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John W. Constable
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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JOHN W. CONSTABLE

The history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reveals that the Synod grappled with the problem of lodges almost from its beginning. In the present essay the author proposes to undertake a chronological survey of the Synod's viewpoints reflected in its official meetings and publications, in books, tracts and conference essays, and so forth. The topic of doctrinal opposition to lodges will not be discussed in any detail since American Lutheranism is all but unanimous on this point.[1] Some attention will be paid to other Lutheran denominations and to possible cultural and economic influence on the lodge practice of the Synod.

An added dimension to this work will be to suggest some procedures for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as it confronts the lodge problem in the latter part of the 20th century.

EUROPEAN BACKGROUND: DEISM

Lodgery has its roots in European deism of the 18th century. The deists were struggling against an absolute state and an absolute church. The deist emphasis on man's freedom from religious control led its adherents to oppose the state-supported church and the movement rapidly became anti-ecclesiastical in sentiment.

The deists believed that the concerns of the church were too intimately wrapped up in those of the state and that the church was urging men to seek a salvation yet to come while it neglected their physical welfare. Deists offered a religion marked by a concern for the human being which they felt could not be found in the 18th-century European church. In France and the United States deist leaders tried to build society along secular lines. Men like Paine, Jefferson, and Franklin constructed a new, free, and voluntary religious society marked by religious pluralism and toleration.

In the 1830s and again in 1848 Europe was rocked by revolutions directed against a renewed absolutism in church and state, particularly in France and Germany. This religious and political absolutism in Germany brought many "Old" (confessional) Lutherans to our shores. This growing tide of German immigration in the 1830s brought the Saxon founders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to the United States.

After the failure of these 19th-century revolutions, many German deists came to the States to flee oppression in their homeland. They had developed a strong anti-ecclesiastical bias because the state against which they revolted had been supported by the churches. These "Forty-eighters" came to America with their deistic ideas and their lodges. They recruited men either for their *Logen* or new groups such as the "Turnerverein" or "Turnerbund," which often carried the deistic slogan, "Tolerance, against all fanaticism; Reason,

[1] "The Lutheran Churches View Fraternal Organizations," a tract published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., in 1962.

The author is associate professor of historical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and chairman of the Commission on Fraternal Organizations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

against all superstition."[2] These organizations fulfilled a religious and fraternal need in the German communities and had their initial period of growth in the 1830s, the years just before the organization of the Missouri Synod. "The Masons had . . . founded six separate lodges in St. Louis by 1842. In that same year, the even more active Odd Fellows, who had organized in 1834, had seven lodges in the city, one a special 'Germania' lodge for the Germans."[3]

1849—1871

Much of the appeal of the lodges centered in their charitable programs, which perhaps originated in the typical deistic criticism that the churches ignored the physical welfare of people. In 1849 *Der Lutheraner* warned against the lodges' claims concerning the charity they performed.[4] In a continuation of this article, the debate once more centered in the "false" charity as the lodge then practiced it.[5] The three-part study concluded with strong remarks against "the hypocritical charity" of the lodge.[6] The writer(s) also warned of the dangers inherent in the political activities of secret, oath-bound societies.[7]

The flow of immigrants from Germany to the New World around the middle of the 19th century resulted in an increase in lodge membership and activity. The Synod realized this and in 1853 "warned all its members and all Christians, especially our newly immigrated brethren, against these societies."[8] To meet the challenge concerning charity, the synodical statement added, "At the same time, Synod encourages its members and the Christian congregation generally most heartily to make provisions within their organizations for their poor and sick and thus render the battle against the ever-increasing seductions of secret orders more successful."[9]

The secrecy involved in lodges was also a concern of synodical leaders, as many early statements attest.[10] It is not, however, the major point of attack upon these societies by the Synod. Opposition remains centered in the unchristian nature of the groups.

The Lutheran synods that were formed in the middle of the last century and that stressed a strong confessional statement pursued the problem of the lodge. The Ohio and Iowa Synods revealed their concern about lodges when they addressed to the newly formed General Council the following question: "What relation will this venerable body in the future sustain to secret, or unchurchly societies?"[11] The Iowa Synod believed that the reply (by the General Council) in 1867 and again the following year was inadequate since they

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[2] Theodore Graebner, *A Handbook of Organizations* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1948), p. 4. Hereafter Graebner, *Handbook*.

[3] Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), p. 310.

[4] *Der Lutheraner*, V (1849), 170.

[5] Ibid., pp. 177 ff.

[6] Ibid., VI (1850), 19.

[7] Ibid., V (1849), 169 ff.

[8] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod *Proceedings*, VII (1853), 270. Hereafter LCMS *Proceedings*.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., Cited here are Eph. 5:11-12; John 3:20; 2 Cor. 6:14; Matt. 5:33-37; and Matt. 6:25-34 on secrecy, oaths, and ungodly persons. See also Eastern District *Reports* of 1858, page 22, and 1871, page 72, and *Der Lutheraner*, XXII, 73, 88, and 113.

[11] Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), p. 156.

only warned their "members and ministers against all fellowship with, or connivance at associations which have this [lodge] character."[12] Secrecy and the anti-ecclesiastical nature of such groups remain major factors.

