lutherans was described as "backing into contact." However, it initiated a later trend in the Missouri Synod that developed and became quite significant in dealing with other lutherans. The meeting Behnken attended marked the first time in history that the Missouri Synod had joined in prayer with National Lutheran Council Lutherans. It indicated that the Missouri Synod was willing to coordinate efforts in the externals of orphan missions. Finally, it prepared the work to coordinate Lutheran work in the armed forces. "But at the same time it revealed Missouri's traditional caution: 'spiritual welfare work in the interest of members of the Missouri Synod' would be done by Missouri pastors."

[22] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1944, p. 252.

The Wisconsin Synod, meanwhile, was disturbed by this additional outreach of cooperation by the Missouri Synod. In addition, on the basis of God's Word. the Wisconsin Synod could not support the practice of joint prayer with other groups or individuals unless there was the basis of total doctrinal unity. The matter of membership in the National Lutheran Council added confusion to an already controversial fellowship between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods.

Progress was shared by the Committee on Doctrinal Unity on the work to provide one document of doctrinal agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. As soon as the document would be ready for distribution, all members of the Missouri Synod were to have access to it. Throughout the Synod it was to be studied and be brought to the Convention of 1947 for official action. "This document will, therefore, after acceptance by the respective bodies, clearly supersede all previous doctrinal documents and resolutions as accepted by Synod in 1938 and 1941."[23] When this document was completed, it was known as the Doctrinal Affirmation. Later on, it will be evident that instead of resolving conflict and controversy, this Doctrinal Affirmation itself became the object of disagreement both within and outside the Missouri Synod.

In response to the questions and concerns raised by the Wisconsin Synod, the 1944 Convention of the Missouri Synod also assured the Wisconsin Synod that no action would be taken in establishing fellowship without the approval of the Synodical Conference. It was stated again that after favorable action had been taken by the Missouri Synod

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[23] Ibid., p. 250.

and the American Lutheran Church with regard to one prepared doctrinal agreement, then no further action would be taken until the sister synods in the Synodical Conference had considered and approved the matter.[24]

The Missouri Synod officially defined its position on joint prayer as the Wisconsin Synod did not support such a practice unless doctrinal unity was established. Missouri Synod maintained a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer.

> However, joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for His guidance and blessing upon the deliberations and discussions of His Word, does not militate against the resolution of the Fort Wayne Convention, provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error. Local conditions will determine the advisability of such prayer. Above all, the conscience of a brother must not be violated nor offense be given.[25]

The Missouri Synod also reaffirmed the fact that no pulpit, altar or prayer fellowship had been established between them and the American Lutheran Church. Furthermore, to avoid any misunderstanding or giving offense, the Synod urged its pastor and congregations not to take any action that ignored the fact that they were not united.[26]

The emphasis was probably necessary because the Wisconsin Synod believed that the Missouri Synod was already particpating in established fellowship activities. The Wisconsin Synod viewed joint prayer and the cooperation in externals as giving evidence of that existing situation. In addition, from the perspective of the Wisconsin Synod the issue remained a doctrinal issue. It became increasingly disturbing to the

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[24] Ibid., p. 251.

[25] Ibid., p. 252.

[26] Ibid., p. 251.

Wisconsin Synod that the Missouri Synod repeatedly avoided the doctrinal issues. At this time there was an additional cause of concern by the Wisconsin Synod. They became more apprehensive about some of the more liberal attitudes and actions of certain leaders within the Missouri Synod. Those early suspicions later proved to be true within almost a year.

> On 7 September, 1945 a group of 44 Missouri Synod clergyman signed "A Statement" in which they called for a greater measure of evangelical practice within the Synod, a definition of prayer fellowship which was at variance with some of the traditionally held views within Synod and a greater readiness to reach agreement with other Lutherans. Twelve propositions with comments made up the document.[27]

This particular Statement was significant in the history of the Missouri Synod because it indicated the developing trend of the Missouri Synod. The propositions in the Statement indirectly crystalized the basic issues of controversy between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod up to that time. But, most importantly, the Statement brought to the forefront the tension and conflict that were present within the Missouri Synod itself.[28] The attitude and action of those leaders within the Missouri Synod were the beginnings of a new liberal trend that would cause severe controversy years later.

In contrast to the liberal trend which developed within the Missouri Synod, there was also the position of a strict confessional Lutheranism as advocated by Rev. Paul Burgdorf in The Confessional Lutheran. During the years of 1945 and 1946 several articles appeared

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[27] Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 422.

[28] Ibid., pp. 422-424. The twelve propositions and comments of the Statement are contained in appendix 5.

in this Periodical which contrasted sharply with the position of fellowship as advocated by the signers of A Statement. The supporters and followers of The Confessional Lutheran disagreed with A Statement when it concluded that Romans 16:17-18 did not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church in America. Again and again Rev. Burgdorf asserted that in prayer fellowship, altar and pulpit fellowship, and church fellowship the principle of Romans 16:17-18 did apply. If such an application of Romans 16:17-18 were no longer maintained, disastrous results would come to the Missouri Synod.

It is again significant to point out the fact that the Missouri Synod found itself repeatedly in some almost impossible situations. The Synod was trying to resolve the conflicts with the Wisconsin Synod. In the meantime, more severe disagreements surfaced in the Missouri Synod. Finally, to compound the entire issue the Missouri Synod was faced with the lethargic, doctrinal attitude and the unpredictable doctrinal stance of the American Lutheran Church. This was quite evident by 1947.

The effort to formulate one document of doctrinal agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church was achieved. The document, Doctrinal Affirmation, was to be carefully studied and the final vote was planned at the Convention in 1947. The Document had been made available to all members of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. In addition, the sister synods in the Synodical Conference were involved in meetings and discussions.

> Your Committee, in obedience to Synod's instructions of 1941, met with official representatives of our sister synods in the Synodical Conference to discuss the Affirmation. Two meetings were held,

> each lasting two full days, to consider the numerous objections which were made by the Honorable Wisconsin Synod and the Honorable Norwegian Synod.
> . . . Objections to the Affirmation were received also from individual members and from conferences of our Synod. In general, the criticisms stated that the wording of the Doctrinal Affirmation in a number of instances was not definite and precise enough to preclude the possibility of misunderstanding.[29]

Efforts were made to carefully consider all the objections and the set of changes was proposed under the title "Clarifications." But the opposition merely increased. "The other synods of the Synodical Conference emphatically declined to concur in the St. Louis resolutions, and attacked the Missouri Synod for negotiating for union with the American Lutheran Church."[30]

The changes submitted by the Missouri Synod were not too great in number. Generally, single words or phrases were changed.[31] Originally the intended one document was to avoid any misunderstanding. But, unfortunately, it was a source of further misunderstanding and confusion.

The Missouri Synod, however, experienced disappointment with the American Lutheran Church. It was discovered that in many areas of the American Lutheran Church there was apathy, reluctance and failure to study the Doctrinal Affirmation. Where the Document had been

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[29]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Fortieth Convention, July 20-29, 1947 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 494.

[30]Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, p. 348.

[31]See Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1947, pp. 499-500 for a detailed listing of items accepted and the items changed. The significant fact is that the issues in controversy dealt with the doctrines of Holy Scriptures, conversion, means of grace, the Church, election of grace and the last things.

studied it was received unfavorably with no enthusiasm.[32] The American Lutheran Church did not support it. The Fellowship Committee of the American Lutheran Church stated its opposition to the Doctrinal Affirmation.

> In the opinion of the American Lutheran Church, as stated by the Fellowship Committee, the Doctrinal Affirmation is a unification rather than a combination of the Brief Statement and the Declaration, because it gives preference everywhere to the Brief Statement. The Doctrinal Affirmation was unacceptable to the American Lutheran Church, because it canceled the position for which the American Lutheran Church stood in the Declaration; the Declaration stood for a certain attitude given freedom under God and His Word, as explained by the Fellowship Committee. Complaint was made that important statements of the Declaration were omitted in framing the Affirmation which were regarded as safeguards, and so the Doctrinal Affirmation, it was contended, failed to make for better understanding but rather invited new controversies.[33]

In view of the situation in the American Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity presented an excellent summary of the barriers which prevented fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.[34] It is most interesting and significant to note the

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[32] Ibid., p. 494.

[33] Ibid., p. 495.

[34] See Ibid., pp. 497-499. Basically there were areas of disagreement. The obvious lack of doctrinal unity was in the public teaching of certain doctrines and other statements. Members of the Fellowship Committee were not aware of any doctrinal differences, yet, it was evident that men in the American Lutheran Church were in error on conversion, inspiration, predestination and other doctrines. There was a lack of agreement regarding the degree of doctrinal unity required for fellowship. Lastly, the American Lutheran Church still maintained its membership in the American Lutheran Conference. Furthermore, the American Lutheran Church practiced the principle of selective fellowship by individuals. As a result, the American Lutheran Church had eliminated the Doctrinal Affirmation and its "Clarifications" as a basis for doctrinal unity with the Missouri Synod.

stalwart defense given by the Missouri Synod in support of its position not to proceed in establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.

> Our Synod has insisted and still insists that fellowship must be based on unity in all doctrines clearly revealed in Holy Writ. That type of unity alone agrees with St. Paul's admonition quoted in the Constitution of our Synod under the caption "Object," to wit, I Cor. 1:10: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment." If church bodies can do no more than pledge that each group be loyal to its own distinctive confession, they are not speaking the same thing, nor are they joined together in the same mind and judgment.[35]

Two important decisions were made by the Missouri Synod in 1947. It declared that it was not ready to establish fellowship at that time with the American Lutheran Church, and it indicated it willingness to continue doctrinal discussions with the American Lutheran Church.[36] Furthermore, the Missouri Synod rescinded the 1938 resolutions that had served as a basis for establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. However, the objective to formulate one document of doctrinal unity still remained a valid one. The Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity was instructed to make every effort to formulate a document that would be clear, concise and unequivocal.[37]

At this time, there appeared to be an end of reaching an established fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. "The Missouri Synod turned to her sister synods in the Synodical Conference to seek

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[35]Ibid., pp. 497-498.

[36]Ibid., p. 501.

[37]Ibid., p. 510.

a procedure for future negotiations that might be agreeable to all, but these efforts failed.[38]

The Missouri Synod was again involved in lengthy internal discussion regarding membership in the National Lutheran Council. The Synod again declined membership in the National Lutheran Council because there was a difference of opinion within the Synod itself on the issue of such membership. However, Synod voiced its willingness to cooperate in areas that agreed with the Scriptural principles of the Synod.[39] In addition, the Misouri Synod directed its attention to some other issues that were disturbing the members of the Synodical Conference.

A relatively more recent issue dealt with the Boy Scout question. In itself the matter of Scoutism was not a major controversy. However, it received major study as the years passed because the Boy Scout program was viewed by some as a form of unionism. There was some difference of opinion about Scouting within the Missouri Synod, but more significantly, the Synodical Conference had requested that its member synods restudy their respective positions with regard to the Boy Scouts.[40] A committee of three men were appointed to restudy the matter, and they were to give a report at the next Convention.

In 1950 Dr. Behnken gave his Presidential Address and outlined three important lessons for the first Convention in a new century of

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[38]Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, p. 349.

[39]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1947, p. 536.

[40]Ibid., p. 541.

Synodical work. They were unwavering orthodoxy, increasing activity and blessed assurance of the Lord for success in His work.[41]

Intersynodical and doctrinal matters contained a variety of major issues and questions. In 1948 at Missouri Synod's invitation a meeting was held with the Union Committees of the sister synods of the Synodical Conference to attempt to work out a policy procedure to be followed in future negotiations. All four Synods of the Synodical Conference were present, but they did not agree on a policy.[42]

The representatives of the Missouri Synod proceeded on their own with representatives of the American Lutheran Church to formulate one document of doctrinal agreement. The result of those efforts was the "Common Confession."[43] The Missouri Synod adopted the "Common Confession, Part I" in 1950. Later, in 1956, the "Common Confession, Part II" was accepted by the Missouri Synod not as a doctrinal document, but as a significant historic statement.

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[41]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-First Convention, June 21-30, 1950 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 1-7. Dr. Behnken pointed out some dangers facing the Missouri Synod. There was some doctrinal indifference and lack of seriousness about matters of doctrine. He mentioned unionism and separatism, legalism, lovelessness and unbrotherliness, and he urged that the convention be loyal to the Word of God.

[42]Ibid., p. 566.

[43]See Ibid., pp. 567-572 for a draft of the Common Confession. Although it was a single document of doctrinal agreement, it ultimately failed to bring about consensus between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. There was dissatisfaction within the Synodical Conference, within the Missouri Synod as well as the American Lutheran Church. In 1953 Missouri Synod considered the complete "Common Confession."

> WHEREAS, By the grace of God the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of Synod and the Committee on Fellowship of the American Lutheran Church have jointly produced the document known as the "Common Confession"; and
> WHEREAS, We find in this document nothing that contradicts the Scriptures; and
> WHEREAS, We are of the conviction that, under God, our Synod should seek a God-pleasing unity with all Lutherans; therefore be it
> Resolved, That we rejoice and thank God that the "Common Confession" shows that agreement has been achieved in the doctrines treated by the two committees; and be it further
> Resolved, That we accept the "Common Confession" as a statement of these doctrines in harmony with Scriptures; and be it further
> Resolved, That if the American Lutheran Church, in convention assembled, accepts it, the "Common Confession" shall be recognized as a statement of agreement on those doctrines between us and the American Lutheran Church.[44]

It was also approved that this matter be placed before the Synodical Conference to secure the consent of the member synods. However, this same Convention had received six questions from the Wisconsin Synod which already indicated the seriousness of the controversy between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. The addition of the "Common Confession" only burdened the confusion and disagreement between the two Synods.

As the Missouri Synod unsuccessfully sought to resolve its problems with the Wisconsin Synod, it also witnessed confusion and disagreement expanding within itself. Increasingly this internal problem became more serious. Much doctrinal discussion focused on the Statement issued in 1945 to all pastors of the Missouri Synod. Some members of the Missouri Synod firmly believed it contained false doctrine.[45] This issue gave evidence of the growing doctrinal disagreement within the Synod itself.

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[44]Ibid., p. 585.

[45]Ibid., pp. 605-606.

In addition the exegesis and application of Romans 16:17-18 received lengthy discussion. The basis of the discussion was whether the application of Romans 16:17-18 applied to other Christians or more generally to the heathen and overt unbelievers. Traditionally, the Missouri Synod had followed a more flexible application of those passages. Several resolutions reaffirmed an evangelical use of Romans 16:17-18.[46] The Wisconsin Synod had maintained, however, that any act or offense divisive of fellowship on the basis of God's truth came under the application of Romans 16:17-18. Their understanding of those particular passages was most evident as they terminated fellowship in 1961 with the Missouri Synod using Romans 16:17-18 as Scriptural proof for their action.

In response to the matters of doctrine and practice raised by the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod gratefully acknowledged their sincere concern. It was decided that the Praesidium was to answer the letters of the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods.[47] As the Missouri Synod struggled to resolve its own internal disagreements, it could not satisfactorily resolve the issues with the Wisconsin Synod.

In 1953 the Missouri Synod considered the complete document of the "Common Confession." Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity had met with representatives of the other synods of the Synodical Conference

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[46] Ibid., pp. 655-658.

[47] Ibid., pp. 666-669. These questions were presented in detail in Chapter one. They indicate the disagreement already existing between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. The Wisconsin Synod in 1951 viewed the response of the Missouri Synod to be unsatisfactory.

to discuss the "Common Confession" in a very thorough manner.[48] The opposition centered on the same doctrines that had been in controversy since the 1938 St. Louis resolutions. Because of the disagreement within the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, the Synod postponed action in 1953 on Part II and allowed more time for all concerned individuals to further study the Document.[49]

Furthermore, the Wisconsin Synod presented a statement to the Missouri Synod.

> The fact that in the Synodical Conference we have these many years enjoyed the blessings and comforts of a full unity in doctrine and practice compels the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States to tell you frankly that it is our firm conviction that your body for a number of years has been deviating to an ever-increasing extent from the position we have so long held and defended together and thereby has most seriously disturbed our God-created relation and has placed our two Synods on opposite sides on a number of important issues, making it impossible for us to join you in the new course you have taken.
>
> Our Synod made an earnest effort to prevail on the convention of the Synodical Conference to settle our controversies according to the Scriptures, but, as you know, without avail.
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> Our Synod is, therefore, addressing itself to your convention of 1953, earnestly pleading with you to remove the offenses of which we have for years complained to the Committee on

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[48]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Second Convention, June 17-26, 1953 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), pp. 495-497. The Wisconsin Synod requested the Missouri Synod to repudiate its position that the "Common Confession" was a settlement of the doctrines discussed by the Missouri Synod and American Lutheran Church. The Document was termed inadequate for the reasons stated in the Review of The Common Confession. Unclear phraseology, wording and doctrinal statements, plus omissions occurred in the doctrines in controversy: Justification, Conversion, Election, Means of Grace, The Church, and the Last Things.

[49]Ibid., p. 528.