Evidence shows that questions were arising in the field both about the admission of lodge members to congregations and the communing of those found in congregations. In 1858 a congregation of the Eastern District asked "whether members of secret societies can for a longer period of time be received as guests at Holy Communion?" This seems to be the first time that this question, which was to dominate discussions for a century, received consideration at a District level. The Eastern District replied to the congregation:

> It is the opinion of Synod, that it is not permissible to dabble in this matter with laws and ordinances and with them bind the conscience of the preachers. This matter as well as all such cases which belong to the care of souls *(Privatseelsorge)*, must be left to the individual preacher. In regard to the admission of individuals belonging to secret societies to the Holy Supper, as well in general in regard to all communicants, he is to inquire solely, whether a person is really a believer; if this is the case, and if he is otherwise ever so weak and in regard to secret societies ever so unclear then a preacher must receive him. For it is not within his power to deny the Treasures of the kingdom of Heaven to a lamb of Christ, though it be the very weakest. We preachers should rather beware of rejecting anyone who by faith has become a member of the body of Christ, even though he be a weak member; for it would be harder for us to answer for such a thing on the Last Day than for being anxiously careful not to admit an unworthy guest.[13]

This was to become the model of all so-called evangelical statements on lodge practice in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The issue of the Sacrament and lodge members was the subject of a long and lively debate at the 11th convention of the Missouri Synod. The 1863 convention report contains a summary which indicates that the Synod failed to reach a consensus. The statement reveals the variety of opinions and practice in the synodical body.

> All these speeches and arguments raised against them [the arguments on lodge practice] clearly showed that it was impossible to bring about any agreement in this matter. Therefore it was finally *unanimously resolved* to report this to the Synod of the Eastern District as the answer to its inquiry. To this resolution, however, the following explanatory statement was added: We should not permit ourselves to be discouraged too much because we could not come to an agreement in this matter. For the matter in question is not *a point of doctrine;* we are in full agreement on this particular doctrine; but we are dealing with a *specific case in casuistry*, that is, a difficult case of official practice and conscience.[14] (Italics original.)

The resolution of 1863 clearly distinguishes between the matter of practice and of doctrine. There is agreement on the latter point, but diversity in practice remains.

On Oct. 16, 1864, C. F. W. Walther wrote a letter to the Rev. George Kuechle

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[12] Wolf, pp. 161, 163.

[13] LCMS Eastern District *Proceedings*, IV (1858), 22.

[14] LCMS *Proceedings*, XI (1863), 60 ff.

of Columbus, Indiana, in which he stated his views on lodge practice.

> I must acknowledge my hesitancy in writing a reply to your letter. The cause of it is this: my conviction in this question differs from that of men in our Synod whom I esteem highly. If it were regarding a clear doctrine, this would not cause me to have any misgivings. . . . Here, however, no doctrine is involved (since we perfectly agree in our opinion regarding secret orders according to God's Word), but what is involved is a practical application of this doctrine in a concrete case. Here I proceed from the principle that whomever I cannot prove to be an unbeliever and who professes my faith, I will not refuse Communion nor membership in the congregation even if he still is living in some sins of weakness or ignorance. . . . When a congregation has the condition in its constitution that no member of a secret order may become a member of that congregation, I consider this a mistake and very harmful especially in this neighborhood in which lodges are prevailing. . . . I recognize the danger which threatens if we open the churches to "lodge brothers," but it is better that love should assume this risk than that it commit a wrong and deny that to God's children to which they are entitled through faith; if instead of inviting them to come in, we stand like a judge before the church and drive them back with a two-edged sword. . . . Might a rigorous attitude on this point not lead to Anabaptist ideas about the perfection of the invisible church? Briefly, I insist, let us distinguish between doctrine and life, between justification and sanctification. Let us publicly and privately urge the case against secret orders, without, however, making a mortal sin of that which in many cases is a sin of weakness, and without judging sin according to the act, but according to the person. . . . Dear Brother, I do not wish that you would ever quote me in this matter.[15] I would seriously regret it if practical questions would be used by the devil in order to cast a torch in our midst.[16]

1871—1900

The Eastern District again faced this question in 1871 when it accepted a congregation with lodge members. The District Synod held in 1873 that "lodgemen must not be tolerated indefinitely . . . and [went on] record as approving the communing of lodge members for a certain time."[17] In addition it held that "the lodge

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[15] The German text reads: *Ich moechte aber nicht, lieber Bruder, das sie sich je hierbei auf mich beriefen.* The English translation could read: "Dear Brother, I do not wish, however, that you would ever appeal to my authority in this matter."

[16] *Lehre und Wehre,* LIX (1913), 385. The letter was reprinted in that year to clear up misunderstandings which had been circulating concerning its contents, according to the editor's note. A. R. Suelflow, "Notes on the Rev. J. M. Buehler of California," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly,* XXV (1952), 191, contains a letter from M. Henry Tietjen to Rev. A. Suelflow of the Concordia Historical Institute under date of Oct. 19, 1951, which perhaps shows that the 1864 view was not just an isolated opinion of Walther: "While we are on the subject of California, it may be well to take up other points. Buehler soon realized that this work would be among lodge members, for the Lutherans largely held membership in them. So he wrote to Walther for advice. Walther advised him to ignore the lodge for the present and saturate the people with the Gospel as a sponge is saturated with water; then they would leave the lodge, but no sooner."

[17] Eastern District *Proceedings,* XVI (1871), 75. David P. Scaer ("Connecticut Lutheranism," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly,* XXXVIII [1965], 99) cites the case of the Rev. Nicholas Soergel of Rockville, Conn., on the lodge. This well might have been the case under discussion inasmuch as the time is the same and the pastor was secretary of the Eastern District.

issue is . . . only a point of discipline in life and not a doctrine or religious conviction." This District's actions on the communing of lodge members seems to have had a major impact on The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for almost a half century. One is struck by the numerous references to their actions in reports of Districts, conferences, and synodical meetings.[18]

Insofar as a synodical "position" on lodge practice existed by 1873, it was characterized by three points. (1) The lodges are unchristian and must be opposed on doctrinal grounds. (2) Individual congregations and pastors alone can decide questions of practice, but procrastination should be avoided. (3) There was considerable variety in practice, but this should not be confused with doctrinal ambiguity.