> Inter-synodical Relations, to the Synodical Conference, and to your convention as well, and so to restore mutual confidence and truly brotherly co-operation.[50]

The Wisconsin Synod requested that the Missouri Synod rescind the resolution of 1950 which accepted Part I of the "Common Confession." However, a strong threat was also contained in that request.

> For the sake of the truth and our common good we ask you to do the following in order to preserve the Synodical Conference and to make it possible for us to continue our affiliation with you and our joint labors in the service of our Lord:
>
> 1. Rescind the following resolutions:
>
> "Resolved, That we rejoice and thank God that the Common Confession shows that agreement has been achieved in the doctrines treated by the two committees. . .and be it further
>
> "Resolved, That if the American Lutheran Church, in convention assembled, accepts it, the Common Confession shall be recognized as a statement of agreement on these doctrines between us and the American Lutheran Church."[51]

It is quite apparent that by this time the disagreement and controversy between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod was quite serious. The "Common Confession" was further studied and discussed, but the Wisconsin Synod and the Synodical Conference would not give their approval.

An excellent presentation of the Wisconsin Synod's position on the "Common Confession" was given in a Synodical Conference essay in 1954.[52] The doctrinal disagreement increased between the Wisconsin

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[50] Ibid., p. 535.

[51] Ibid., p. 536.

[52] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, August 10-13, 1954 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 17-38. E. H. Wendland of Benton Harbor, Michigan presented the excellent essay on the position of the Wisconsin Synod. The essay, "The Inadequacy of the 'Common Confession' as a Settlement of Past Differences," regarding the doctrine of justification, it was unclear as to the teaching of the American

Synod and the Missouri Synod because of the Missouri Synod's acceptance of the "Common Confession" as a settlement of past differences.[53]

In the meantime the Norwegian Synod had taken the lead and terminated fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1955.[54]

> We feel, therefore, that, as matters now stand, further negotiations by committees will be fruitless; that an impasse has been reached in our fraternal relations with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod; and that further negotiations will result in indifferentism and in compromise of Scriptural doctrine and practice.[55]

Historically, the Wisconsin Synod and the Norwegian Synod had held similar doctrinal positions within the Synodical Conference. Although the Wisconsin Synod had not officially terminated fellowship with the Missouri Synod at this time, the situation was grave and threatening.

Lutheran Church on universal justification. The doctrine of conversion lacked clarity on the untenable distinction between a natural and willful resistance of man. The doctrine of election lacked an election unto faith. Inspiration lacked the certainty of the Holy Spirit providing Holy Scriptures in their entirety. The charge of the Wisconsin Synod was that the "Common Confession" allowed various interpretations of the doctrines in question. It lacked antitheses which called attention to specific errors that had existed in the past.

[53]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, June 20-29, 1956 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), pp. 505-508. This was the first official Convention action of the Wisconsin Synod to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod was informed of this Convention action in order that it might re-consider its actions at the 1956 Convention.

[54]Ibid., pp. 508-514.

[55]Ibid., p. 513. It is significant to note that the Preus brothers were supportive of the action of the Norwegian Synod. The basic reason cited by the Norwegian Synod was unionism in the Missouri Synod.

A new approach to perhaps resolve some of the controversy was offered. The topic of fellowship itself was to be studied and discussed because the two Synods actually followed two different principles of fellowship. The Seminary Faculties of the Missouri Synod prepared a report on fellowship for the Praesidium of the Synod as well as later for the Synod at large.

This effort was a restudy of the question of fellowship, prayer fellowship and unionism. It was a Biblically-based presentation of fellowship, Theology of Fellowship.[56] Additional documents were planned on fellowship in order that the basic issue might be discussed. However, the Wisconsin Synod stated that the Missouri Synod had not put its viewpoint down in the finished form of a printed document. They declared that an impasse existed, but since the Missouri Synod was in the process of doing so they would await its appearance.[57]

The Synodical Conference later became the forum for discussion of the doctrine of Christian fellowship. Those developments will be treated in Chapter 3 under the developmental background of the Synodical Conference. However, the fellowship discussions were necessary because there was no other feasible option left. "Since there was still no unanimity, the problem was submitted to the convention of the Synodical Conference, August 2-5, 1960."[58]

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[56]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, The Theology of Fellowship (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), Preamble.

[57]The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention, 1961 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1961), p. 171.

[58]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Four Statements on Fellowship (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, November 1960), p. 3.

In 1959 the Missouri Synod Convention agenda did not have any lengthy doctrinal issues related to the Wisconsin Synod. Instead various resolutions pertained to working with other Lutheran bodies. Although there was the unresolved controversy on the doctrine of Christian fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod, the Missuri Synod moved ahead in its ecumenical efforts. The 1959 Convention adopted a resolution to invite the representatives of the new The American Lutheran Church (TALC) to meet for the purpose of seeking a God-pleasing unity. In addition, the sister synods of the Synodical Conference were to be invited to join in that endeavor.[59]

The scene for decisions on the doctrine of Christian fellowship then shifted to the Synodical Conference and the Wisconsin Synod. The question regarding the termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod was decided by the Wisconsin Synod in 1961. The final decision by the Wisconsin Synod was based on differences with the Missouri Synod on the doctrine of Christian fellowship, prayer fellowship and unionism.[60] The Missouri Synod did not terminate fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod, and the Synodical Conference did not dissolve immediately in 1961.

In 1962 the Missouri Synod acknowledged the decision and action of the Wisconsin Synod and expressed regret over the suspension of

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[59]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Convention, June 17-26, 1959 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), pp. 196-197.

[60]The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention, August 8-17, 1961 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1961), pp. 197-199. The complete text of the resolution for the suspension of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod is contained in appendix 3.

fellowship by the Wisconsin Synod. The Synod gave approval to continue doctrinal study and to meet with representatives of the sister synods in the Lutheran Synodical Conference.[61] What happened later then within the Missouri Synod is beyond the scope of this paper. We turn our attention now to the Synodical Conference. Chapter III will present the background of the termination of fellowship by the Wisconsin Synod with the Missouri Synod from the developments within the Synodical Conference.

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[61]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Convention, June 20-29, 1962 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 105. "WHEREAS, The Lord of the church urges us to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4:1-3); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod again extend heartfelt invitations to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to resume discussions with us on the basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and earnestly urge these synods to accept these invitations for the purpose of restoring the bonds of fellowship which once existed; . . ."

CHAPTER III

SYNODICAL CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND

The Synodical Conference organized in 1872 served as a federation of synods which supported Lutheran Confessionalism.

> One of the chief objectives of the new federation was the "union of all Lutheran Synods in America in one orthodox American Lutheran Church." The autonomy of the member synods was carefully preserved. The relationship of the Synodical Conference to the synods was defined as being advisory. Only upon the unanimous approval of each of the synods could new members be accepted into the conference.[1]

The objectives of the Synodical Conference were generally of a doctrinal nature.

> To give outward expression to the unity of the spirit existing among the respective synods; to encourage and strengthen one another in faith and confession; to further the unity in doctrine and practice and to remove whatever might threaten to disturb this unity; to cooperate in matters of mutual interest; to strive for true unity of all Lutheran church-bodies in America in doctrine and practice.[2]

Although there had been doctrinal controversies within the Synodical Conference throughout the years, still the Synodical Conference remained in tact and faithful to its doctrinal objectives. Since 1920 the membership of the Synodical Conference consisted of the

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[1] E. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 251.

[2] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention, August 4-9, 1938 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 127.

Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, the Slovak Synod and the Norwegian Synod.[3] Furthermore, the Synodical Conference not only espoused doctrinal and confessional unity, but the Conference also was active and faithful in mission work. "The Synodical Conference has also remained true to its scope of activities as laid down in its constitution, especially with regard to home and foreign mission work."[4]

In 1938 there was the preliminary statement made in the Synodical Conference of the fellowship negotiations between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

> The Missouri Synod has, after a number of conferences, at its last convention adopted statements and passed resolutions to "be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church." According to the constitution of the Synodical Conference, this whole matter will be presented at the proper time to the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.[5]

It is important to note the peaceful setting in which those remarks were made. There were no threats or accusations, there were no attempts to evade an issue, and there was evident the secure feeling and understanding that the Missouri Synod would naturally follow the proper procedure. If the future brought more developments between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod was expected to abide by the Constitution of the Synodical Conference. The

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[3] Ibid., p. 8. In spite of changes that had occurred over the years in the Synodical Conference, it still remained a Conference of Lutheran synods standing firmly and unequivocally upon the inspired and inerrant Word of God and upon the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

major convention activity at this time dealt with two essays: "Union Movements in the Church" by Professor Theodore Hoyer of the Missouri Synod and "Social Problems and the Gospel" by Professor E. E. Kowalke of the Wisconsin Synod. At the conclusion of the essay on church union, some concise statements were made about church union.

> Let us never forget: In any compromise between truth and error, truth always loses. Error can give up half of its tenets, and it is still error; as soon as truth gives up one iota, it is no longer truth. Then, unionists are not at all as altruistic as at first glance they seem. History shows us that true Lutheranism simply cannot exist in an atmosphere of unionism and doctrinal indifference; it will lose its savor, its distinctive features and settle down to a type of religion that is dominantly Reformed.[6]

It is significant to note that it was in that structure of strict-confessionalism in the Synodical Conference that Missouri Synod enjoyed fellowship with its sister synods. There was no doubt as to the doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference, and there was mutual acceptance of fellowship within the Synodical Conference by the constituent synods.

In 1940 the Synodical Conference still was blessed with faithfulness to the Word of God and the Confessions. It had remained true and faithful even during the times of earlier controversy.[7] However, at this same time the Convention of the Synodical Conference received the official information from the Missouri Synod and its actions with the American Lutheran Church.[8] In addition, the Synodical Conference

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[6]Ibid., p. 48.

[7]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention, August 1-6, 1940 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1940), p. 7.

[8]See Ibid., pp. 81-87. The Synodical Conference received the Committee Report on Lutheran Church Union submitted by the Missouri

as also able to consider the position of the American Lutheran Church and the Sandusky Resolutions.[9]

In the preliminary discussions of the submitted material, the Synodical Conference spoke in positive terms about the good faith evidenced by the Missouri Synod. Approval for fellowship would have to come from all the synods constituting the Synodical Conference. An additional positive statement endorsed the fact that the Missouri Synod gave the sister synods an opportunity to participate in Missouri Synod's dealings with the American Lutheran Church by offering constructive criticism.[10]

It was also pointed out by the Synodical Conference that the proposed fellowship should not be established until all the synods in in the Synodical Conference were convinced that there actually was unity of faith between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

In view of such circumstances the Synodical Conference recommended the following resolutions:

Synod. It outlined the developments between 1935-1940 between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. In addition, Missouri Synod's Convention Committee No. 16 presented specific areas of disagreements that existed with the American Lutheran Church on some fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines.

[9]Ibid., pp. 87-88. The significant aspect of the Sandusky Resolutions is that it was the official and conditional acceptance of the Missouri Synod's Brief Statement. The American Lutheran Church accepted the Brief Statement in light of its own Declaration. As a result these were the two documents of agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

[10]Ibid., pp. 88-89.

1. That the Synodical Conference at this time take no final action in this matter of union but await further developments.
2. That we ask the Missouri Synod not to enter into fellowship (prayer-, altar-, pulpit-fellowship) with the American Lutheran Church until matters now objected to by members of the Synodical Conference have been clarified and until the whole matter has once more been presented to another meeting of the Synodical Conference, a policy which has already been laid down by the Missouri Synod itself in the above reference.
3. That the presidents of the four synods be requested to divise ways and means for continuing close co-operation between the different union committees of the Synodical Conference.
4. That we ask the Missouri Committee earnestly to consider the advisability of bringing about the framing of one document of agreement.[11]

The Synodical Conference was further advised that those who lead and bear the responsibility should take no steps that in the future would lead the Synodical Conference away from its Scriptural principles and position. The overtones of doctrinal disagreement were already expressed at this date by representatives of the Norwegian Synod and such disagreement was also indicated by convention action of the Wisconsin Synod.[12]

Because of the Second World War, the convention of the Synodical Conference was postponed from 1942 until 1944. In the President's Address a description of the atmosphere and situation of the times was

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[11] Ibid., p. 89.

[12] Ibid., pp. 90-92. Dr. Ylvisaker spoke in behalf of the Norwegian Synod and he listed ten points in connection with the documents of agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. He expressed concerns about confusion with two documents of agreement, he summarized the areas of disagreement in some non-fundamental doctrines which the Wisconsin Synod had also stated, and he urged that the Scriptural position in the doctrine of unionism be safeguarded. The Wisconsin Synod shared their convention action that the agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church provided no real doctrinal basis for church fellowship. The Wisconsin Synod believed further negotiations would cause confusion, and therefore, negotiations should be suspended for the time being.

significant. Professor L. Fuerbringer of the Missouri Synod and President of the Synodical Conference indicated the contemporary weaknesses as well as strengths.

> The present days are days of many and rapid outward and also inward changes in the churches surrounding us. The tendency everywhere is amalgamation, consolidation, union, union frequently without unity. Thanks be to God that in spite of this trend the Synodical Conference has continued to exist without any changes and has remained true to its principles, has remained a conference of Lutheran Synods standing firmly and unequivocally upon the inspired and inerrant Word of God and upon the confessions of the Lutheran Church.[13]

The Wisconsin Synod informed the Synodical Conference of its dissatisfaction with the actions of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod believed the Missouri Synod had moved ahead too quickly in formulating one document of doctrinal agreement with the American Lutheran Church. "We cannot but declare that this was not our conception of the 'close co-operation between the different union committees' requested by the convention of 1940."[14]

In addition, the Wisconsin Synod made it quite clear that such actions by the Missouri Synod did not serve the cause of unity, but they only caused confusion within the synods involved. Because of the various opinions and positions expressed regarding the actions of the Missouri Synod, the Synodical Conference resolved that two men from each constituent synod be appointed by the respective synodical Presidents. These men together with the Presidents were to form a standing

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[13]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Convention, August 1-4, 1944 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 7.

[14]Ibid., p. 102.

committee to be called the Committee on Intersynodical Relations. The Committee's responsibility would be to discuss the various overtures and related matters relative to the actions of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, and this Committee was to report at the next convention.[15]

In 1946 there were the initial signal warnings that the situation within the Synodical Conference revealed conflict and confusion. In the Presidential Address there were the indications of problems that plagued the Synodical Conference. Rev. E. Benjamin Schlueter, President of the Synodical Conference, directed the delegates to look back to the historic strength and purpose of the Synodical Conference.

> This is the kind of admonition and encouragement we need today. Midst the confusion and strife that has entered our Synodical Conference and threatens to undermine its stability we should hark back to that early day when the federation of which we are the heirs was called into existence and learn anew that the one great purpose of our individual as well as our joint work is the saving of souls.[16]

The Committee on Intersynodical Relations made their report to the Synodical Conference.[17] Evident already was the synodical issue of prayer fellowship. Nonetheless, assurance was given that the controversial matters and events were being discussed, and future action

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[15] Ibid., pp. 103-104.

[16] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Convention, August 6-9, 1946 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 9.

[17] Ibid., pp. 57-58. The general tone of the report was positive. The different union committees of the synods were in close co-operation and it was recommended to continue such co-operation. In regard to the actual fellowship negotiations of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, the Committee offered some suggestions:

> "We recognize that the Missouri Synod has made a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer, by which it would

would be taken to resolve the matter if it was necessary. However, there was the subtle reminder that incidents and infractions of joint prayer were on the increase rather than decreasing.

Two additional issues came before the Synodical Conference. One of these was the Boy Scout issue.

> Another matter that came before the Committee was the Boy Scout issue. A difference of opinion in this respect became apparent both within the Committee and, because of the Saginaw resolutions of the Missouri Synod concerning Scoutism, between the synods.[18]

The Synodical Conference requested the Missouri Synod to restudy the matter and to consult with the other synods of the Synodical Conference concerning it. The suggestion was also given that when a common policy was involved the synods should counsel with one another intersynodically.[19] The Synodical Conference here requested a major

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> justify some, but by no means all prayer at intersynodical gatherings . . . While the question of prayer fellowship and joint prayer is still under debate also within the Committee, incidents have occurred even since 1944 which go beyond the distinction made at Saginaw."

The Committee on Intersynodical Relations was composed of the respective Presidents of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference with two additional men from each synod. These men were appointed by the respective synodical President.

[18] Ibid., p. 59.

[19] The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Fortieth Convention, July 20-29, 1947 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 257-258 gave the action of the Missouri Synod at Saginaw in 1944. A committee did conduct a study of the Boy Scout issue and shared their conclusions with the Synod.

> "We were unable to find any factors which would violate our principles and have not been able to discover anything in the practices of scouting, as outlined in these handbooks, to which a Christian parent, scoutmaster, or pastor would take exception."