C. F. W. Walther discussed lodge practices in a series of theses that dealt with "Altar Fellowship with Those of Another Faith." The paper was delivered to the Western District in 1870. In the tenth thesis on secret orders he said:

> We repeat the statement that with reference to their admission to the Lord's Table we make a distinction between those who persistently and against better conviction remain in these bulwarks of the devil, or who are affiliated with lodges that pursue some religious tendency, or participate in individual religious lodge ceremonies even if these are less essential and those [persons] of whom neither one nor the other of these assertions were made. To the former we deny Communion as we deny it to others who are unrepentant or have a false religion. To the latter we cannot deny altar fellowship since they are weak and their error is one of life (conduct).[19]

In 1876, the Illinois District argued for greater strictness toward the lodge.

> Who among our church members when our Synod was founded, had a sufficient, correct, and profound understanding of the devilish and godless activities of the secret orders? There were only a few such. Hence, we proceeded with great discrimination in the beginning. But after our congregations had been instructed, *we have become stricter every year and in proportion to the growing knowledge must show a growing strictness.* Those who have become stronger in knowledge must not be treated like the weak.[20] (Italics added by Theodore Graebner.)

Walther used his Sunday evening informal lectures to the students of Concordia Seminary ("Luther Hours") in the years 1877—1878 for a discussion of the action of the Eastern District.

> Frederick Pfotenhauer later reported on these discussions: Dr. Walther instructed us never to admit lodgemen outright (to the Lord's Supper), nor to refuse them Communion as if they were unchristian,

[18] LCMS Northern District *Proceedings*, 1874, p. 70; *Der Lutheraner*, XXIII (1877), 66 f.

[19] LCMS Western District *Proceedings* (1870), p. 63.

[20] Graebner's notes, p. 28, quoting from the LCMS Illinois District *Proceedings* (1876), p. 47. This quotation is taken from the unpublished manuscript translation of materials on the lodges from the period 1847—77 by Dr. Graebner and Rev. O. F. Engelbrecht of Milwaukee. This work was done in 1936 by these two members of the Missouri Synod Bureau of Information Regarding Secret Orders. The writer is indebted to this work for many translations used in this study. This quotation of Dr. Graebner's translation contains the assertion that he is responsible for the italics or underlinings in this one place only.

but to suspend them provisionally from the Lord's Supper.[21]

During the last quarter of the 19th century the Synod's approach to the lodge situation varied both in intensity and direction. In rural areas notice is taken of the Grangers and other organizations that reflect growing farm problems. The years from 1870 to 1897 were years in which the farmer suffered serious economic losses. The movement of the Grangers was a predominant force from 1867 to 1897, when it fell victim to a panic in the economic world. The Grange numbered over 800,000 members in the rural areas of the United States and thus constituted a force the churches had to recognize. William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska inspired many to join the Grangers.

While the rural church was concerned about the lodgery in the Granger movement, the rapidly urbanizing members of the Synod turned their attention to possible lodgery within the labor unions.[22] These labor unions, especially The Knights of Labor, were often discredited because of the open warfare that marked the labor movement. In addition, there was a growing taint of socialism connected with some of these unions. The question about which factor — religion, secrecy, violence, or socialism — affected most strongly the church's attitude toward these "lodges" is not settled by the records. A combination of these seems to be the best answer. The church probably did not oppose these unions on religious and secrecy grounds alone.

A Time of Crystallization, 1900—1932

In 1894 the Michigan District enunciated a principle in keeping with Walther's Western District thesis 10, although it also called for specific action by the weak Christian.

> Since it is possible that a weak Christian, because of insufficient knowledge, is a member of a lodge and longs after the Lord's Supper, he must not under all circumstances be denied the same. But the least that is to be expected of him is that he publicly declare his separation from the idolatry practiced in the "worship" of the lodges, and thenceforth omits to attend meetings where such worship takes place.[23]

Can the change from Walther's statements and those of Districts in the past be explained? It should be noted here that this pronouncement came in the last years of the 19th century when economic conditions in the United States in general were excellent and lodgery was flourishing. The *Lutheran Witness* reported that according to the 1890 census there were 8,400,000 [sic] male lodge members compared with only 4,500,000 male Protestant church members over 21 years of age in the United States.[24] Lodges had become a religious and an economic problem in the eyes of many. Examples of the growth

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21 "D. Walther über Behandlung der Logenfrage," *Lehre und Wehre*, LIX (1913), 387.

22 LCMS Illinois District *Proceedings* (1895), p. 40, on Knights of Labor. LCMS *Proceedings* (1891), p. 23; 1882, p. 12, on labor unions.

23 Ibid., p. 54. It cites the 1874 Eastern District *Report*, p. 44: "A Lodgeman who still attends the lodge and does not repudiate the idolatry of the same, and perhaps even takes part in it, is not to be admitted to communion." The italics in the quotation in the text are part of the original.