As a result, the Committee believed that the matter of scouting was to be left to the decision of the individual congregation. Such a recourse would best serve the interest of the Synod. The convention adopted these recommendations of the Committee.

restudy if an issue that in reality was no burning issue within the Missouri Synod. Nevertheless, the Missouri Synod did restudy the issue.[20]

The second additional issue at this time dealt with the Army and Navy Chaplaincy program. This had been a source of disagreement between the Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Synod for a number of years. The basic areas of disagreement involved matters relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry and the church. This particular issue was sufficiently serious in that it was threatening the true unity of the Synodical Conference.[21]

An Interim Committee was to be established and study the Army and Navy Chaplaincy question as well as all other matters relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry and the church. Where there had been disagreement the goal was that of achieving complete agreement. This Committee was to report to the next convention, and the hope was expressed for definite progress in strengthening the unity of doctrine and practice within the Synodical Conference.[22]

The Synodical Conference received some favorable reports from the various meetings of the union committees of the Missouri Synod and

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[20]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1944, p. 670. After a thorough and rather exhaustive restudy of the matter of scouting, the Missouri Synod in 1950 officially stated it found nothing to change its 1944 position on Boy Scouts.

[21]Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1946, p. 61.

[22]Ibid. One of the initial difficulties in resolving the controversies was the overlapping of committees and their work. At this time each synod in the Synodical Conference had its own doctrinal committee. In addition, there were the Intersynodical Committee and the Interim Committee.

sister synods of the Synodical Conference. Suggested changes in the Doctrinal Affirmation were mutually agreed upon.[23] Consensus had been achieved and the proposed changes were to be given to the Missouri Synod for action. "This group unanimously agreed on changes in the Doctrinal Affirmation which in its opinion would remove cause for the objections presented."[24]

In 1948 the Interim Committee reported to the Synodical Conference. Disagreement in several major areas was presented.[25] The sources of disagreement involved basically the understanding of the doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the call. In order that the problems and the controversies might be resolved in a God-pleasing manner, it was decided to have a thorough consideration of the principles of the major doctrines in question on the basis of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions. The outline of this thorough and exhaustive study followed this format:

1. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to synodical organization.

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[23] Ibid., pp. 66-69. The objections to the Doctrinal Affirmation were thoroughly discussed. The Doctrinal Affirmation was the result of an attempt to formulate one document of doctrinal agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. Major changes were not requested, but more concise phraseology and clarification of doctrinal statements were carried out. These related to the inspiration of Scripture, conversion, the means of grace, the Church, election of grace and the last things. Parts of these doctrines had been repeated sources of disagreement and discussion.

[24] Ibid., p. 66.

[25] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Fortieth Convention, August 3-6, 1948 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), p. 136. The existing disagreements within the Synodical Conference are contained in appendix 6.

2. The doctine of the Church with special reference to the office of the ministry.
3. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to the call into the ministry.
4. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to its relation to the State.[26]

The Interim Committee also reported that because of the in-depth study and discussion required, and because of the importance of the matters to yet be considered, the question of the Army and Navy Chaplaincy program needed additional time for study. The areas of apparent agreement were stated in the majority report and the areas of disagreement were presented in the minority report.[27] The doctrines of the Church and Ministry were brought into a sharper focus of understanding. In regard to the two doctrines there were no differences as to the Biblical revelation and truth of these doctrines.[28] However, there were disagreements in the application of the doctrines of the Church and Ministry.

a. Some restrict the concept of a divinely instituted church local (the Church of Christ as it appears on earth - ekklesia, Matthew 18) to the local congregation and consider all gatherings of believers, groups of Christians beyond the local congregation, such as synods, conferences, etc., a purely human arrangement.

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[26]Ibid., p. 136.

[27]See Ibid., pp. 137-144. The Interim Committee was comprised of eight members. Seven of those members reached agreement and presented the results of their conclusive study in the majority report. The one dissenting member of the Committee was granted the privilege of submitting his conclusions in the minority report. A closer comparison of the two reports will reveal that the disagreement lies more in the application of the doctrine rather than in disagreement on the fundamental doctrine of the Church itself. The minority report was submitted by Harold H. Eckert.

[28]Ibid., pp. 140-141.

b. Others find in the descriptive name of church (ekklesia, they who are called out) a term which applies with equal propriety to the various groupings into which the Holy Spirit has gathered His believers, local congregations as well as larger groups.
c. Some restrict the idea of a divinely instituted ministry to the pastorate of a local congregation and consider such offices as teachers, professors, synodical officials, etc., branches of this office without a specific command of God, established in Christian liberty.
d. Others see in "ministry" a comprehensive term which covers the various special offices with which the ascended Lord has endowed His Church.[29]

As a result, the Interim Committee had not reached a unanimous agreement in its work thus far. However, since its work was incomplete, the Committee was to continue functioning until the next convention. In the meantime, the members and groups of the sister synods in the Synodical Conference were urged to restudy the doctrine of the Church.

It is significant to note that at this time the Norwegian Synod stated its dissatisfaction with the doctrine and practice of the Missouri Synod to the Synodical Conference.[30] The concerns expressed by the Norwegian Synod were not acted upon by the Synodical Conference at this time. Instead, it was suggested that both Synods arrange for meetings of their officers to discuss the points at issue.

It is increasingly evident that doctrinal disagreements and controversies were present within the Synodical Conference, and unfortunately none of them were easily resolved. The attempts to appoint committees and study the issues in question were excellent, but such actions necessitate time and patience and some form of ultimate

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[29] Ibid., p. 141.

[30] Ibid., pp. 147-149.

compromise and agreement. All the participants were also aware of the grave danger of God's truth and compromise.

In 1950 the Convention of the Synodical Conference was given the broad spectrum of its doctrinal and practical controversies.

> There are three special areas where it is apparent that God is tempting us: the doctrines of Unionism, of Prayer, of the Church and the Ministry. When we add the questions of the Chaplaincy and the Boy Scouts, these are only as phases of the others.[31]

At this Convention of the Synodical Conference, the Missouri Synod registered its official disagreement with some of the opinions stated in the Presidential Address. Such action was noted at the end of the Presidential Address.[32]

The Interim Committee continued to function, but its work was still incomplete on the study of the doctrines of the Church and Ministry. However, it was obvious that progress had been made. Unanimous agreement within the Committee was still lacking, but because of the favorable progress achieved, the Interim Committee was asked to continue its work and complete its assignment.

The doctrinal issues of unionism, prayer fellowship and joint prayer were discussed by the Synodical Committee on Intersynodical Relations. The representatives of the constituent synods had not reached an agreement on the validity of a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer. Consequently, further study and discussion was to be carried out on unionism and church fellowship.

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[31]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-First Convention, August 8-11, 1950 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), p. 8.

[32]Ibid., p. 11.

The year, 1950, also marked a significant event in the Synodical Conference. The Missouri Synod brought the "Common Confession" to the attention of its sister synods. The purpose of this referral was to seek approval of this Document. Accordingly, the Synodical Conference referred the "Common Confession" to its constituent synods for consideration and action. The Missouri Synod's request for approval of the "Common Confession" opened a new era of study, discussion, confusion and disagreement within the Synodical Conference and also between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods themselves. As the Synodical Conference submitted the "Common Confession" to its constituent synods for consideration and approval, the Conference also presented a recommendation of caution regarding any action that might endanger the fellowship within the Synodical Conference.

> As regards the differences that have arisen and that are threatening the unity of spirit in our Synodical Conference, we recommend that the Conference resolve that the efforts to achieve complete unanimity be continued by all proper means, and that all members of the Conference be admonished to avoid any action not clearly based on God's Holy Word that might further endanger our fellowship, and that they be further admonished in the meantime to recognize each other and to treat each other as brethren in Christ and as brethren in the faith. Eph. 4:1-3: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthily of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."[33]

In 1952 the Interim Committee reported that it had made a thorough study of the doctine of the Church. The conclusion reached was that the Theses on Church and Ministry as adopted by the St. Louis and Thiensville faculties on April 16, 1932 expressed correctly the

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[33]Ibid., pp. 136-137.

Scriptural principle of these Doctrines.[34] However, it must be borne in mind that doctrinal agreement had been reached only on the Sriptural principle of the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry. In regard to the application of these Doctrines, there still was disagreement.

> Your Committee recognizes that the Thiensville Theses as presently formulated do not resolve all the difficulties that still exist among us, and that further clarification on the points in question is desirable.[35]

Furthermore, some differences existed between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods in the application of the doctrine of the Church and Ministry.

> It should be clearly understood, however, as before said that there is no complete agreement within the Synodical Conference when these basic concepts of the doctrine of the Church and Ministry are translated into the practical life of the Church and its Ministry (witness the Chaplaincy question for example). The original report of the Interim Committee clearly refers to this realm of disagreement among us.[36]

A more complete analysis of this particular disagreement of the application of the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod will be presented in Part II of this paper. However, it is necessary to refer to it specifically

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[34]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-Second Convention, August 12-15, 1952 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 143. The acceptance of The Thiensville Theses was a positive step in arriving at unity of doctrine on the Church and Ministry. The Interim Committee thought that a great deal of misunderstanding was felt among members of the Synodical Conference. In reaching agreement on the Scriptural principles of the doctrine of the Church, it was evident that unity of doctrine actually existed. The Thiensville Theses are contained in appendix 7.

[35]Ibid., p. 144.

[36]Ibid.

at this point because future actions of both Synods were so closely related to it.

The Wisconsin Synod believed that the word church applied with equal propriety to the various groupings into which the Holy Spirit has gathered His believers. This included local congregations, conferences and even conventions. The Missouri Synod, however, viewed the church in the perspective of the congregation. The local congregation was the divinely designated group of the visible church, and it alone had the right and privilege to carry out and perform the functions of the Church. Other gatherings such as conferences and synods were purely of a human arrangement.[37] As these different applications of the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry were exercised, it always resulted in a difference of understanding regarding the situation or issue.

The differences within the Synodical Conference on the matter of scouting came into clearest focus in 1942. In fact, there were basically two positions: the Missouri and Slovak Synods in contrast to the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods. As a result, the Synodical Conference was divided between its consitutent Synods.

The Missouri Synod itself was not greatly troubled by the matter of scouting. "Scoutism is not agitating the Missouri Synod, nor is it a problem in the Slovak Lutheran Church."[38] The conclusion drawn by the Missouri Synod from its study on scouting explained the real reason for objections to scouting.

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[37] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1949, pp. 136-140.

[38] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1952, p. 145.

1. We dare not burden the conscience by making something a sin which is no sin.
2. The matter of scouting on the local level should be left to the judgment of the local congregation.
3. Certain voiced objections to Scouting stem from--
   a. false views concerning Scout principles.
   b. false views or false applications of Scriptural teachings in the area of the natural knowledge of God and the natural law;
   c. an apparent unwillingness to accept documented evidence in support of principles under which Scouting is now conducted in its relation to the churches.[39]

The position of the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods stood in striking contrast to that position expressed by the Missouri and Slovak Synods. The Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods believed scouting presented features of offense to a Christian.

1. In its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion; cf. Rom. 8:8; John 3:6;
2. By means of its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to train character without the motivation of the Gospel; f. Gal. 2:19-20; Gal. 3:10; Eph. 2:8-10; John 15:5;
3. The "Scout oath or promise" is an oath condemned by the Word of God; Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12; Matt. 23:16-22;
4. The twelfth Scout law is basically unionistic, since it obligates every Scout to faithfulness in his religious duties without defining these duties or the God whom he is to serve; cf. 2 John 9:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.[40]

The Synodical Conference in its convention business recognized that there was difference of opinion concerning the application of the Holy Scriptures to the issue of Scoutism. This difference of opinion applied specifically to the use and abuse of the Scouting oath, natural law, natural knowledge of God, civic righteousness and unionism in reference to the twelfth Scout Law. Because an in-depth study of such doctrinal differences would go beyond the limitations of the present

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[39] Ibid., p. 146.

[40] Ibid., p. 147.

committee on Scouting, it was recommended that a joint study be done by the seminary faculties of the Synodical Conference. A report of their findings was to be given at the next convention.[41]

The Synodical Conference received in 1952 the first official reaction from some of its constituent synods on the matter of approving the "Common Confession." The Wisconsin Synod's Committee on Church Union submitted a memorial which accused the Missouri Synod of compromising the Scriptural and historical, doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference.[42] Furthermore, the Wisconsin Synod expected the Synodical Conference to take some definitive action in regard to the Missouri Synod.

> We therefore urge the Synodical Conference in convention assembled to request the Missouri Synod to repeal the "Common Confession" and to return to the clarity and decisiveness in setting forth the Scriptural and historical, doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference for which the Brief Statement sets an excellent precedent.[43]

The prolonged debate on the issue of the "Common Confession" already indicated the doctrinal disagreements among the Synods of the Synodical Conference. Ironically, Part II of the "Common Confession" had not as yet been officially accepted by the Missouri Synod. However, since the Missouri Synod had prepared a tentative Part II of the "Common Confession" to meet objections raised against the "Common Confession," this gave an option for the Synodical Conference. The Synodical Conference postponed any further action until Part II of the "Common

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[41] Ibid., p. 148.

[42] Ibid., p. 157.

[43] Ibid.

Confession" was completed and presented to the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference and to the American Lutheran Church.

Such action of postponement solved the immediate and delicate problem of what course to follow for the Synodical Conference. However, it really did not serve any positive contribution for later doctinal agreement and unity. The waiting period and the delay, as well as the intervening events between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, merely precipitated further confusion and misunderstanding.

In 1954 Rev. W. A. Baepler in the President's Address shared the complete, official action of the Wisconsin Synod in taking the position of Protest against the Missouri Synod. Prior to the sharing of that action with the delegates, he stressed the exercise of patience and forbearance that ought to be shared by members of the Synodical Conference. He concluded that in the past there were really two failures. "It seems to me that one failure on our part in the past was that we made no continuous and consistent attempt to grow together.[44] The second failure was the lack of a Board of Arbitration.[45] Although there were past weaknesses of the procedural structure of the Synodical Conference, the convention had to deal with the present issues which

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[44]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, August 10-13, 1954 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954, p. 15.

[45]Ibid., Rev. Baepler perhaps correctly analyzed the weaknesses of the procedures of the Synodical Conference. As the numberous items which caused disturbances arose, the Intersynodical Relations Committee lacked the proper responsibility and membership to deal more quickly with the offenses. Part II of this paper will present a more in-depth analysis of the situation.

were serious and numerous by this time. A lengthy essay rehearsed for the delegates of the Synodical Conference the inadequacy of the "Common Confession."[46]

Rev. T. F. Nickel of the Missouri Synod presented an essay that supported the "Common Confession."[47] The 1954 Convention of the Synodical Conference not only dealt with discussing the "Common Confession," but the same procedure of positional papers were presented on the Military Chaplaincy and Scouting. No substantial agreement had been reached yet between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods on the Chaplaincy question. The basic issue was presented to the convention.

> We should be ready to center our whole attention on the question on which the controversy hinges, the question: Can the Church in accordance with the divine instructions given it in God's Word commission its ministers to serve as military chaplains under prevailing conditions? The Missouri Synod answers in the positive by the word and deed.[48]

The position of the Wisconsin Synod stated that the chaplaincy program conflicted with its doctrinal stand on the divinity of the pastoral call. In addition, the Chaplain's duties and regulations were

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[46]Ibid., pp, 17-38. The essay was presented by E. H. Wendland of the Wisconsin Synod. Part I of the essay considered the meaning of the word "settlement" as used by the Missouri Synod in the "Common Confession." Part II treated the confusion and lack of clarity in the doctrines of justification, conversion, election, inspiration and the Anti-christ. Part III of the essay pointed out the weak structure of Part II of the "Common Confession." Part IV stated that the "Common Confession" does not really present doctrinal agreement. Rather, the "Common Confession" was open to various interpretations.

[47]Ibid., pp. 39-51. The excellent feature of Rev. Nickel's essay is that it answers the doctrinal objections raised by the Wisconsin Synod. Each doctrine in question was given an explanation.

[48]Ibid., p. 57.

a violation of the principle of the separation of Church and State, and doctrinal indifferentism was very evident in the regulations of the War Department as they pertained to the office of Chaplaincy.[49]

Furthermore, the Wisconsin Synod did not relent on the issue of finding religious features in Scouting.

> That certain changes in Scouting have been made we readily grant. But a major change in its principles must still be made before its objectionable religious features are eliminated. Whatever changes have been effected have only served to correct glaring outward faults and thus to obscure the greater evils within. We point out the change in the position of the sister synod on Scouting, not to gain a pound of flesh, but to reinforce our fervent plea that the Missouri Synod say with us now, as it did in 1938 and 1941, "There are naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement."[50]

Consequently, there were numerous areas already where the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod disagreed. During these grave times the Synodical Conference became the forum for debate and tough decisions. By this time the issues had received in-depth study, and these particular convention essays in 1954 gave ample evidence of research, respective doctrinal positions and the precise points of disagreement. The final essays treated the issue of unionism.

A defense of the Missouri Synod's position was given by Dr. Arnold Grumm.[51] The purpose of his essay was to show that these listed

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[49]Ibid., pp. 57-68. The outline of Wisconsin Synod's Chaplaincy position is contained in appendix 2.

[50]Ibid., p. 76.

[51]Ibid., pp. 87-102. Dr. Grumm presented the controversial practices of joint prayer, communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, cooperation with unorthodox church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals, negotiating with lodges and Boy Scouts of America with the plea that this opportunity to witness, with the same plea participating in unionistic programs and activities of

items were not examples of persistent unionism on the part of the Missouri Synod.[52] However, the basic issue of controversy in the matter of unionism was the difference of opinion on Church fellowship. Since the principle of Church fellowship was such an important issue, a more complete analysis of it will be given in Part II of this paper.

The Wisconsin Synod's position was given by Professor E. E. Kowalke.[53] In this essay the whole concept of unionism was defined in the total context of faith and practice as understood by the Wisconsin Synod. This particular essay also stated the opposing position held by the Wisconsin Synod on the issues that Dr. Grumm had presented to the Synodical Conference. By this time it was quite clear that the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods were not in doctrinal agreement, and therefore the unity and fellowship within the Synodical Conference were also threatened. Professor Kowalke ended his essay by holding forth to a degree the fallacy and ultimate futility of the Missouri Synod's actions.

> We of the Wisconsin Synod have been admonished in the second Fraternal Endeavor not to work toward a separation, and our consciences have been appealed to cease rushing into a separation. We, on the other hand, have pleaded with Missouri not to establish the contemplated union with the A.L.C. on the present basis. Missouri has consistently defended all its actions connected with the union endeavors. If a satisfactory settlement of all old differences has been achieved, if the Missouri Synod is satisfied that there is now

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unionistic federations, negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters. These items were the additional controversial issues between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods.

[52] Ibid., p. 87.

[53] Ibid., pp. 102-111. Professor Kowalke held the opposing view of Dr. Grumm. The Wisconsin Synod believed joint prayer, etc., was unionism. The essay was an excellent presentation of unionism as the Wisconsin Synod understood it.

> complete agreement between it and the American Lutheran Church, and if it is convinced that the American Lutheran Church now is of one mind and one spirit, and speaks the same language and means the same thing as Missouri, then the logical and natural course would be for the synods to declare and practice pulpit and altar fellowship.
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> Such a union would, of course, now link Missouri ultimately with the other synods in the American Lutheran Church, notably with the E.L.C., and the ties that bind the A.L.C. would then also bind Missouri. That action would be hailed by the National Lutheran Council of Churches and by the Christian Century as one of the greatest forward steps in the Lutheran Church since the Prussian Union, but it would kill the Synodical Conference.[54]

Such was the sad state of affairs within the Synodical Conference in 1954.

In addition, the Committee on Intersynodical Relations discussed with the Wisconsin Synod its earlier action of continuing their present relations in the Synodical Conference under protest. But, again no positive results were gained. "These matters were discussed at length without any satisfactory settlement."[55] Disagreements were further noted between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods on the matter of prayer fellowship and joint prayer.[56]

The Convention of the Synodical Conference in 1954 did take some official action in spite of the dilemna it found itself in.

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[54] Ibid., p. 111.

[55] Ibid., p. 190.

[56] Ibid., p. 191. The Wisconsin and Norwegian members of the Intersynodical Relations Committee failed to find any distinction made in Scripture between prayer fellowship and joint prayer. The Missouri Synod Committee members held that there was a distinction in application. Prayer fellowship was defined as an exercise of church fellowship and joint prayer meant prayer outside the bonds of church fellowship. However, no agreement was reached on the distinction held by the Missouri Synod Committee members.

> Resolved, That we request The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod not to use the "Common Confession" as a functioning union document, without, however, passing judgment pro or con on the doctrinal content of the "Common Confession" by this convention; . . .[57]

In the meantime, it was also resolved that the issues which disturbed the unity of the Synodical Conference be thoroughly discussed. These discussions were to be held by the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference at joint meetings of the theological faculties, mixed pastoral conferences, other smaller groups and the sessions of the convention of the Synodical Conference.[58] Although the resolution was adopted by the Synodical Conference, twenty-nine men requested that their negative vote be recorded.[59]

The Synodical Convention in 1956 did not begin with any favorable report of the controversies resolved. Instead, the situation had become more intense. In the President's Address, Rev. Baepler gave his keynote summary of conditions within the Synodical Conference at that time.

> The clouds which hovered over the recent conventions of the Synodical Conference, casting shadows of gloom and pessimism upon the sessions and dimming the happiness and joy of brethren gathered in the name of our Lord, have not disappeared; rather have they grown darker and become more ominous during the past biennium.[60]

The Synodical Convention also officially received the resolution of the Norwegian Synod in which it suspended fellowship with the

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[57] Ibid., p. 192.

[58] Ibid., P. 194.

[59] Ibid. The twenty-nine men were from the Missouri Synod. In casting the negative vote, they were affirming the use of the Common Confession as a union document.

[60] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Convention, December 4-7, 1956 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 6.

Missouri Synod.[61] The suspension of fellowship was based on Romans 16:17 and doctrinal disagreements with the Missouri Synod caused the Norwegian Synod to take such action. Unfortunately, the Wisconsin Synod also at this time was considering suspension of fellowship with the Missouri Synod.[62] Such action, however, was deferred until after the Missouri Synod was to meet in convention. The Wisconsin Synod would then again analyze the situation and developments and take proper action.

A ray of hope was still seen though in that both the Norwegian Synod and the Wisconsin Synod had indicated their readiness and willingness to discuss the issues that were threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference. Although such willingness to discuss the issues was surely a positive effort, yet in reality, that activity had repeatedly taken place already. Unless one of the synods involved in the controversy were to change its position, the future events could be easily predicted.

In order to resolve the grave situation within the Synodical Conference, it was decided that a joint meeting of the Union Committees of member synods be called. The Committee was to develop a program of future discussions based on the specific problems that troubled the Synodical Conference. In addition, as the Union Committee reached agreement in the controversial issues, they were to formulate a common doctrinal statement that would serve the unity of fellowship of the Synodical Conference.[63]

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., p. 7.

[63] Ibid., p. 145.

In 1958 the Synodical Conference received the report of the Joint Union Committee. The Committee realized it had a large and necessary task to perform, and the group carried on an exhaustive study of theology.[64] Although the work of the Committee was incomplete, it did submit a preliminary report of its findings to the Synodical Conference.

> 1. By the grace of God all of us stand unreservedly committed to the Holy Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions.
> 2. By the grace of God we have been preserved in full agreement on the all-important doctrine of Scripture.
> 3. Because of our human limitations and frailties we find ourselves in disagreement as to the scope and the application of some Scripture truths to specific areas of our corporate and individual Christian life.
> 4. All of us sincerely desire in a Scriptural, God-pleasing way to avoid or remove the causes of intersynodical friction and to become again a faithful instrument in the hands of our God for the vigorous promotion of the work of His kingdom.
> 5. All of us must rely wholly on the strength, illumination, and direction of God and His Holy Spirit through His Word, and to that end must address an incessant flow of prayer in Jesus' name to the throne of grace, humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us in due time, fully conscious of the fact that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."
> 6. All of us, in singleness of purpose, are willing to continue these doctrinal discussions under the Word of God, gratefully confident that His Word will not return void of the results He wants.[65]

The Synodical Conference urged the Joint Union Committee to continue its work of reaching full agreement in all matters of doctrine.

The Synodical Conference Convention in 1960 received an update from the member synods as to their respective positions in the

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[64]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Convention, August 5-8, 1958 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), p. 41. The Joint Union Committee divided itself into six groups to study the areas of theology in controversy. These were Scripture, Atonement and Justification, Grace, Conversion and Election, Scouting, Church and Ministry and Eschatology.

[65]Ibid., p. 45.

controversy. The Joint Union Committee in its report finally discovered the real issue of the controversy.

> By far the largest amount of time during the past several meetings was devoted to a determined wrestling with the problems growing out of divergent views on fellowship, recognizing that here lay the single most formidable obstacle to a restoration of proper inter-synodical relations.[66]

Efforts to resolve the obstacle of fellowship were not successful, and the Wisconsin Synod in 1960 declared that an impasse had been reached in respect to the Scriptural principles of church fellowship.[67] The differences in church fellowship were viewed as divisive by the Wisconsin Synod. Consequently, the impasse had been reached and the situation was most critical within the Synodical Conference. Since there was not sufficient time to discuss the doctrinal matters, the Synodical Convention resolved to meet in 1961 and continue the doctrinal discussions.

By 1961 the controversies between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod had become quite serious as it was presented in Chapters one and two of this paper. The issue of fellowship remained the basic source of disagreement, and the union committees of the respective synods could not reach agreement on the basis of their theses on Fellowship.[68] A restudy of the doctrine of the Church was recommended and the findings be given to the respective synods for consideration.

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[66]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-Sixth Convention, August 2-5, 1960 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), p. 35.

[67]Ibid., p. 46.

[68]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of NOrth America, Proceedings of the Recessed Forty-Sixth Convention, May 17-19, 1961 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 17.

In the meantime, the Wisconsin Synod moved ahead with its suspension of fellowship with the Missouri Synod. What happened later in the Synodical Conference is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the Synodical Conference did continue to serve as a forum for doctrinal study and discussion among the synods. But the break in fellowship between the Synods severely crippled the existence of the Synodical Conference. Later on, arrangements were carried out that dissolved the Synodical Conference.

On the basis of the historical and developmental background information provided in Part I of this paper dealing with the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, Part II will present an analysis of those developments as they relate to the termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod.

PART II

ANALYSIS OF THE TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE MISSOURI SYNOD BY THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIONS OF THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

An analysis of the actions of the Wisconsin Synod toward the Missouri Synod presents a complete reversal of what had formerly occurred between the two Synods. Prior to the founding of the Synodical Conference, the Missouri Synod was criticizing and finding fault with the doctrine taught by the Wisconsin Synod.[1] Within the Synodical Conference later on, however, the Wisconsin Synod became most disturbed about some of the doctrine taught by the Missouri Synod. In addition, the Wisconsin Synod did not satisfactorily accept the Missouri Synod's fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. Although the controversy between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod lasted about two decades, the basic issue was and always remained doctrinal in essence.

The Wisconsin Synod firmly held to a unity concept of church fellowship. This meant precisely that there must be doctrinal agreement in all areas, and furthermore, church practice must also be in total harmony with the doctrine professed by a church body. This position of the Wisconsin Synod was further delineated as a result of the increasing disagreements with the Missouri Synod. However, the basic position was held by the Wisconsin Synod prior to 1938. In 1935

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[1] John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), p. 83.

already the Wisconsin Synod let it be known that in their understanding church practice was also a part of church fellowship and closely related to doctrine.

> While some of these questions are often relegated to the realm of church practice, we hold that it is dangerous thus to segregate practice from doctrine.[2]

The Wisconsin Synod followed a type of procedure for fellowship negotiations which appeared inconsistent, and therefore, many were confused by the position held in the Wisconsin Synod. On the one hand, the Wisconsin Synod had expressed a willingness to meet and discuss areas of disagreement in order to find the common ground of truth in the Word of God.[3] On the other hand, there was the repeated refusal of the Wisconsin Synod to discuss closer relations until the particular church body had removed the obstacles or false doctrine which caused offense and division. In a sense, the Wisconsin Synod exhibited the spirit of first having their standards met or position accepted, then they would negotiate and work for agreement.

Such an approach and procedure in negotiating church fellowship was almost foreign to American Christianity.

> The conservatives of the Missouri Synod and of the Wisconsin Synod have received a new name - immigrants. In the Christian Century for November 4, 1942, it is said that the conservatives of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods "represent more recent waves of immigrants, and at the present rate of progress," it is said, "it will take another generation or two before they become sufficiently indigenous to American culture for them to trust themselves in the warmth of fellowship which American Christianity affords." This

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[2]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Convention, August 7-13, 1935 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1935), p. 108.

[3]Ibid., p. 39.

> is indeed a new explanation of our conservatism. Before, the cause was said to be liver trouble and too low salaries, and now it is said that the cause is that we have so recently immigrated.[4]

The Wisconsin Synod supported the total truth and purity of God's Word, and to the present day it has not yielded in its stance on fellowship. That particular Synod has been viewed as being narrow-minded, strict confessionalists, literalists and fundamentalists, yet, it has remained faithful to the Word of God. The preservation of the purity of doctrine was a hallmark effort exercised by the Wisconsin Synod within the Synodical Conference.

When the Missouri Synod in 1938 had approved a doctrinal agreement with the American Lutheran Church, that action was the precipitating problem which initiated the disagreement between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. Because of the Wisconsin Synod's tremendous zeal and concern for purity of doctrine, it was well aware of the doctrinal situation in the American Lutheran Church. Historically, there had been some divergent views expressed on some Biblical doctrines within the American Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod concluded that such doctrinal divergence was still present in the American Lutheran Church. In fact, the Wisconsin Synod felt that further negotiations would involve a denial of the truth.[5]

The suspicions of the Wisconsin Synod were further supported by the fact of the nature of the agreement between the Missouri Synod

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[4]C. M. Gullerud, "Take Heed, Ye Immigrants!," The Confessional Lutheran 4 No. 2 (February 1943):22.

[5]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Twenty-Fifth Convention, August 2-9, 1939 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1939), p. 61.

and the American Lutheran Church. The agreement involved both the Missouri Synod's Brief Statement and the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church. This basis of fellowship dependent upon two documents was not acceptable to the Wisconsin Synod.[6] Since it was evident to the Wisconsin Synod that there was no real doctrinal basis for church fellowship, all negotiations and doctrinal discussions conducted by the Missouri Synod should come to a halt.

The Missouri Synod did not accept the position of the Wisconsin Synod. Already several developments were present that served to heighten the crisis later on between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. The Wisconsin Synod had immediately concluded that the Missouri Synod was swerving from the purity and truth of God's Word even in its initial fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod, also guided by suspicions of false doctrine within the American Lutheran Church, immediately requested a single document of agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod further specified that it was imperative that the contested doctrines be arranged in a thetical and antithetical outline and that the doctrinal statement be set forth in clear and unequivocal terms that would not require lengthy, additional explanations. Such a request by the Wisconsin Synod exhibited a rather hasty and simplistic view of what might be involved in fellowship negotiations at that time. By such action the Wisconsin Synod was certainly

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[6] Ibid., p. 60.

making its own position secure, but unfortunately, it did not attempt to understand in an evangelical manner the environment and situation in which the Missouri Synod found itself.

The course of action followed by the Wisconsin Synod followed the policy of non-negotiation initiated in 1935 which stated that the basis for church fellowship was agreement in doctrine and practice. When there is a divergence of doctrinal opinion only the "thorough going unionist" would declare fellowship.[7] From the perspective of the Wisconsin Synod this was a clear and consistent principle supported by God's Word. Through the Wisconsin Synod's Committee on Union matters many Bible passages were cited which spoke of "rejecting," "marking," and "avoiding," as proof that negotiations and verbal testimony should cease under certain conditions. Such negotiations of fellowship should terminate most obviously when there was no doctrinal unity in all matters of faith as taught solely by the Word of God.

The actions of the Missouri Synod in the years following 1938 also caused some confusion within the Wisconsin Synod. In reality, the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church had not established church fellowship. The doctrinal agreement that had been reached in the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod and the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church was to serve only as a doctrinal basis upon which to pursue further negotiations with the American Lutheran Church.[8]

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[7]Wisconsin Synod, Proceedings, 1935, p. 23.

[8]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention, June 15-24, 1938 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 231. "2. That Synod declare that the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran

The ultimate goal was church fellowship naturally between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

From the viewpoint of the Wisconsin Synod that particular initial doctrinal agreement was totally inadequate. The Missouri Synod as well as the entire Synodical Conference were made well aware of the fact that there was no doctrinal unity.[9] It was confusing to the Wisconsin Synod for the Missouri Synod to have spoken of doctrinal unity when, in fact, no such doctrinal unity existed. The Wisconsin Synod, however, did not hold the monopoly on such confusion on the doctrinal unity that existed between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. Some members within the Missouri Synod, too, had great difficulty in understanding just exactly what was the Missouri Synod's position on doctrinal unity with the American Lutheran Church.[10]

Because of that confusion about the exact nature of doctrinal unity between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, and

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Church and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod's actions thereupon, be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church."

[9]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Porceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention, August 1-6, 1940 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1940), pp. 83-87. The Missouri Synod did not hesitate to admit that there were disagreements both in doctrine and in practice between itself and the American Lutheran Church. However, favorable progress had been made to reach agreement thus far. Differences still existed as to the nature of fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines as well as areas of variance in church practice. Future efforts would endeavor to reach full agreement even in those areas.

[10]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Convention, June 18-27, 1941 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), pp. 288-292.

because of objections raised by the Wisconsin Synod and sister synods in the Synodical Conference regarding Missouri Synod's actions, the Wisconsin Synod firmly believed fellowship negotiations should be suspended for the present time. Unless full doctrinal agreement was achieved between the two Lutheran bodies, the Missouri Synod would be guilty of violating the Scriptural principles of God's Word as well as disrupting the fellowship within the Synodical Conference. The Wisconsin Synod then firmly maintained that sensitive and most cautious stance in regard to the Missouri Synod in its negotiations for church fellowship.