24 *LW*, XVI (1897), 103. The figure of 8.4 million is in error and should read approximately 3.4 million male lodge members

of lodges both on the rural and the urban scene can be cited. In St. Louis by 1900 there were actually three times as many halls dedicated to lodges as there were church buildings.[25]

Furthermore, in the last years of the 19th century and the early years of the present one the Lutheran mission work was limited rather narrowly to German immigrants. The "new immigration" after 1880 consisted mostly of Roman Catholics and Jews, and the supply of immigrants from Germany and other Protestant countries was gradually shut off. The Lutherans then concentrated on solidifying their gains in the New World. During the years 1900—1910 the urban population grew 34.8 percent, and this gain was three times that of the rural areas. The population thrust was clearly toward the cities. With this movement many of the churches in rural areas entrenched themselves theologically, while others began to see the cities as the root of evil. The "Social Gospel" was for many the result of bad theology and poor practice.

In these years Lutherans of the Missouri Synod began to consider other support for their position relative to the lodges. The *Lutheran Witness* equated the Synod's lodge position with that of other church groups.[26] With the rise of the high school fraternal movements in the early 20th century, lodgery shows itself there, and the Synod extended its opposition.[27] The false charity of the lodges is regularly derided in synodical writings. Secrecy was still a major issue.[28]

In the face of these developments the Lutherans affiliated with the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference spoke out firmly in 1904. The Rev. P. J. F. C. Harders presented an essay entitled "May a Lutheran Pastor Administer Holy Communion to a Lodge Member, or Must He Refuse to Do So?" He argued that "on the basis of Holy Scripture we may now take the position that a brother in the congregation who has gone over to the lodge is to be denied the Sacrament of the Altar until he acknowledges the sinfulness of the lodge business and has stepped out.[29]

The *Theological Quarterly* of the following year echoed this view: "With regard to lodge members the rule should obtain that they must first withdraw from the lodge." It added the qualifying statement:

> There are exceptional cases when a man can be admitted before he has formally announced his withdrawal to the lodge, but the rule must be: First withdraw, then commune.[30]

With the failure of many insurance lodges between 1900 and 1910 interest in them on the part of the church declined. There is no major reference to lodgery in the *Theological Quarterly* in its entire ex-

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[25] Harold Underwood Faulker, *The Quest for Social Justice* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 305.

[26] *LW*, XIII (1894), 12, on the Reformed Presbyterians; XVI (1897), 174, on the United Brethren; XVII (1898); 78, on the United Presbyterians.

[27] *LW*, XXV (1906), 169, and XXVI (1907), 7.

[28] *LW*, VI (1888), 115, and XXIV (1905), 167.

[29] "Kann ein lutherischer Pastor einem Logenmitgliede das heilige Abendmahl reichen, oder muss er es ihm verweigern?", The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference *Report* (1904), pp. 5—50.

[30] *Theological Quarterly*, IX (1905), 123.

istence up to 1920. The *Lutheran Witness* from 1900 to 1915 contains only occasional references to the lodge.[31] Almost nothing is reported or discussed in the first two decades of the 1900s by either District synods or the Synod.

With the outbreak of World War I there was a renewal of interest in fraternalism in the United States. In 1915 the *Lutheran Witness* began a series of articles by Ben Holt of Fargo, North Dakota, on why people join the Masons.[32] In that same year, the number of references to the lodge in the columns of the *Lutheran Witness* rose sharply, and in the following year there were 14 references. After 1918, soldiers came home with an urge for continuing fraternity with friends who had fought side by side with them.

In the postwar years the Synod's opposition was gradually changing. Whereas in the past charity and secrecy had been emphasized, in 1918 J. H. C. Fritz signaled the tone for the future by arguing that "the real issue of our Lutheran Church, in discussing lodge membership, is the *religious issue.*"[33] This insight served to focus the attention of the church away from the secrecy argument and toward that religious point which is crucial in the Missouri Synod's opposition to lodgery, that of the denial of the Gospel.

In the last year of the second decade the English District asked: "What shall be the present-day attitude of our church toward the lodge in practice?" A second query asked: "Shall lodge members be permitted to hold communicant membership in our churches?" In a reply to these questions, the District resolution urged that:

> We should testify against the lodge and confess Christ also by action of refusing to fellowship with anyone who is in any way, intentionally or ignorantly, directly or indirectly, a participant in the gross idolatry practiced by the lodge.[34]

At the 1920 Detroit Synod an unprinted memorial asked for an interpretation of Section 6.2 of the *Synodical Handbook.* The Synod resolved that the words "unionism and syncretism of every description" included the "renunciation of all lodgery."[35]

Growing mission work led to increased contact with mission prospects who had lodge background. The Oregon-Washington District in 1922 issued the following advice.

> It is a wrong practice, and that missionary makes a gross mistake who thinks he has to take in lodge members at first when a

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[31] *LW*, XXIII (1904), 9, against Elks; XXIV (1905), 100, on secrecy; XXV (1906), 90, on fraternities; XXVI (1907), 7, on high school groups; XVIII (1909) 321, on General Synod weakness on lodges; ibid., 273, on Pennsylvania Ministerium and practice; XXX (1911), 138, on cheap life insurance; XXXI (1912), 1 F., on United Norwegian Lutheran position; XXXII (1913), 129, on New York problems, et passim.

[32] *LW*, XXXIV, 153, 169, 338 ff. Interest in the other aspects of lodgery that had gained attention did not diminish, as the 1915—19 issues show clearly.

[33] *LW*, XXXVII (1918), 388—89.

[34] English District, *Proceedings* (1919), pp. 40—47.

[35] Pages 46—47. This reference is probably in direct relationship to the *Synodical Handbook.* When the first English version appeared in 1924, Synod held "that the words 'renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description' in Section 6.2 of the Constitution shall be understood to include also the ungodly lodge system." (This version is a translation of the previous German edition. The circuit visitor is to "ask the pastor . . . with reference to . . . lodges, or secret societies, and similar antichristian organizations" (p. 52).