Later on as the critical situation of disagreement between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod heightened, the issue of unionism was generally brought into the discussions. Because unionism became such a major issue of disagreement between the two Synods, within the Synodical Conference, it is worthy of consideration and analysis at this point to see how it contributed to the termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod. A sequel analysis, that of the doctrine of Church fellowship as understood by the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, will be presented in Chapter V.

If the Wisconsin Synod and Missouri Synod would have had the same understanding and position on just exactly what constituted unionism, many of their practical disagreements could have been resolved earlier. By the time the two Synods realized their distinct differences regarding unionism, it surely was not too late to resolve the disagreements, but rather, the issues had become more complex and involved because of other developments within each respective Synod itself.

The Wisconsin Synod did not totally accept the Missouri Synod's statement on unionism in the Brief Statement.[11] The emphasis brought out by the Wisconsin Synod is that the 28th Article of the Brief Statement did not present a definition of unionism. However, the "Common Confession" expanded somewhat farther towards a definition of unionism.

> 'We cannot condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural co-operation with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word.' Here the term, 'unscriptural co-operation' is added as being included under church fellowship.[12]

Although the "Common Confession" had presented a more specific aspect of a definition for unionism, the Document as a whole had not received approval from the Wisconsin Synod.[13] Instead the "Common

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[11]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, August 10-13, 1954 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 102-103. "The 28th Article of the Brief Statement contains this sentence; 'We repudiate unionism, that is church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the church, Rom. 16:17, 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21.' This passage has been cited as an all-inclusive definition of unionism, as though no unionism were involved unless actual church fellowship were being practiced. The 28th Article of the Brief Statement is, however, not attempting a definition of unionism. The Article is headed 'On Church Fellowship' and says that church fellowship with heterodox bodies is unionism, and 'we repudiate unionism.' The article merely rejects church fellowship with adherents of false doctrine as unionism."

[12]Ibid., p. 103.

[13]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-First Convention, August 8-15, 1951 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), pp. 128-135. A special committee had evaluated the "Common Confession" for the convention delegates in 1951. As a result of that evaluation, almost every major article and section were criticized as being inadequate or misleading. The committee agreed that the section on "Church Fellowship" could be correctly understood in part. Yet, the committee noticed, there was nothing said of prayer fellowship in the definition. The term "unscriptural co-operation" was left undefined. The committee

Confession" was inadequate because it failed to delineate the Biblical doctrines in clear and concise wording that removed or prevented false and various interpretations.

The Wisconsin Synod found agreement and was comfortable with a definition of unionism given in the Concordia Cyclopedia.

> After citing eleven passages from Scriptures, including Romans 16:17; Matt. 7:15; I John 4:1, the article says: 'In the light of these tests all joint ecclesiastical efforts for religious work (missionary, educational, etc.) and particularly joint worship and mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who confess the truth and those who deny any part of it, is sinful unionism.' The article in the Cyclopedia quotes Luther, who said: 'It will not serve to make any compromise for the sake of union. A compromise is in itself untruthful because its purpose is to unite things which are mutually opposed.' The article also adds this quotation: 'The more careless we are in stating the differences and the more anxious to hide the sores, the farther removed we are from that unity of the Spirit which is the inner-most essence of all true unity.[14]

The Wisconsin Synod also believed that the definition as presented in the Cyclopedia had been, and no doubt still was, the accepted understanding in the Synodical Conference of what constitutes unionism.[15] Such a definition of unionism was quite clear, and limited in a strict sense, fellowship with any church body that did not share doctrinal consensus on the basis of God's Word.

In addition, the Wisconsin Synod practiced a broader application of the definition of unionism.

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rejected the phrase stating that Christians must be alert to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom God has made one with us in faith. Faith is invisible, and thus, fellowship can only be based upon confession and practice.

[14]Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, p. 103.

[15]Ibid.

> Unionism is more than the actual practice of church fellowship. It includes prayer fellowship, condoning of error, willingness to compromise, a desire to hide differences for the sake of outward union or peace; unionism includes all efforts to arrive at agreement at the expense of truth; it includes co-operation with errorists and evasion of confession of the truth for the sake of a gain in efficiency or an increase in numbers or for any other reason.[16]

Furthermore, the Wisconsin Synod spoke not only of the practice of unionism, but the Synod also referred to a spirit of unionism. The spirit of unionism was as unscriptural and as unacceptable as the practice of unionism. Attempts to bring about a union in spite of disagreement are always based on love, tolerance and zeal for the Lord. However, after such a union has been achieved then there is only talk of tolerance for those who are indifferent and liberal. Attempts at such unions end in bitterness and greater division when the union is not one of real agreement.[17]

Important also to a proper understanding and analysis of the Wisconsin Synod's position on unionism was the basis of Scriptural proof used in the support of the Synod's stand against unionism. A more complete analysis of Romans 16:17-18 will be presented in Chapter V as it was applied respectively by the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. However, since the Wisconsin Synod used Romans 16:17-18 as Scriptural proof in support of its termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod, it is significant to understand the exegesis and application of Romans 16:17-18 as accepted and endorsed by the Wisconsin Synod. Although there were many passages cited to support the principle advocated by the Wisconsin Synod, the foremost passage was Romans 16:17-18.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., pp. 103-104.

> We are agreed that the position against unionism as expressed, for example, in the Concordia Cyclopedia is firmly based on Scripture. There may be some disagreement among us as to the applicability of certain passages to current cases. It may be argued that when Paul told the Romans to avoid those who were causing divisions, he was speaking of people who were not Christians at all and that the passage therefore does not apply to union movements among people bearing the Lutheran label. The exact identity of these causes of divisions is of little importance to us. If it had been important to identify them, Paul would have done so, as he did to the Corinthians and to the Galations. The heart of his admonition lies in the word 'avoid.' However much the divisions, the offenses, and the causes of them, may have changed in appearance, and in detail since Paul's day, the prinicple that he voices remains unchanged. Avoid them![18]

This particular application of Romans 16:17-18 was at variance with the Missouri Synod's application of those same passages. This difference will be expanded on in Chapter V. However, it is quite obvious that the Wisconsin Synod was inflexible in its position on the basis of Romans 16:17-18. As the Wisconsin Synod viewed the doctrinal disagreements between itself and the Missouri Synod, the Scriptural principle stated in Romans 16:17-18 left little doubt as to the course of action to be taken by the Wisconsin Synod. Once again they felt their position was secure and they were Biblically sound in their actions.

In additional support for the position of the Wisconsin Synod against unionism, reference was also made to the position of the Synodical Conference. "The Synodical Conference has, however, always held that union must be based on doctrinal unity.[19] President Behnken of the Synodical Conference also stated that one cannot get away from the fact that the Word of God throughout emphasizes doctrinal unity. Furthermore, such agreement and unity must be reached not only by official

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[18] Ibid., p. 105.

[19] Ibid.

committees, but also between members of congregations.[20] This was a sound Scriptural principle and good Lutheranism according to the Wisconsin Synod.

It was because of this issue that the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod were continually involved in disagreements. This was evident initially in church practice and later on also in doctrine. In view of the presentations of the background developments of the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod in Chapters I and II, and when the Wisconsin Synod's definition of unionism is analyzed in the light of that developmental, background material, it becomes evident that the most basic and controversial issue finally surfaced officially in 1953. It is most unfortunate that the real issue could not have been dealt with earlier as a priority by itself. In 1953 the Wisconsin Synod in its resolutions charged that the Missouri Synod had acted contrary to the sound principles of unity as held by the Wisconsin Synod and the Synodical Conference.

> Those Resolutions name as unionistic practices "the Common Confession," joint prayer, Scouting, chaplaincy, Communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, co-operation with unorthodox church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals; negotiating with lodges and Boy Scouts of America with the plea that this gives opportunity to bear witness; under the same plea taking part in unionistic religious programs and in the activities of unionistic church federations; negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters of doctrine and which contends for an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the Word of God. These practices are characterized as being unionistic, and therefore contrary to Scripture, and if persisted in, as consitituting a disruption of the unity that so far has held the Synodical Conference together.[21]

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

These various areas of church practice had been subjects of disagreement for some years already between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. The matter of the Chaplaincy program was brought up for discussion with the Missouri Synod in 1941. Already at that time the Wisconsin Synod held that the Chaplaincy program encourages unionism.[22] As the years passed more and more issues were added to the list of disagreements between the two Synods. The majority of those disagreements involved unionism on the part of the Missouri Synod. During that time representatives of both Synods discussed these issues, and these areas of disagreement were also brought up for discussion and consideration at the conventions of the respective two Synods as well as at the conventions of the Synodical Conference itself.

However, as these controversial issues were discussed and studied, no unity or agreement was ever achieved that satisfied the Wisconsin Synod. The presentation of the Wisconsin Synod's definition of unionism and an analysis of its viewpoint regarding the activities of the Missouri Synod reveal that the Wisconsin Synod did not share an understanding of unionism that was in harmony with the Missouri Synod's position on unionism at all. Furthermore, in addition to the analysis of the Wisconsin Synod's position against unionism, it is also significant to note the Wisconsin Synod's position on cooperation with other church bodies. "Perfect agreement in all matters of doctrine and

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[22]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Convention, August 6-13, 1941 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1941), p. 44.

practice are also required by the Wisconsin Synod as a prerequisite for co-operation with other Christian groups."[23]

The Wisconsin Synod did allow that certain forms of cooperation could be external and not be termed unionistic. Such an example might have been a clothing drive. However, even such activities of cooperation were not encouraged since there always existed the danger that such acts of external cooperation would ultimately lead to actual co-operation in the work of the church.

The Wisconsin Synod practiced a very strict confessionalism and maintained the stand that unless there was doctrinal agreement in all matters between two Christian church bodies, it was unionistic to even cooperate with such a body in externals. This basic principle was the criterion by which the Wisconsin Synod viewed and judged the actions of the Missouri Synod. The Wisconsin Synod was convinced of the correctness of its position by the Word of God, and it viewed any deviation from that position as a violation of the Scriptural principle of fellowship. Together with that judgment of the Wisconsin Synod there usually followed a cautious warning or subtle threat that if such unionistic actions persisted, the unity of fellowship within the Synodical Conference would be endangered.

An analysis of unionism at this point would be incomplete if the position of the Missouri Synod were not presented. In Chapter V a more complete analysis of church fellowship will be presented as

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[23]Carl Louis Bornmann, "The Concepts of Unity, Fellowship, and Cooperation Among Various Lutheran Bodies in America" (Master of Sacred Theology dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1959), p. 198.

accepted and practiced by the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. Since the position held by the Missouri Synod on unionism was so closely related to a proper understanding of its view on church fellowship, a brief reference is made to church fellowship at this point.

The Missouri Synod disagreed strongly with the unionistic accusations made against it officially in 1953 by the Wisconsin Synod. The Missouri Synod acknowledged that surely its members lacked perfection in practice, and where weakness had occurred, those would have to be dealt with and corrected. Surely the Wisconsin Synod had experienced similar situations of weaknesses and would better understand the situation of the Missouri Synod. But, the real source of disagreement voiced by the Missouri Synod was the specific phrasing of the Wisconsin Synod's accusation of unionism against the Missouri Synod. "The issue is, as stated by our Wisconsin brethren, 'persistent adherence to unionistic practices'."[24] The Missouri Synod could not honestly accept that accusation to be a valid and honest judgment in view of its own presuppositions on unionism and church fellowship which were based also on the Word of God.

The position of the Missouri Synod was argued from the basis initially of the Brief Statement. The matter and question of religious unionism were defined and applied.

> The Brief Statement answers the question in this manner (par. 28); "We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing division in the church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21." We note that unionism is defined as "Church fellowship with adherents of false doctrine."[25]

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[24] Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, p. 88.

[25] Ibid.

The oneness in Christ was indeed the basis for the church fellowship. "This manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in word and deed, in doctrine and practice, we call church fellowship."[26] Words, actions, doctrines and practices which disturb the peace and unity are contrary to the Word of God. As a result, Christians are not to be simply idle spectators when the peace is disturbed, but they are to actively engage in maintaining the bond of peace. Conversely, the Missouri Synod also recognized limits on extending church fellowship.

> Concerning the man who walks disorderly and thus obstinately refuses to listen to God's Word or becomes a stubborn adherent of false doctrine, the Apostle declares that Christians are to withdraw from such an one (2 Thes. 3:6; I Tim. 6:5). Not to withdraw from such as thus have disturbed the peace of the church, but to continue religious fellowship with them and behave as though the peace had not been disturbed at all, to cry "'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11), we call unionism. What then, is unionism? It is church fellowship without doctrinal unity.[27]

It is significant to note that in a sense the wording of the definition of unionism appears to be identical between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod at this point. However, the important thing to remember is the vantage point one takes with the definition of unionism and thereby makes the resultant application.

The Wisconsin Synod always took the initial vantage point and stated that unless there was prior doctrinal unity in all matters, any cooperation or subsequent agreement would be unionistic in character between two church bodies. Meanwhile, the Missouri Synod took a latter position. Their position maintained that after two church bodies had

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 89.

discussed their doctrinal disagreements and the Christians remained stubborn adherents of false doctrine, then it would be unionism to continue religious fellowship with them. This is a most important analysis to remember in reference to the sin of unionism as understood by the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod.

Furthermore, the Missouri Synod wanted to make it clear that in its fellowship activities it was acting with restraint and according to the discipline which fellowship in the Synodical Conference required of it.

> We will not immediately enter into church fellowship with a person or group willing to submit to Christ and His Word in all things, before we have made certain that among them and us all teaching will be observed as Christ has commanded and that there is a complete willingness to observe in practice those things that are asked of us by our Lord (Matt. 28:20). However, we will not apply the "avoid" and "withdraw" as though we were dealing with men who want to persist in error and will not let God's Word be the judge in all things.[28]

That exactly was the issue to which the Wisconsin Synod had been continually objecting. If there was any doctrinal disagreement with a church body, it was imperative that the "avoid" and "withdraw" of Holy Scripture be applied and that all activities with such an erring body cease.

The Missouri Synod did indicate the positive fact that it would be serious in all of its endeavors to oppose unionism wherever it showed itself. But, the significant thing to remember is that the Missouri Synod would endeavor to oppose unionism as the Missouri Synod defined the term, and not as the Wisconsin Synod viewed unionism. Since the

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[28]Ibid., pp. 89-90.

Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod were not in agreement on the definition and cause of unionism, many of the issues such as the chaplaincy, scouting, joint prayer and prayer fellowship were only surfacing symptoms of a deeper disagreement and issue. For that reason it was virtually impossible for the two Synods to reach agreement in those areas of church practice even though both Synods had made valiant attempts to reach agreements on those matters of controversy.

The Missouri Synod also revealed that it would continue in its understanding of unionism and not become too restrictive or legalistic in its dealings with other church bodies,

> On the other hand, let us avoid all legalism and lovelessness in our application of the judgment placed upon a brother that he is a unionist. Are we sure of all the circumstances? Are we certain that the brother has not been a good witness for Christ instead of a unionist? Are we basing our judgment on newspaper reports or on interpretations of what somebody said the brother did or didn't do . . . Are we thinking only of the Law and hurrying to the "avoid them" passages before we have exhausted every effort according to the Gospel admonition in Gal, 6:1: "Ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness"?[29]

The subtle directives against the position of the Wisconsin Synod are quite obvious as to what procedures were to be followed with an erring brother. The precise difference was even more evident in these concluding remarks.

> Anything that adds to this Word or subtracts from it tends to destroy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, sets up a new master who is not Christ, brings in error that cannot set men free. Whenever this occurs those that are spiritual will restore the erring one in the spirit of meekness. To do less is to become a loveless legalist and separatist. Only when he refuses to accept the Word of God for correction and becomes a stubborn adherent of false doctrine, then must we withdraw from church fellowship with such an erring one. Otherwise we become guilty of unionism, of

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[29] Ibid., p. 90.

> disobedience to God's Word, of causing divisions in the church, of involving ourselves and others in the constant danger of losing the Word of God.[30]

Furthermore, the Missouri Synod defended its position and activity of cooperation in externals with other church bodies. That situation, too, was often misunderstood by the Wisconsin Synod.