> new congregation is founded, because these people do not have the correct understanding of the matter, are not sufficiently grounded in doctrine, and because he fears to harm the Kingdom of God by strict practice.[36]

In 1925 the Southern Illinois District demanded a "reaffirmation"[37] of our position on the lodge question and insisted that "if a congregation, after having received due instruction, refuse to rid itself of the lodge members, Synod shall discipline such a congregation and eventually refuse it Christian fellowship."[38]

In the year 1921 the *Lutheran Witness* had at least 27 references to lodges and their practice.[39] Other church groups with strong antilodge platforms are cited in the *Lutheran Witness*.[40] Perhaps much of this intensive pressure against the secret orders stems from successful lodge propaganda, which according to the *Lutheran Witness* was persuading many that "the churches are letting down the bars."[41] The pressure of the lodges and their membership agents seemed to have turned the lodges' attention toward the Lutheran position, and some lodgemen suggested that the Lutherans had changed their opposition.[42]

The editors of the *Lutheran Witness* felt that there were some clear problems in the practice of the Synod and argued in "Are We a Unit on the Lodge Question?" that "we do not for a moment entertain the opinion that conditions are perfect in our Synod."[43] In 1923 T[heodore] G[raebner] commented editorially, "I shall be entirely candid and admit that things are not as they should be in our lodge practice . . . and they never will be in the future."[44] There is an urgent call for a "strenuous campaign against lodges within the church."[45] The columns of the *Lutheran Witness* in 1923 contain at least 28 different references and the following year more than 16 items relative to lodgery appeared. In 1924 the letter of Walther was reprinted. The article concluded with the comment that "he wanted no legalistic, automatic exclusion of lodgemen from the church."[46]

The campaign was carried on in other Lutheran bodies as well. In 1920 the *Lutheran Witness* quoted without comment an article from the *Lutheran Standard* which relates the position of Dr. Theodore Schmauk on lodges as he presented the matter to the National Lutheran Council and encouraged firmness with respect to the lodges. He cited the Lutheran Church in America as the only Lutheran group which did not officially oppose lodgery.[47] The New York Ministerium put a pastor out for becoming a member of a "secret or-

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[36] LCMS Oregon-Washington District *Proceedings* (1922), p 13.

[37] It should be noted that up to this time there had been no official synodical policy on lodge practice.

[38] LCMS Southern Illinois District *Proceedings* (1925), pp. 21—22.

[39] *LW*, XL (1921), passim.

[40] Ibid., p. 20, cites eleven small religious sects in the United States that are opposed to lodges. It should be noted, however, that the reasons for their opposition are not always the same as those advanced by the Missouri Synod.

[41] Ibid., p. 396.

[42] Ibid., XLI (1922), 169.

[43] Ibid., p. 199.

[44] Ibid., XLII (1923), 163. Quotation is by Dr. Graebner.

[45] Ibid., pp. 34—36.

[46] Ibid., XLII (1924), 215.

[47] Ibid., XXXIX (1920), 138.

der."[48] The Ohio Synod was in the process of reinforcing its rule of 1888 "that members of secret societies can neither become members of our congregations nor indefinitely remain such and be admitted to the Lord's Supper."[49]

In this period Theodore Graebner became the major spokesman for the opposition to the lodge, basing his views on his extensive study of the matter over many years.[50] In the *Lutheran Witness* of 1925 he observed:

> One occasionally meets with the expression that the fathers of our Synod had a more liberal policy regarding lodge membership than is advocated in our Synod at the present time. Now, when a Missouri Synod pastor assumes his office, he does not take a vow upon the writings of Dr. Walther, Dr. Sihler, and Professor Craemer, nor on *Der Lutheraner,* whether of 1845 or 1925, nor on pamphlets, private letters, and what not, of our fathers — for whom the writer has, it should be said, only profound admiration. His oath of ordination was not taken on a stack of *Lehre und Wehre* or on the archives of Concordia Seminary, but on the Bible and the Book of Concord. No matter how strict or how liberal our fathers were regarding questions of congregational practice, it can mean nothing to us. Our congregations cannot defend either strictness or laxity by referring to opinions of the fathers. We should, then, be Romanistic in principle, accepting tradition alongside of the inspired Scriptures.[51]

Nevertheless, he returns to the fathers of the Synod for his guide:

> Now, while the opinions of the sainted fathers of our Synod are not a norm for our congregations, it may strengthen some of us to discover that more than seventy-five years ago the official opinion of our Church was exactly what it is today so far as the religion of the lodge is concerned.[52]

He adds the comments heretofore mentioned from the dialog over the lodges in *Der Lutheraner* in 1849. Graebner did not enter into the question of the matter of practice in this article.

In 1925 Graebner published *Winning the Lodge-Man: A Handbook of Lodges,* in which he began his analysis of Masonry and related lodges in the United States. He followed this work with a further study in 1927 entitled *The Secret Empire: A Handbook of Lodges* and completed his work on the subject in 1948 with *A Handbook of Organizations.*

In Chicago in 1914 the synodical president was asked "to appoint a committee of three pastors residing near each other who are to confer on the questions at issue."[53] The issue was over the difference of opinion on lodge practice between "a conference and the faculty at St. Louis regarding the interpretation of articles which have appeared in the official reports or periodicals of the Synodical Conference and of our own Synod."[54] These queries concerning the communicant membership of such as have not yet fully separated from the lodge probably refer back to the sense of the

[48] Ibid., XLII (1923), 268.

[49] Ibid., p. 390.

[50] Graebner served as editor of the *Lutheran Witness* from 1913 to 1949.