> "Co-operation in Externals." This is a phrase used in our circles to designate work done jointly by Lutheran church bodies or groups from such church bodies not in church fellowship with each other. This is work which does not involve the joint use of the Gospel and the Sacraments and does not compromise the confessional position of our own Synod. It involves us in no practice of church fellowship. Whether the term "externals" is the best one to use is debatable, but until a better, clearer term is offered, we will continue to use it. "Externals" must never be understood as though the work involved had nothing to do with the faith and love of the child of God, as though the work were not a part of the work a child of God does for the King.[31]

In order to make the analysis of the Wisconsin Synod's actions and position complete, it is also necessary to present the procedure followed in resolving differences when they did exist. In this particular area the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod also had marked differences as to the procedure to be followed. "The Missouri Synod is always willing to negotiate with other church bodies when such negotiations include questions of doctrine and practice. The Wisconsin Synod strongly disagrees."[32]

Rather, the Wisconsin Synod was willing to negotiate and discuss questions with heterodox church bodies only under certain conditions. These conditions, however, varied from time to time. At times

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 95

[32] Bornmann, "The Concepts of Unity, Fellowship, and Cooperation," p. 200.

the Wisconsin Synod felt negotiations could take place only after the heterodox body had removed the variations which were causing the offense either in doctrine or practice. At other times there had to be the mutual acknowledgment of the verbally inspired Holy Scriptures as the norm of authority in all matters of faith, doctrine and practice.[33]

It was apparent from the procedures of the Wisconsin Synod that the Synod was consistent in practice with its definition and understanding of unionism. Unless total doctrinal unity existed, the Wisconsin Synod sincerely believed that there should be no fellowship or cooperation between church bodies. With this stance and procedure of church practice the Missouri Synod could not agree. Instead, the objective held by the Missouri Synod was to try and correct the erring brother with meekness. If the erring brother persisted in adhering to false doctrine and error, then it would be unionistic to continue church fellowship. As a result, the foundation of the difference between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod involved not only the respective understandings and applications of unionism, but the doctrine of Church Fellowship was also most significantly related to their differences. An analysis of the doctrine of Church Fellowship will be presented in Chapter V as it was understood and practiced by the two Synods.

It was undoubtedly true that additional differences were also causes for the final termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod. Since human sinful weaknesses were always present, there was the temptation to make major issues out of minor

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[33] Ibid.

disagreements. The Wisconsin Synod focused on particular issues and sometimes the practical issues were elevated to major status. Present also were delays in responding to and communicating with each other, and misunderstandings were evident in the use of terms as well as reported events and incidents that caused offense.

The Wisconsin Synod relentlessly worked to maintain the status quo of strict confessionalism and the security of church practices as it accepted the truth of God's Word. In addition, the Wisconsin Synod believed it was resisting the broad, sweeping, powerful trend toward unification which was so characteristic of the day.[34] At times the Wisconsin Synod perhaps failed to acknowledge and understand the situation of the Missouri Synod. When the Wisconsin Synod expected compliance at times with some of its rather simplistic and legalistic conditions, even though the Missouri Synod would have preferred to accommodate its sister Synod, yet the predicament in which the Missouri Synod found itself prevented it from doing so. This situation was compounded by the fellowship negotiations of the American Lutheran Church with other Lutheran bodies as well as by the increasing differences in doctrine and church practice within the Missouri Synod itself.

Unfortunately, time was running out for the Wisconsin Synod. It had taken a stand against the Missouri Synod that labeled some specific differences in doctrine and practice to be divisive of church fellowship between the two Synods. If some definite action was not taken in the near future, the statements and position of the Wisconsin

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[34]Edmund C. Reim, Where Do We Stand?, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1950), p. 16.

Synod would be idle and meaningless words and empty statements of caution and warning. Furthermore, although the Wisconsin Synod had attempted to take a middle course of action between a too hasty and drastic action, and that course of doing nothing at all, the time had come to pursue a different direction. The Wisconsin Synod was being pressured by its own members to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod. It was already losing some of its pastors and congregations who accused the Wisconsin Synod of being unionistic in its toleration of fellowship with the Missouri Synod.[35]

It was to the credit of the Wisconsin Synod that throughout the years of controversy and disagreement with the Missouri Synod, it remained faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. The Wisconsin Synod supported its position with the Word of God and defended it with the same Sacred Scriptures. The Wisconsin Synod expected no less from fellow Lutherans nor from its sister synods in the Synodical Conference.

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[35]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention, August 5-12, 1959 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing HOuse, 1959), pp. 177-179. The Wisconsin Synod received the report of the Protest Committee in 1959. It is significant to note the emphasis on the volume of protests that were directed to the Wisconsin Synod by its own members. During this time the Wisconsin Synod also realized heavy losses of its own membership as more conservative bodies such as the Church of the Lutheran Confessions were founded.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIONS OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD

This chapter will present an analysis of the developmental background material from the viewpoint of the Missouri Synod. As the events and controversies finally led up to the termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod in 1961, there were significant areas of disagreement which the Missouri Synod also recognized in its activities and fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. One of these significant issues of disagreement was on the doctrine of Church Fellowship. Another issue of disagreement was the interpretation and application of Romans 16:17-18 as it applied to other Lutheran church bodies. This analysis will present the different positions taken by the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod on these issues. In addition, the significance of the position of the Missouri Synod will be highlighted as the Missouri Synod pursued a course it also thought to be correct and Scripturally sound.

With the St. Louis Resolution of 1938 the Missouri Synod established a principle of reaching doctrinal agreement with another Lutheran body without having unity in all areas of doctrine and practice. The same Resolution also presented a difference of agreement as it involved a fundamental doctrine and a non-fundamental

doctrine.[1] The action taken by the Missouri Synod, of course, did not pass unnoticed. The Wisconsin Synod objected to the action of the Missouri Synod. The Wisconsin Synod believed that on the basis of the St. Louis Resolution doctrinal agreement was inadequate and further negotiations by the Missouri Synod were to be suspended.[2] Within the Missouri Synod there were also objections raised. In fact, confessional objections against the action of the Missouri Synod in 1938 precipitated the beginning of the periodical, The Confessional Lutheran. These objections raised within the Missouri Synod presented the differences that existed doctrinally between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

> In 1938 a false doctrine of the Church knocked at the door of the Missouri Synod in the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church. The St. Louis Interim resolutions of 1938 recognized the fact that a difference exists between Missouri and the ALC with respect to the dictrine of the Church. But these untenable resolutions mistakenly labeled this difference, like others, a difference which "need not be divisive of church-fellowship" when certain restrictions of the St. Louis Interim are heeded. These resolutions also made it a special point to stipulate concerning the question at issue "that in regard to the propriety of speaking of 'the visible side of the Church' we ask our Committee on Lutheran Union to work to this end that uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching be attained."[3]

As a result of the actions of the Missouri Synod with the American Lutheran Church in 1938, objections were raised both by the

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[1]The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Convention, June 15-24, 1938 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 231-232.

[2]The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, Proceedings of The Twenty-Fifth Convention, August 2-9, 1939 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1939), pp. 61-62.

[3]Paul H. Burgdorf, "The 'Lutheran Witness' And The Doctrine Of The Church," The Confessional Lutheran 5 No. 3 and 4 (March and April 1944):33.

Wisconsin Synod and by some members of the Missouri Synod itself. The objections were doctrinal in nature, but they also included the practice of church fellowship.

In 1945 the Statement of forty-four pastors re-stated the fellowship principle which was followed by the Missouri Synod in 1938.

> We affirm our conviction that in keeping with the historic Lutheran tradition and in harmony with the Synodical resolution adopted in 1938 regarding Church fellowship, such fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church.[4]

In 1950 the convention of the Missouri Synod was faced with numerous memorials requesting Synod to no longer endorse the Statement. However, the convention resolved to permit the study of issues raised by the Statement. Objections to the Statement were referred to proper channels.[5] Such action was significant at this time regarding the practice of church fellowship as presented in the Statement.

In 1947 the Missouri Synod had officially withdrawn the 1938 St. Louis Resolution because of the unfavorable activities of the American Lutheran Church.[6] Consequently in 1950, although the resolutions of 1938 were no longer in effect, the points and principles presented in them were not condemned by the Missouri Synod. By tolerating at

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[4] Speaking the Truth in Love: Essays Related to A Statement, Chicago, 1945 (Chicago: The Willow Press, n.d.), p. 9.

[5] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-First Convention, June 21-30, 1950 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 658.

[6] The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Proceedings of the Fortieth Convention, July 20-29, 1947 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 510-511.

that time the Statement and its signers, the Missouri Synod continued to actually tolerate the principles of church fellowship of 1938 within the Synod itself.

In 1954 after the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod had realized that their differences on the issue of unionism could not be so easily and quickly resolved, both Synods finally accepted the fact that they would have to study the doctrine of Church Fellowship. This particular Doctrine was the foundation and cornerstone from which the other issues were to be understood.

> Pulpit and altar fellowship is a very important aspect or facet of this fellowshp but cannot be simply equated with it. Pulpit and altar fellowship, and the related problems of prayer fellowship and unionism, can be properly understood and evaluated only within the larger framework of Christian fellowship generally.[7]

It was a tremendous task to thoroughly study and consider the doctrine of Church Fellowship. The objective of the Study was to endeavor to reach understanding and agreement. In reality, however, when the study was finally completed, it revealed the disagreements between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. For a beginning of this in-depth fellowship study, each constituent Synod of the Synodical Conference was to present its position on church fellowship. These

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[7]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Four Statements on Fellowship (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, November 1960), p. 16. The Joint Committee, composed of the standing doctrinal committees of the four member synods of the Synodical Conference, requested the Presidents of the four constituent synods of the Synodical Conference to make copies of the statements on fellowship. Each constituent synod of the Synodical Conference had prepared a statement on fellowship. This was the responsibility of the doctrinal committees of the four synods. The Four Statements on Fellowship is the composite of all fellowship statements of the four synods in the Synodical Conference.

statements were compiled and published in Four Statements on Fellowship in 1960.

The Missouri Synod began its task by a prayerful restudy of the Scriptures in order to gain as complete a picture as possible of the Biblical teaching concerning fellowship.[8] Part I did not reveal any significant differences with the Wisconsin Synod. This was true because Part I presented basically the selected passages on fellowship. In Part II, however, the Missouri Synod stated its interpretative principles regarding fellowship as derived from the Word of God.

> In making decisions concerning the exercise of fellowship the confessional church is constantly confronted by serious problems. The following section addresses itself to one of the most vexing of these problems, to the question, namely: When must the church in obedience to her Lord refuse to practice fellowship?[9]

The Missouri Synod stated that caution should be exercised in using the passages of Holy Scriptures lest they be used in a manner not intended by God. If the passages were misused, the church would be harmed rather than strengthened.[10] In distinguishing between

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[8] Ibid., pp. 17-38. The contents of the various Bible passages were arranged under the outline headings: God created the fellowship; God created man for fellowship; Man destroys the fellowship; God has restored the fellowship in Christ; God in creating faith bestows the blessings of fellowship; Fellowship with God in Christ; Fellowship with all believers in Christ; In bestowing this fellowship God claims for it the whole life of men; In the exercising of this fellowship; In extending this fellowship; and In guarding this fellowship. Part I was a systematic arrangement of selected fellowship under each outline heading.

[9] Ibid., p. 39.

[10] Ibid., p. 40. The Missouri Synod clearly stated that some of the passages were written against known individuals and well-defined situations, while others were more general in application.

well-defined passages and general passages of the Sacred Scriptures, the Missouri Synod was already indicating a varying principle in understanding and defining church fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. In addition, the Missouri Synod favored a more flexible application of the passages in order not to restrict or mis-apply their intent.

> While the church today must seek to live, as it must seek to live in every age, in obedience to the apostolic Word, it cannot simply revive or reproduce the conditions of apostolic times. The apostolic indicatives and imperatives concerning the church cannot be automatically transferred to present-day confessional-organizational groupings. Rather, their intent must be faithfully understood and brought to bear on the altered and complex contemporary situation.[11]

The Missouri Synod felt that the church today must ask itself how the passages which command Christians to separate themselves from and avoid false teachers were to be applied to the present situation. The passages were not to be applied in a legalistic manner. "They must not, however, be applied mechanically to fellow Christians in a confessional-organizational fellowship other than one's own."[12] The significant emphasis made by the Missouri Synod was that the selected passages relating to fellowship could not be applied to fellow Christians other than one's own confessional fellowship.

> It would be incongruous if a Christian who has the misfortune of being in a body afflicted with some doctrinal error would now have to be branded a wolf in sheep's clothing or a belly servant, when in fact he is a beloved child of God.[13]

In applying the Scriptural passages on fellowship, the Missouri Synod followed an evangelical and cautious approach. Such a procedure

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[11] Ibid., p. 41.

[12] Ibid., p. 42.

[13] Ibid.

attempted to provide the fullest domain of Scriptural intent and application of the Word of God.

> Recognizing the fact, therefore, that the passages which command separation were written for situations which cannot simply be identified with those which we face today, we must beware of applying them mechanically and indiscriminately, and seek rather to abstract from them the timeless principles underlying them, and then operate in the area of the exercise of Christian fellowship according to the basic principles.[14]

On the basis of such presuppositions regarding the use and application of the Scriptural passages on fellowship, the Missouri Synod wanted to arrive at a viewpoint from which a correct and realistic view of confessional-organizational forms of fellowship would be possible. The significant emphasis in such an objective was that the Missouri Synod approached the matter of church fellowship with a functional and realistic viewpoint. This approach was at variance with the viewpoint of the Wisconsin Synod as will be pointed out later on. In achieving its fellowship objective, the Missouri Synod was well aware of the future course to follow.

> Two dangers beset the church in the area of the practice of fellowship today. The one is <u>separatism</u>, that is, the tendency to set up barriers to the exercise of fellowship where the Word of God sets none. The other is <u>unionism</u>, the tendency to ignore and overleap barriers to the exercise of fellowship, barriers set up by the Word of God.[15]

The Missouri Synod did acknowledge that it recognized limits in establishing church fellowship with other Lutheran bodies. Although the Missouri Synod favored the evangelical approach in applying the Scriptural passages on fellowship, it is important to also note that

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

the Synod simultaneously was cognizant of the fact that Holy Scripture did set barriers in the exercise of fellowship. The difficulty for the Missouri Synod was to avoid the extremes of separatism and unionism and still be faithful to the Word of God and the fellowship as it existed within the Synodical Conference.

The Missouri Synod recognized some weaknesses and faults in separatism, and the Synod stated its judgment of a church that favored separatism.

> They treat their own confessional-organizational form as absolute. By setting up false standards for fellowship (either doctrinal or moral or both) and by rigorously excluding all who do not conform to these standards, they conscientiously seek to create a pure church. . . . This "pure" church has no room and no help for the weak in its own midst, nor can it exercise an effective ministry to the weak and erring outside its own organizational limits, because it shrinks from those contacts which would give an opportunity for such ministry. The end and aim of its discipline becomes exclusion rather than that gaining of the brother which our Lord intended, Matt. 18:15.[16]

At the other extreme was unionism. The Missouri Synod pointed out the fallacy and deception of unionism. Unionists usually want a strong church and mistakenly view the divisions in the church as a cause of the church's weakness. In addition, unionists minimize confessional differences.

> By ignoring the necessity of facing confessional differences in the practice of fellowship, unionists either overtly deny some truths of God's Word or treat them as unimportant. This is the essential harm of unionism.[17]

As the Missouri Synod avoided the dangers and weaknesses of unionism and separatism, it discovered an acceptable principle of

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[16]Ibid., p. 43.

[17]Ibid.

fellowship in the truth of the Gospel as stated in Galatians 2:14.[18] The exercise of such fellowship was dependent upon mature Christian judgment which was enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. The Missouri Synod admitted that discussions and issues in the area of fellowship were particularly sensitive ones because consciences react in various ways. Nevertheless, the Synod held the position that the Scripture passages could not cover every situation and case in precise detail. In such situations, enlightened Christian judgment would of necessity play a large role in order to arrive at a God-pleasing decision.

In its study and consideration of the Doctrine of Church Fellowship, the Missouri Synod proceeded to apply the principles of church

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[18] Ibid., p. 44. This criterion of fellowship was critical, helpful and useful in practice.

"a) It cannot be applied mechanically (and therefore legalistically), as the sequel in the Epistle to the Galatians shows. The sequel is not separation forthwith by vigorous, unsparing rebuke in the interest of the preservation of fellowship, Gal. 2:11-21. So Paul dealt with the Galatians who had been misled by false teachers, Gal. 3:1-5; 4:12-20; 6:11-18.

b) While this criterion is as comprehensive as it is incisive, it does not set up a quantitative basis for the exercise of fellowship; it avoids the danger of substituting mere knowledge of doctrine for a living faith which manifests itself in a manner of life worthy of the Gospel of Christ, Phil. 1:27.

c) This criterion does not admit of a false, unbiblical cleavage between doctrine and practice. Doctrine in the light of this word of St. Paul (Gal. 2:14) is seen as the New Testament Gospel in its transforming effect upon the whole life of man, and practice is seen as the life of man transformed and brought into harmony with the Gospel.

d) This criterion counteracts the fleshly tendency both of separatism and of unionism to construct a church according to the desires of men's hearts, 'pure' or 'strong,' as the case may be, by keeping before men the New Testament view of the functioning, repenting church, which is able to bear with and help the weak and at the same time has the inner strength to confront and exclude the persistent errorist."

fellowship as it understood them to some of the issues of controversy existing between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. One of these issues was joint prayer. Immediate disagreement was evident as the Missouri Synod stated its position on joint prayer. "A decision as to the propriety or impropriety of joint prayer in a given situation cannot be reached by the application of a flat universal rule."[19] Evident here already was the consistent application of the fellowship principles as accepted by the Missouri Synod.

The Synod maintained that specific rules and answers were not always easily arrived at regarding the issues involved with church fellowship. At times specific and individual circumstances of the fellowship issue would have a direct influence on the proper decision to be made. It is significant to note that the Missouri Synod was at variance at this point again with the Wisconsin Synod. It will be evident later on that the Wisconsin Synod maintained the position of absoluteness in the matter of joint prayer. The Wisconsin Synod held that unless there existed full doctrinal agreement, joint prayer was unionistic.

In regard to joint prayer between Christians not in doctrinal agreement, the Missouri Synod offered several criteria to serve as an evaluative process for a particular situation of joint prayer.[20] Among

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[19] Ibid., p. 45.

[20] Ibid. The Missouri Synod, consistent with its fellowship principles, believed each case was to be evaluated as it arose. The criteria for such an evaluation should consider the situation in which such prayer was offered, the character of the prayer itself, its purpose, and its probable effect on those who unite in the prayer.

the criteria stated was the consideration of the situation. In my analysis of the Missouri Synod's position, the situation of joint prayer would rank as the top priority of all the criteria listed. Most significant, too, were the questions to consider when evaluating the situation.

> 1. Is this a situation in which Christian prayer is appropriate?
> 2. Are the people involved such as can offer prayer in the Christian sense, that is, can they pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?
>
> If the answer to both questions is "yes," then there is no objection to joint prayer on this score.[21]

In order to actually follow through with the evaluative steps of joint prayer as indicated by the Missouri Synod, it would have been an involved and slow process. The fellowship objective of the Missouri Synod had been to achieve a realistic approach. In regard to the issue of joint prayer, the Missouri Synod attempted to function with an almost idealistic evaluation rather than a realistic and functional process. The amount of time and consideration required to meet the evaluative criteria surely would not have warranted the end result or decision. The very event perhaps at which joint prayer was to have been practiced would have long been past.

Unique to the position of the Missouri Synod on joint prayer was the distinction it made between joint prayer and prayer fellowship. "Joint prayer at intersynodical conferences as we know them is not a part of the practice of church fellowship, of unrestricted pulpit,

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[21] Ibid.

altar, or prayer fellowship."[22] In addition, at incidents of joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, the Missouri Synod believed there was no religious unionism involved.

Conventions of the Missouri Synod had also reaffirmed such a position on joint prayer.

> WHEREAS, Such prayer at intersynodical meetings does not pretend that doctrinal unity exists where it does not exist, nor intimate that doctrinal differences are unimportant, but rather implores God, from whom true unity in the spirit must come, for His blessing, in order that unity may be achieved in those things where it is lacking; be it therefore
> RESOLVED, That Synod declare that it does not consider Joint Prayer at intersynodical meetings unionistic and sinful "provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error."[23]

The Missouri Synod continued to follow that practice of joint prayer.

In 1961 at the height of the doctrinal and practical controversies between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod, the Overseas Committee stated its understanding of the entire Doctrine of the Church. The Overseas Committee indicated that the member churches of the Synodical Conference had not enunciated and carried through their documents of fellowship. The specific weakness pointed out was that the Synods had lacked the necessary clarity and consistency in applying the principles of fellowship.[24] The significant emphasis of the Overseas

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[22]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Forty-Third Convention, August 10-13, 1954 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 92.

[23]The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Second Convention, June 17-26, 1953 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 552.

[24]The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Proceedings of the Recessed Forty-Sixth Convention, May 17-19, 1961 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 12.

Committee report also specifically mentioned joint prayer. This particular Committee did realize that situations could exist where joint prayer would not be unionistic. However, once again no general and uniform rule could serve as a criterion to arrive at a proper decision.

> These instances cannot be judged by a flat rule beforehand, for the situation differs with each case, and so a decision of the permissibility of joint prayer in any particular situation will have to be made by a fair and adequate judgment of that case. And in such individual cases one must reckon with the fact that Christians will differ in their judgment. Such differences in judgment will have to be tolerated in the Church Militant, as long as there is an evident loyalty to the demands of the divine Word and Sacraments.[25]

The important fact at this time was that the Overseas Committee report supported the position of the Missouri Synod. However, in reality, such support could not resolve the controversies between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. There was a lack of clarity and consistency with joint prayer, and efforts to properly understand and explain the issue or situation were involved and too lengthy. Ultimately, the Missouri Synod realized that a more feasible and functional approach had to be taken in regard to the practice of joint prayer.

In 1962, the Missouri Synod recommended that The Theology of Fellowship be restudied. On the basis of reactions received from the members of Synod the Commission on Theology and Church Relations was to make revisions on the document or make a new study according to the recommendations of the Synodical Conference.[26] This was an attempt to clarify the position of the Missouri Synod in the area of church fellowship.

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[25] Ibid., p. 13.

[26] The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Convention, June 20-29, 1962 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 110-111.

The Missouri Synod did not believe its activities were unionistic and continued to apply the principles of church fellowship as had been presented in The Theology of Fellowship. An analysis of church fellowship at this point would not be complete without the viewpoint of the Wisconsin Synod. The Missouri Synod's practice of church fellowship was unacceptable to the Wisconsin Synod. The real differences on this issue between the two Synods really surfaced in 1960. Since The Theology of Fellowship, Part I of the Missouri Synod, did not present the real area of controversy, the Wisconsin Synod indicated its desire to wait until the complete presentation on the subject of Fellowship was ready. After the complete document was made available, the Wisconsin Synod studied it.

The Wisconsin Synod voiced strong disagreement with The Theology of Fellowship, Part II. The application of the principles of church fellowship was the major issue.

> According to the Scriptural principles of fellowship as we hold them, such joint devotions with people with whom confessional fellowship has not been established would simply be ruled out as unionistic. Thus proper discipline would mean for us asking those within our confessional fellowship not to participate in these expressions of fellowship.[27]

It was evident that an impasse might occur between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. The Missouri Synod's practice of church fellowship could no longer be accepted by the Wisconsin Synod. As a result of further doctrinal discussions with the Missouri Synod and the

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[27]The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention, August 8-17, 1961 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1961), p. 170.

Joint Doctrinal Committee of the Synodical Conference, the Wisconsin Synod felt an impasse had been reached. The Commission on Doctrinal Matters of the Wisconsin Synod informed the Synodical Conference of that impasse.

> This discussion therefore revealed that these instances of Missouri Synod practice and their official evaluation were in full harmony with the viewpoint on fellowship set forth in their presentation.
>
> We as a Committee therefore believed that our full admonitory testimony on the Scriptural support of our convictions and on our adverse evaluation of the Missouri Synod viewpoint had been given and that the differences had not been resolved. In this sense we then declared to the Joint Doctrinal Committees that we had reached an impasse.[28]

Although doctrinal discussions focused on church fellowship, no progress was made. In fact, the Wisconsin Synod believed that the further elaborations and expansions made by the Missouri Synod in The Theology of Fellowship, Part II, even made the objectionable viewpoints on fellowship more apparent and obvious.[29]

The Missouri Synod's position on church fellowship was definitely stated to be an untenable position.

> I. To distinguish between joint prayer which is acknowledged to be an expression of church fellowship and an occasional joint prayer which purports to be something short of church fellowship;
> II. To designate certain nonfundamental doctrines as not being divisive of church fellowship in their very nature;
> III. To envision fellowship relations (in a congregation, in a church body, in a church federation, in a church agency, in a co-operative church activity) like so many steps of a ladder, each requiring a gradually increasing or decreasing measure of unity in doctrine and practice.[30]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., p. 175.

[30] Ibid., p. 193.

In the final analysis the Wisconsin Synod realized that it could no longer remain in fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The position of church fellowship as held by the Wisconsin Synod viewed the fellowship activities of the Missouri Synod as unionistic.[31] As a result, in 1961 the Wisconsin Synod suspended fellowship with the Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17-18. It is significant to note that even in the interpretation and application of Romans 16:17-18 the two Synods were in disagreement. The following brief analysis will give evidence of this disagreement.

In 1950 the Missouri Synod in convention discussed the position of Romans 16:17-18. After much time and effort had been devoted to the matter, the Synod reaffirmed, as Scripturally correct, the use of Romans 16:17-18 in the Constitution of Synod, the synodical Catechism, and the Brief Statement. It also verified that in this particular passage as well as many others Scripture warns against unionism and the tolerance of error. Scripture, furthermore, requires that we deny church fellowship to all who persist in false doctrine.[32] Nevertheless, in the application of the principle of the denial of church fellowship, the Missouri Synod allowed for some flexibility and latitude in determining what situations actually constituted denial of church fellowship.

The interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 is not easy to discover since Paul's description of those in error was general. However, a valid exegesis has been given.

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[31] Ibid., pp. 190-193.

[32] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1950, p. 656.

> One might therefore describe the division mongers as a group of people who are members of the Roman congregation, and who are giving offense to weaker Christians by their eating habits. By offending the weak they are creating dissensions and divisions. Whether or not they are fully aware of the implications of their deeds, their action is subtle and deceptive.[33]

It is significant to note that the difficulties being faced by the Roman congregation were of a general nature. Therefore, they cannot be limited to doctrinal matters or false teachings. In the application of Romans 16:17-18, the Missouri Synod also made a distinction between those people willing to submit to the Word of God and those who were not.

> We have, however, no right to go beyond what they say. The "avoid them" of Rom. 16:17 refers to ongoing "causers of divisions and offenses," the "withdraw from" of I Tim. 6:5 to people who refuse to "consent to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ." To apply "avoid" and "withdraw" to those willing to submit to Scripture and strive for unity in doctrine on the basis of God's Word is going beyond the Word itself, is adding something God Himself has never put there. No man or church has the right to do that.[34]

The Wisconsin Synod applied Romans 16:17-18 in a much more restrictive manner.

> The heart of his admonition lies in the word "avoid." However much the divisions, the offenses, and the causes of them, may have changed in appearance, and in detail since Paul's day, the principle that he voices remains unchanged. Avoid them![35]

Consequently, since the Wisconsin Synod could no longer tolerate and approve the fellowship activities of the Missouri Synod, it

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[33]Roger P. Frobe, "An Exegetical Study of Romans 16:17-20 in Light of Its Use in The Missouri Synod During The Last Thirty Years for The Question of Fellowship" (Master of Sacred Theology dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1970), p. 92.

[34]Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1954, p. 89.

[35]Ibid., p. 105.

declared suspension of fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod became the object of the "avoid" and "withdraw" of Romans 16;17-18 as applied by the Wisconsin Synod.

In 1947 the Missouri Synod reaffirmed its insistence that fellowship must be based on unity in all doctrines clearly revealed in God's Word. In reality, earlier resolutions and actions of the Missouri Synod revealed that certain variations in doctrine, terminology and practice were not necessarily divisive of church fellowship. This was evident by resolutions of 1938 and 1956. It was evident in the doctrinal agreement the Synod had with the American Lutheran Church in 1938. The basic principle provided doctrinal agreement on fundamental doctrines. Yet, disagreement on a non-fundamental doctrine could exist as long as the church body submitted to the Word of God.

This flexibility allowed the Missouri Synod to share and enjoy the fellowship of the Synodical Conference. The Missouri Synod along with the sister synods of the Synodical Conference all submitted to the Word of God. The differences among the sister synods in the Synodical Conference were in the areas of interpretation, explanation and application of the truth of God's Word. Throughout the stresses and strains of the controversy the Missouri Synod could endure and remain in the Synodical Conference because of its concept of church fellowship. But, conversely, the Wisconsin Synod could not continue fellowship because of its concept of unity fellowship, total and absolute agreement in doctrine and practice.

Other actions of the Missouri Synod present additional events that contribute to a more complete analysis of the Missouri Synod.

Those events were not as major and significant as the issue of church fellowship. Nevertheless, they were influential in chartering the course of the Missouri Synod.

The Missouri Synod followed the growing tide of Lutheran unity. It had not initiated fellowship negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. The opposite situation was true. It was the American Lutheran Church that sought to establish altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod.[36] As a result, throughout the period of the 1940's the cause of Lutheran unity was one of Missouri Synod's prime concerns. There was internal pressure exerted upon the Missouri Synod by some of its leaders as well as the Council of Presidents to strive for Lutheran unity. This internal pressure was further intensified when forty-four pastors issued A Statement which presented a greater awareness for Lutheran unity. In addition, A Statement supported a more flexible approach in the exercise of church fellowship. All of the endeavors of the Missouri Synod to strive for Lutheran unity ultimately intensified the basic difference between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod in the area of church fellowship.

The developing internal situation of the Missouri Synod during its years of controversy with the Wisconsin Synod was also significant. A liberal element was present in the Missouri Synod and it advocated more latitude both in doctrine and practice. This trend to steer away from isolationism favored increased cooperation and fellowship with other church bodies. Consequently, the Missouri Synod not only

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[36]Carl S. Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing HOuse, 1964), p. 418.

experienced stresses and strains from the outside, but it also had to cope with its own changing conditions. It was a difficult era for the Missouri Synod.

There were also minor irritants between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. These included delays in communication and instances of misunderstandings, sometimes the Missouri Synod was almost caught in embarrassing situations because of the activities of a church body with which it was negotiating fellowship, poor timing of invitations and offers of fellowship and its appearance of chartering an independent course without consulting its sister synods. All of this to some degree added to the confusion and the controversy.

The Missouri Synod, like the Wisconsin Synod, also lost some of its members who believed the Missouri Synod no longer walked the paths of true orthodoxy. On July 11, 1951 a meeting had been called to organize a conservative Lutheran church body. Invitations were extended to 119 pastors and laymen of the Missouri Synod who had earlier signed a document known as the Confession of Faith Professed and Practiced by All True Lutherans. The original intent was that they would be willing to return to the Missouri Synod later on if the Missouri Synod returned to true orthodoxy. The Orthodox Lutheran Church maintained that the mark of true orthodoxy was the practice as well as the confession of a true doctrine.[37]

The Missouri Synod did strive for doctrinal unity and did submit to the Word of God throughout the years of controversy with the

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[37]The Orthodox Lutheran Conference, Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, 1951, n.p., p. 4.

Wisconsin Synod. It, too, persisted in the course which it believed to be Scripturally sound and valid. Perhaps the suspension of fellowship by the Wisconsin Synod was a blessing in disguise. The situation was not one of peace within the Missouri Synod. Although the Synodical Conference did not survive very long after the actions of the Wisconsin Synod, the respective synods have continued to exist as citadels of Lutheran confessionalism. The Missouri Synod, by the grace of God, did see the day when it enjoyed again doctrinal unity as a Synod. Ironically, at the present time the Missouri Synod finds itself in a state of fellowship in protest with The American Lutheran Church. Where will it lead? God knows as He holds the future in His hands and continually blesses His Bride, the Church of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, as the history of the controversy between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod is analyzed, it is apparent that the termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod was inevitable. There were continuous areas of disagreement between the two Synods in the area of church practice. To make matters worse each Synod viewed its course of action to be proper and in accord with the truth of God's Word.

However, a more basic difference was also present. The Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod did have doctrinal differences in regard to the Church, the Holy Ministry and Church Fellowship. It was because of these doctrinal issues that their church practices were at variance. Both Synods and the Synodical Conference made valiant attempts to resolve the doctrinal and practical controversies. Although progress had been made in a few areas of mutual understanding, the

ultimate goal of total unity in doctrine and practice could not be attained. Time was running out and no one wanted to be guilty of violating the truth of God's Word.

The trend and powerful struggle to persevere in faithfulness to the truth and purity of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions are still exhibited by the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. We praise God yet today for these citadels of confessional Lutheranism.

APPENDIX 1

SIX QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO THE MISSOURI SYNOD BY THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

1. Does the Missouri Synod approve of the participation of its pastors in the programs and in the joint worship of intersynodical laymen's organizations, especifically Lutheran Men in America? If not, only a public disavowal of the offense will remove it.

2. Does the Missouri Synod approve of the cooperation of some of its welfare agencies with Lutherans with whom it is otherwise not in fellowship, in view of the fact that such welfare work is inseparably associated with spiritual implications? If the Synod does not approve, what will you do to clear yourselves of the responsibility for the offense that has been given?

3. Does the Missouri Synod approve the cooperation of its representatives with the National Lutheran Council in matters which are admittedly no longer in the field of externals? (E.g. "Building a New Lutheranism in Great Britian," L. W., 3-8-49, p. 76.) If not, what will be done to correct the impression that has been created?

4. Does the Missouri Synod approve the position taken by its representatives at the first Bad Boll with regard to the program for devotions and worship? If not, what will be done to remove the offense?

5. Does the Missouri Synod approve of the arrangement whereby prominent members of its official committees are serving with representatives of other Lutheran bodies as sponsors of the book, Scouting in the Lutheran Church, published by the National Scout Organization? If not, what will you do about the offense that was thus given?

6. Does the Missouri Synod still hold to its former position that Rom. 16:17 applies to all errorists, whether Lutheran or not? (See Stoeckhardt, Roemerbrief, p. 641 and 642; also Pieper, Dogmatik III, p. 474, par. 5; Brief Statement, Art. 28.) If so, what will be done to correct the growing impression that this is no longer the case?