[51] *LW,* XLIV (1925), 437.

[52] Ibid.

[53] LCMS *Proceedings* (1914), pp. 53—54. At synod in Milwaukee in 1917 no report of this committee appears.

[54] Ibid.

1904 resolution of the Synodical Conference. The matter seems to have been resolved by the committee since the 1917 Milwaukee *Proceedings* give no report of the matter.

The St. Louis synod of 1926 spent a great amount of time on the lodge question. It was obvious by this time that there was a growing diversity of practice and also a growing interest in resolving the question of lodge practice within the Missouri Synod. The Central District, the Central Illinois District, and the Southern Indiana Pastoral Conference presented memorials pertaining to lodge practice. The Central District proposed the principle that "no lodge member shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper as long as he holds membership in the lodge."[55] It also called for the establishment of a Lodge Information Bureau in the same resolution. The other two petitioning parties asked that elected synodical officials be "pastors of congregations known to be free of the lodge evil"[56] and that "no pastor of a congregation in which lodgemen are admitted to the Lord's Table be eligible to an executive position in Synod."[57] The Synod answered these requests by resolving "that Synod go on record as being as firmly as ever opposed to lodgery because of its unchristian and anti-Christian character"[58] and by authorizing a Lodge Information Bureau. It also called for pastoral discipline by Districts in dealing with congregations on the lodge issue and for the formation of a committee

> of nine capable and trustworthy men from various parts of Synod who shall give these questions further study and make suitable recommendations to Synod at its next session and thus assure to our whole Church the blessed fruits of such continued study and discussion of this important question.[59]

The synod of 1929 in River Forest was memorialized by the Western District for an educational campaign among the congregations "which shall lead to a definite decision and final action on the part of such congregations as still permit lodge members to commune at their altars."[60] The Iowa District urged action against congregations that were negligent.[61] The first report of the Committee on Lodges appears in the *Proceedings* of this synod. The committee had asked conferences within the Synod for opinions on the lodge and lodge practice and reported that

> it has become clear that, while the difference concerning the question whether lodge members may under certain circumstances be admitted to Communion still exists, there is an increasing tendency toward greater strictness in dealing with the lodge evil and a growing concern lest any show of tolerance lead to a gradual breakdown of discipline in this respect.[62]

In addition, the Synod

> declares that it is Scriptural, and has been and is the practice of our Synod, not to administer Holy Communion to members of

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[55] LCMS *Proceedings* (1926), p. 146. It is instructive to note how many memorials to this effect have been presented to District and general synods. Diversity in practice must have continued.

[56] Ibid., p. 147.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., p. 148.

[59] Ibid.

[60] LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1929), p. 141.

[61] Ibid., p. 142.

[62] LCMS *Proceedings* (1929), p. 115.

> lodges. Resolved, That in cases of casuistry — i. e. in cases which present unusual features, rendering their classification difficult — the conscientious pastor will not satisfy himself either by quoting a synodical resolution or tradition or by assuming an attitude which must cause offense among those not acquainted with the case.[63]

Lest, however, this be taken as license by any, Synod adds that "experience has abundantly demonstrated that the practice of admitting lodge members to the Sacrament indiscriminately and indefinitely with the hope of gradually persuading them to sever their lodge connections will lead to bitter disappointment and hopeless confusion." [64]

The Synod had spoken formally for the first time on the matter of lodge *practice* and had, in effect, established a new principle for the local pastoral practice *(Privatseelsorge)*. The 1929 resolution of the Synod supported a different practice than that permitted by the 1863 resolution. That it always "has been the practice of our Synod, not to administer Holy Communion to members of lodges," is a debatable statement, as other evidence cited in this study suggests. While synodical and District resolutions were strong and firm in opposition to *lax* lodge practice, most of them contain qualifications with regard to special cases and urge an evangelical concern both for lodgemen within congregations and toward congregations with lodge members.

Graebner's analysis of the River Forest meetings underscores the tensions that were present in the Synod and also indicates his own firm convictions.

The great fight on the lodge question which many expected did not develop. Fears had been expressed, on the one hand, that the convention would adopt resolutions which a synodical body cannot adopt without invading the rights of congregations and of pastors under their call. Others feared that the floodgates would be turned open to a liberal attitude with reference to secret orders. There was a single "no." This has been widely exploited in the Lutheran press as indicating grave dissension in the Missouri Synod, an impatient rattling at the bars to give lodge members full standing. This is ridiculous. The single vote against the four paragraphs adopted (they were adopted as one) was based on a misunderstanding, cleared up by the committee's secretary and accepted by the delegates.

The question settled by this convention was not whether lodges should be tolerated in our congregations; that question was settled by the convention in 1926. What now concerned us was the question whether membership in any secret order under all conditions, and automatically, excludes from the Lord's Supper. The difference concerning this question may be summed up in two sentences: Some of us believe that our chief purpose must be to keep the lodges out of our congregations. And who would oppose this? Others believe that our chief concern must be to gain the lodge man for Christ and Christian fellowship. And who would want to oppose that? On the one hand, cases, whether authentic or not, of a legalistic automatic exclusion policy are cited. Others were cognizant of cases in which ministers have neglected their duty of admonishing those who have joined secret orders and of instructing their congregations in Lutheran methods of procedure. The resolutions adopted are, we believe,

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[63] Ibid., p. 116.