We say again that it is our earnest hope and prayer that your answers to these frank questions will show us to be in full agreement on these issues and will thus result in a strengthening of the ties which unite us.

These six questions presented to the Missouri Synod by the Wisconsin Synod are presented in the Proceedings of the Missouri Synod, 1950, pp. 666-667.

APPENDIX 2

OUTLINE OF THE WISCONSIN SYNOD'S POSITION ON THE CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

I. THE CHAPLAINCY CONFLICTS WITH THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINITY OF THE CALL.

A. The Church's Authority to Call is Limited in the Chaplaincy System.

1. This authority has been given to, and must be retained by, the church.

2. This authority is infringed upon in the chaplaincy system where the Government establishes by law the post of chaplain and regulates the calling in respect to standards, numbers, station, and supervision.

B. Certain Duties Stipulated to the Chaplain Are In Violation of a Lutheran Pastor's Divine Call.

1. Chaplains are required to promote the false principles of the character guidance program.

2. Chaplains are required to provide for the religious needs of those who are not of their denomination either personally or through false teachers.

II. THE CHAPLAINCY VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

A. The Appointment of Chaplains by the Government Violates This Principle.

1. The Government-appointed chaplain is the spiritual leader of the men in his charge.

2. The Government-appointed chaplain is required to do more than promote civic righteousness

B. Regulation of the Chaplain's Duties by the Government Violates This Principle.

1. The Government regulates the work the chaplain is to do.

2. The Government determines what men the chaplain is to serve.

III. THE CHAPLAINCY FOSTERS UNIONISM.

A. The Chaplaincy Involves in Unionism by Making the Chaplain the Spiritual Leader of Those of Other Denominations.

1. The chaplain must, in some instances, serve those of other denominations but is deprived of his right and duty to testify against error. He must provide "Protestant" services.

2. He must, in other instances, provide for those in his charge through false teachers ministrations of which he disapproves.

B. Participation in the Chaplaincy System Nourishes the Spirit of Unionism.

1. A unionistic burial practice for chaplains is advocated.

2. A unionistic administration of the Sacrament is provided for in the "Articles of Agreement."

This outline is a statement of the Wisconsin Synod's position on the Chaplaincy program as it is presented in Moving Frontiers, Carl Meyer, ed., pp. 425-426.

APPENDIX 3

TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP

WITH MISSOURI SYNOD BY THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

Resolution No. 1

Subject: The Report of the Commission on Doctrinal Matters

WHEREAS, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has lodged many admonitions and protests with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod during the past twenty years to win her from the path that leads to liberalism in doctrine and practice (cf. Proceedings 1939, page 59; 1941, page 43f; 1947, page 104ff; 114f; 1949, page 114ff; 1951, page 110ff; 1953, page 95ff), and

WHEREAS, Our admonitions have largely gone unheeded, and the issues have remained unresolved, and

WHEREAS, Many of the policies and practices which called forth our admonitions were in the field of fellowship, and

WHEREAS, The 1959 Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod therefore gave its Commission on Doctrinal Matters the directive "to continue and accelerate the discussions in the Joint Union Committees to bring about complete unity of doctrine and practice in the Synodical Conference . . . to give primary consideration in their discussions to the area of fellowship . . . to continue its efforts in the Joint Union Committees until agreement on doctrine and practice has been reached, or until an impasse is reached and no such agreement can be brought about" (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1959, p. 195), and

WHEREAS, The Commission has faithfully carried out this directive but now regretfully reports that differences with respect to the Scriptual principles of church fellowship -- differences which it hold to be divisive -- have brought us to an impasse, and

WHEREAS, Our Commission's Theses on Church Fellowship are not to be considered a formal confessional document (otherwise it would be advisable to expand them considerably, for instance, to preface them with the Doctrine of the Church, the Marks of the Church, etc. They were set up and used simply as a working document in the discussions of the Joint Doctrinal Committees. As such they were to express the Scriptural and

historical principles of the teaching and practice of church fellowship held by the Synodical Conference), and

WHEREAS, The substance of these Theses is an expression of the Scriptual principles on which the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod has stood and which have guided it in its practice for many years (cf. FELLOWSHIP THEN AND NOW), and

WHEREAS, In the Statement of the Overseas Committee, FELLOWSHIP IN ITS NECESSARY CONTEXT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, we have found nothing to warrant any modification of our position on church fellowship, and

WHEREAS, In the new forum suggested by the Overseas Committee and adopted by the Synodical Conference we see no avenue leading to the removal of the difference in regard to church fellowship principles which now exists between The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and

WHEREAS, The doctrine of the Church has not been slighted in the inter-synodical discussions in the past (cf. Synodical Conference Reports, 1946, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1954), and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has not retreated from the unscriptural position long held by it and also expressed in THE THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, but continues to defend that position and carries on fellowship practices which conform to that position (e.g., the two meetings with the National Lutheran Council on cooperative activities, July 7-9, 1960, and November 18 and 19, 1960, with a third meeting to be held October 30-November 1, 1961; the National Lutheran Education Conference, January 8-10, 1961; the Conference of Lutheran Professors of Theology, June 5-7, 1961 -- all of these including conference devotions), and

WHEREAS, We recognize our sacred trust and the obligation to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," and also to give vigorous testimony on Church Fellowship before the church and the world; be it

Resolved, a) That we now suspend fellowship with The Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17,18 with the hope and prayer to God that The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself, and be it further

Resolved, b) That under conditions which do not imply a denial of our previous testimony we stand ready to resume discussions with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod with the aim of reestablishing unity of doctrine and practice and of restoring fellowship relations, these discussions to be conducted outside the framework of fellowship, and be it further

Resolved, c) That we are not passing judgment on the personal faith of any individual member of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, but that

we are addressing the stern admonition required by love to The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as a corporate body, and be it further

Resolved, d) That we are ready to continue our support of the joint projects carried on by the Synodical Converence and by groups within the Synodical Conference until we can adjust to the new conditions brought about by the suspension of fellowship with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, and be it further

Resolved, e) That we call upon all our members to manifest the understanding, consideration, and patience of love during this period of change and adjustment. (We also direct attention to the fact that this Convention has already taken note of the problems that will arise and has approved a study committee that would supply helpful counsel and guidance. See the Report of Committee No. 4, Resolution 2.); and be it further

Resolved, f) That the action taken in our resolution of suspension does not apply to our fellowship relations with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche, the Evangelical Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church (Evangelisch-Lutherische (alt-lutherische) Kirche), and the Igreja Evangelica Luterana do Brasil, as well as any other church bodies outside the Synodical Conference with whom we have been in fellowship, and be it further

Resolved, g) That we declare our desire to discuss the principles of church fellowship further with the church bodies that were represented by the members of the Overseas Committee, and that we initiate such steps as might be necessary to carry out such further discussions, and be it further

Resolved, h) That we encourage all who are of a like mind with us in this matter to identify themselves with us in supporting the Scriptural, historical position of the Synodical Conference, and be it further

Resolved, i) That the president of our Synod transmit copies of this report to the president of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, to the presidents of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and to the president of the Synodical Conference, and be it finally

Resolved, j) That the resolutions adopted by this convention constitute our answer to the letters and memorials which we have received on this matter.

Action by the Convention: The Resolution was adopted by a vote of 124 to 49.

This is the official action taken by the Wisconsin Synod against the Missouri Synod as stated in the Proceedings, Wisconsin Synod, 1961, pp. 197-199.

APPENDIX 4

THE RESOLVES OF THE 1938 ST. LOUIS

RESOLUTIONS OF THE MISSOURI-SYNOD

Resolved:

1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached and imploring His further guidance toward the consummation of the efforts to bring about church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, even though we believe that under the most favorable circumstances much time and effort may be required before any union may be reached.

2. That Synod declare that the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod's actions thereupon, be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

3. That in regard to the points of non-fundamental doctrine mentioned in the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives (Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, the fulfilment of the thousand years) we endeavor to establish full agreement and that our Committee on Lutheran Union be instructed to devise ways and means of reaching this end.

4. That in regard to the propriety of speaking of "the visible side of the Church" we ask our Committee on Lutheran Unity to work to this end that uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching be attained.

5. That, since for true unity we need not only this doctrinal agreement but also agreement in practise, we state with our synodical fathers that according to the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessional writings Christian practise must harmonize with Christian doctrine and that, where there is a divergence from Biblical, confessional practise, strenuous efthe attitude toward the anti-christian lodge, anti-Scriptural pulpit-and altar-fellowship, and all other forms of unionism.

6. That regarding the establishment of church-fellowship between the two bodies on this basis, Synod recognize the following points, which embody and augment the four recommendations of Synod's Committee on Lutheran Union:

a. The establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend on the action taken by each body with reference to the Brief Statement, the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church, and the report of this Committee as adopted by Synod.

b. The establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend also on the establishing on the part of the American Lutheran Church of doctrinal agreement with those church-bodies with which the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship.

c. As far as the Missouri Synod is concerned, this whole matter must be submitted for approval to the other synods constituting the Synodical Conference.

d. Until church-fellowship has been officially established, the pastors of both church-bodies are encouraged to meet in smaller circles wherever and as often as possible in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the questions of church practise.

7. That, if by the grace of God fellowship can be established, this fact is to be announced officially by the President of Synod. Until then no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which would overlook the fact that we are not yet united.

8. That for the purposes herein stated we recommend to Synod that the Committee on Lutheran Union be continued.

9. That we express our sincere gratitude to the members of the Committee on Lutheran Union for their diligent, painstaking and conscientious work and bespeak for them continued divine blessing.

Action of Synod: After discussing this matter in four sessions, Synod adopted this report of Committee 16.

These are the St. Louis Resolutions as officially adopted by the Missouri Synod as presented in Proceedings of the Missouri Synod, 1938, pp. 231-233.

APPENDIX 5

A STATEMENT OF THE 44 MISSOURI SYNOD CLERGYMEN

ONE

WE AFFIRM OUR UNSWERVING LOYALTY TO THE GREAT EVANGELICAL HERITAGE OF HISTORIC LUTHERANISM. WE BELIEVE IN ITS MESSAGE AND MISSION FOR THIS CRUCIAL HOUR IN THE TIME OF MAN.

We therefore deplore any and every tendency which would limit the power of our heritage, reduce it to narrow legalism and confine it by man-made traditions.

TWO

WE AFFIRM OUR FAITH IN THE GREAT LUTHERAN PRINCIPLE OF THE INERRANCY, CERTAINTY, AND ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF HOLY WRIT.

We therefore deplore a tendency in our Synod to substitute human judgments, synodical resolutions, or other sources of authority for the supreme authority of Scripture.

THREE

WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION THAT THE GOSPEL MUST BE GIVEN FREE COURSE SO THAT IT MAY BE PREACHED IN ALL ITS TRUTH AND POWER TO ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH.

We therefore deplore all man-made walls and barriers and all ecclesiastical traditions which would hinder the free course of the Gospel in the world.

FOUR

WE BELIEVE THAT THE ULTIMATE AND BASIC MOTIVE FOR ALL OUR LIFE AND WORK MUST BE LOVE--LOVE OF GOD, LOVE OF THE WORD, LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, LOVE OF SOULS.

WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION THAT THE LAW OF LOVE MUST ALSO FIND APPLICATION TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER LUTHERAN BODIES.

We therefore deplore a loveless attitude which is manifesting itself within Synod. This unscriptural attitude has been expressed in suspicions

of brethren, in the impugning of motives, and in the condemnation of all who have expressed differing opinions concerning some of the problems confronting our Church today.

FIVE

WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION THAT SOUND EXEGETICAL PROCEDURE IS THE BASIS FOR SOUND LUTHERAN THEOLOGY.

We therefore deplore the fact that Romans 16:17, 18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. It is our convictions, based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America.

We furthermore deplore the misuse of First Thessalonians 5:22 in the translation "avoid every appearance of evil." This text should be used only in its true meaning, "avoid evil in every form."

SIX

WE AFFIRM THE HISTORIC LUTHERAN POSITION CONCERNING THE CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF THE UNA SANCTA AND THE LOCAL CONGREGATION. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE SHOULD BE A RE-EMPHASIS OF THE PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATION ALSO IN THE MATTER OF DETERMINING QUESTIONS OF FELLOWSHIP.

We therefore deplore the new and improper emphasis on the synodical organization as basic in our consideration of the problems of the Church. We believe that no organizational loyalty can take the place of loyalty to Christ and His Church.

SEVEN

WE AFFIRM OUR ABIDING FAITH IN THE HISTORIC LUTHERAN POSITION CONCERNING THE CENTRALITY OF THE ATONEMENT AND THE GOSPEL AS THE REVELATION OF GOD'S REDEEMING LOVE IN CHRIST.

We therefore deplore any tendency which reduces the warmth and power of the Gospel to a set of intellectual propositions which are to be grasped solely by the mind of man.

EIGHT

WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION THAT ANY TWO OR MORE CHRISTIANS MAY PRAY TOGETHER TO THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST IF THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THEY MEET AND PRAY IS RIGHT ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD. THIS OBVIOUSLY INCLUDES MEETINGS OF GROUPS CALLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES.

We therefore deplore the tendency to decide the question of prayer fellowship on any other basis beyond the clear words of Scripture.

NINE

WE BELIEVE THAT THE TERM "UNIONISM" SHOULD BE APPLIED TO ACTS IN WHICH A CLEAR AND UNMISTAKABLE DENIAL OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH OR APPROVAL OF ERROR IS INVOLVED.

We therefore deplore the tendency to apply this non-Biblical term to any and every contact between Christians of different denominations.

TEN

WE AFFIRM THE HISTORIC LUTHERAN POSITION THAT NO CHRISTIAN HAS A RIGHT TO TAKE OFFENSE AT ANYTHING WHICH GOD HAS COMMANDED IN HIS HOLY WORD. THE PLEA OF OFFENSE MUST NOT BE MADE A COVER FOR THE IRRESPONSIBLE EXPRESSION OF PREJUDICES, TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS, AND USAGES.

ELEVEN

WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION THAT IN KEEPING WITH THE HISTORIC LUTHERAN TRADITION AND IN HARMONY WITH THE SYNODICAL RESOLUTION ADOPTED IN 1938 REGARDING CHURCH FELLOWSHIP, SUCH FELLOWSHIP IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT COMPLETE AGREEMENT IN DETAILS OF DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN CONSIDERED DIVISIVE IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH.

TWELVE

WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION THAT OUR LORD HAS RICHLY, SINGULARLY, AND UNDESERVEDLY BLESSED OUR BELOVED SYNOD DURING THE FIRST CENTURY OF ITS EXISTENCE IN AMERICA. WE PLEDGE THE EFFORTS OF OUR HEARTS AND HANDS TO THE BUILDING OF SYNOD AS THE SECOND CENTURY OPENS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES ARE GIVEN US BY THE LORD OF THE CHURCH.

A copy of A Statement as presented by Meyer, ed., in Moving Frontiers, pp. 422-424.

APPENDIX 6

STUDY QUESTIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY

1. What is a Christian congregation?
2. Is the local congregation a specific divine institution, and is it the only divinely instituted unit in the Church?
3. Is a synodical organization divinely instituted, or does it exist purely by human right?
4. Does a synod possess the rights and powers of a congregation, including that of exercising church discipline?
5. Is the office of the public ministry a specific divine institution, distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers?
6. Is the power to call vested solely in the local congregation?
7. May a synod as such, without specific delegation of authority by its constituent congregations, extend calls?
8. Is the placement of chaplains by the Government a usurpation of the prerogatives of the church and a violation of the principle of separation of Church and State?
9. Does the performance of a chaplain's prescribed duties necessarily involve him in unionistic practices?

These guide questions were used by the Interim Committee as it studied the doctrine of the church. The full presentation is in the Proceedings of the Synodical Conference, 1948, p. 136.

APPENDIX 7

THIENSVILLE THESIS

I. As we know from Scripture, it is God's will and regulation that Christians who reside in the same area also establish an external connection in order to exercise jointly the obligations of their spiritual priesthood.

II. As we know from Scripture, it is furthermore God's will and regulation that such Christian local congregations have shepherds and teachers, who in the name and on behalf of the congregation carry out the duties of the ministry of the Word in their midst.

III. As we know from Scripture, it is also God's will and regulation that Christian local congregations give expression to their unity of faith with other congregations and carry on jointly with them the work of the Kingdom of God, as is done among us in the unprescribed form of a Synod.

IV. Because every Christian possesses the keys of the kingdom of heaven, every judgment pronounced in agreement with God's Word by an individual Christian or by more Christians in any kind of combination, is valid also in heaven. But, as we know from Scripture, it is God's will and regulation that proceedings against a brother who has sinned shall not be

considered completed until his local congregation has acted. Congregational discipline and synodical discipline, if everything is done properly, cannot cause a conflict, since the local congregation excludes from the local congregation and not from the Synod, and Synod excludes from Synod and not from the local congregation.

This translation of the Thiensville Theses is presented in the Proceedings of the Synodical Conference, 1952, p. 143.

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