[64] Ibid.

practical and evangelical and no more open to abuse than any other evangelical principle. Comparing the meetings of 1929 and 1926, we will say that this year's speeches by the friends of a strong anti-lodge policy did not come quite so close to talking a good set of resolutions to death as those of three years ago. In all good conscience the Lodge Committee's Report held out no hope to those who believed that Missouri was ready to capitulate to the secret orders; and also the resolutions adopted, though not so stringent in terms as the lodge committee's propositions, leave them without a ray of light. When we once view with equal favor the two propositions that to win the lodge man is our duty and that we keep the lodges out of the Church is likewise our duty, we shall more fully recognize our essential unity, understand each other's problems, and where differences arise, speak with more statesmanlike calm than was sometimes done at River Forest.[65]

An opinion of the St. Louis faculty, prepared in 1932 in response to a letter and query from the Rev. Henry Abram of Amherst, Ohio, and written by Theodore Graebner, called for a clear and evangelical distinction between doctrine and practice in this matter. It reads in part as follows:

> It should be noted also that the earlier expressions of our Synod, be they strict or lenient, have no binding value. Nor has the Synod ever officially spoken until 1926 when it resolved unanimously to reaffirm its opposition to lodgery. . . . The unanimous resolution is there recorded that a difference in the handling of certain individual cases that does not involve a difference in doctrine is not divisive of brotherly relations. This we too maintain is based both on evangelical and soundly Lutheran principles of relationship.[66]

In 1932 John H. C. Fritz published a volume on pastoral theology which was used in seminary classrooms of the Synod for a generation and was mechanically reproduced for continuing use as late as 1963. He states that the Missouri Synod "has since its organization held that lodge members, while holding lodge-membership should not be admitted to the Lord's Table and to the membership of Christian congregations." He argues that there is no excuse for those who hold membership in the lodge through ignorance and that those who retain their membership only for pecuniary reasons are "actually members of the lodge, and cannot be communed." He concludes: "Since it is a fact that Christian church-membership and lodge-membership exclude each other, there can, strictly speaking, never be made an *exception* to the rule that a Christian should not be a member of a lodge and that therefore a lodge member should not be communed."[67] (Italics in original)

An analysis of the fellowship relations of the Missouri Synod and the synods which later formed the American Lutheran Church in 1930, the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo Synods, should be undertaken at this point. The four synods had worked on the Intersynodical (Chicago) Theses from 1925 to 1928. These negotiations were taking place at the same time that the Missouri Synod was moving toward a stronger position on lodgery. Although one looks in vain to find support for the

[65] *LW*, XLVIII (1929), 346—47.

[66] Faculty opinion to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Amherst, Ohio, April 19, 1932.

[67] J. H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1932), pp. 223—29.

claim that the lodge issue was a divisive factor, there is the suggestion that there was disagreement on "proper church practice" among the Lutheran groups.[68] Missouri rejected these theses in 1929. It is interesting to note that the reason given is that "these synods have entered . . . fraternal relations [with the Norwegian Lutheran Church]."[69] While the lodge practice is not mentioned as a cause for breaking off discussion, there is reference to practice which apparently is different in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In the late twenties the Missouri Synod moved away from other Lutheran synods, and some of the reason rests on the diversity of practice within these groups. The Missouri Synod was beginning to move toward a unilateral interpretation of doctrine and practice that in 1932 produced the *Brief Statement.*

With the coming of the depression in October 1929, interest in lodge problems waned as the numbers of articles both in the *Lutheran Witness* and the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY attest. The *Lutheran Witness* was concerned both about the resurgence of Elks and the matter of insurance. There is a growing interest in dealing with exceptional cases. In an article entitled "Facing Our Worst Enemy — The Little Leaven" J. T. Mueller warns that there is "no open door for wholesale exceptions."[70]

At the Milwaukee delegate synod in 1932 the Bureau of Information Regarding Secret Orders noted "with gratification an improvement in the handling of lodge problems by our congregations."[71] The Northern Illinois District asked Synod for a clearer interpretation of the 1929 resolution and phrases such as "under certain circumstances . . . in cases which present unusual features, rendering classification difficult." The District memorial called these phrases too vague, too pliable, too general, and therefore misleading, inviting abuse and wrong practice.[72] Still others, believing that the resolutions of Synod had not been discussed sufficiently at River Forest in 1929, asked for a referendum among the congregations on the lodge issue. The question posed was whether the 1863 resolution which held that the practice of communing lodge members and accepting congregations with lodge members was *not a point of doctrine* was still valid.

> Can members of secret societies be received as guests at Holy Communion for a longer period of time? Shall we continue to abide by the original position and practice of our Synod? [The implication is that the matter of communing lodge members belongs to *Privatseelsorge.*] If the answer to these questions should show a division of opinion among our congregations, shall we, in this question of the application of Scriptural principles to Christian life, respect one another's conviction and conscience and bear with one another as brethren?[73]

The matter of the referendum received little attention, and it is assumed in this paper that the historical position of the

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[68] Wolf, p. 360.

[69] Ibid., p. 370.

[70] CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, I (1930), 39.

[71] LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1932), p. 141.

[72] Ibid., pp. 142—43.

[73] Ibid., p. 144—46. The committee cited with favor the 1932 St. Louis seminary faculty opinion.

Synod on the lodge is found in the 1929 resolutions.

A New Time of Flux and Change After 1932

The continuing depression of the thirties seems to have taken its toll of both the lodges and lodge interest in the Missouri Synod. Making a living became all important and the spirit of fraternalism faded into the background for many people. In 1932 the Synod affirmed "that the 1929 resolutions of Synod at River Forest, adopted unanimously after thorough deliberation, were to stand unchanged as the official declaration of Synod."[74] At the Cleveland Synod in 1935 the Bureau of Information Regarding Secret Orders notes that "the decay of the secret societies becomes more and more apparent. . . . Their day of prosperity . . . is definitely past."[75]

Not all in the Synod believed that the River Forest resolutions had solved all problems. In 1935 the Western Pastoral Conference of the South Wisconsin District called for the Synod to create a committee of nine men to investigate the "deplorable variance existing in our Synod."[76] The Synod responded by asking that the matter of lodgery should be a part of the agenda in all areas of the church beginning with the District presidents.[77] It also warned against legalistic measures in dealing with the persistent issue.[78]

[74] LCMS *Proceedings* (1932), p. 178.

[75] LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1935), p. 174.

[76] Ibid., p. 176.

[77] LCMS *Proceedings* (1935), p. 218.

[78] Ibid., p. 339. Cf. also p. 171 of *Reports and Memorials* (1935).

The edition of the *Synodical Handbook* of 1937 stated:

> Resolved, That the Synod hereby declare that it is, and shall be, the practice of our Synod not to administer Holy Communion to members of the lodges; Resolved, That we do not deny that a conscientious pastor may under certain circumstances ("in cases which present unusual features, rendering their classification difficult") administer Holy Communion to a person who is still outwardly connected with a lodge. But in such a case the pastor shall earnestly beware of procrastinating and giving offense, and to this end he shall freely and conscientiously consult with his vestry and congregation, his brethren in the ministry, and with the officials of the Synod, as the case may require. Resolved, That the Synod hereby declares that the practice outlined above is Scriptural and evangelical.[79]

At the synod in St. Louis in 1938 the Lodge Bureau of Synod called attention to the fact that the problem of lodgery "has shifted from the field of congregational problems to the field of missionary problems."[80] The bureau reiterated the 1926 position and observed that "it is evident that from its beginning the expression of our Church was unanimously against all toleration of lodge members." The report added that Synod was "also against a legalistic, mechanical operation with lodge resolutions, paragraphs, and principles."[81]

In its report the Synod's Lodge Bureau recognized perhaps for the first time, that there was a difference between Masons and

[79] *Synodical Handbook* (1937), pp. 53—54.

[80] LCMS *Proceedings* (1938), p. 341.

[81] Ibid.

other "borderline societies."[82] The report also recognized that there were in the Synod areas where legalistic practice is followed, others where there is sound evangelical practice, and "areas in which there had been a more or less definite let-down in regard to the lodge."[83]

In a paper presented in 1940, the Rev. O. F. Engelbrecht of Milwaukee, a longtime member of the Bureau of Information on Secret Societies of the Synod, appealed for evangelical practice. He characterized Synod's attitude of the "old days" when "many pastors and congregations operated with a lodge paragraph in the constitution of the congregation. They made no effort to get at the conscience of the lodgemen. If he joined the lodge, out he went."[84] He adds the comment that "even today many of our people do not know why our church is opposed to lodgery."[85] Of Synod's lodge paragraph (probably with reference to the 1937 *Handbook*) he holds that "in actual practice it is not always possible to follow this rule."[86]

In 1943 the Bureau of Information on Secret Societies canvassed the District presidents on the lodge situation in their Districts. The bureau reported to the Saginaw convention the following year "that without exception they [the presidents] declare that to their knowledge the congregations of their District stand four-square on Synod's resolution." There is, however, a confession that there are a "few bad spots."[87]

Perhaps a more accurate picture is found in the bureau report submitted to the Chicago synod in 1947 which observed that "the postwar prosperity has caused the lodges of our country to compete for new members, especially men who have returned from military service."[88] Those who found a spirit of fraternalism with their comrades in the service continued to seek it in the lodges after peace arrived. It is also clear that the problem areas were growing, for "our conferences permit, apparently without making any remonstrance, lax practices in the reception of members."[89] Pastors from Cleveland asked Synod in 1947 to define the meaning of "procrastinating without being legalistic" with regard to lodge practice.[90] Synod urged firmness in the application of Matthew 18 without being legalistic.[91]

In 1948 Theodore Graebner published a revision of his two previous works on the

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[82] LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1941), pp. 785—86.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Graebner, *Handbook*, p. xix.

[85] Ibid., p. xx.

[86] Ibid., p. xxiv. When the synodical Handbook was revised between 1938 and 1941, there appeared for the first time a section on lodges designated as "Varia 901." This delegate synod did not adopt the *Handbook* and asked for further study and coordination with those of the past.

It is not clear how the section referred to in the 1943 version as "Varia 901" became an official part of the *Synodical Handbook*. In the report of the Handbook Committee to the Chicago Synod (1947) it appears as 13.01, "Synod's Position Concerning Lodges," under Section XIII — Miscellaneous. In 1956 it became 14.01 ff, and the name of Synod's Bureau was changed to the Commission on Fraternal Orders.

[87] LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1944), p. 346.

[88] LCMS *Proceedings* (1944), p. 258. *Proceedings* (1941), p. 392; *Reports and Memorials* (1944), p. 345; *Reports and Memorials* (1947), p. 506.

[89] Ibid.

[90] LCMS *Proceedings* (1947), p. 472.

[91] Ibid., p. 473.

lodge in the now familiar *A Handbook of Organizations.* In an analysis of the 1927 problems relative to the lodge, Graebner asserted that difference in lodge practice "should not be regarded as divisive of fellowship, as it is 'a matter not of doctrine, but of treating certain special cases, which will vary in their aspects with varying circumstances.'"[92] He asserted further that "when judging the practice of other pastors in these matters, we encourage charity and extreme caution."[93] Under a section entitled "Evangelical Practice Under Varying Conditions" he argues, "We must never operate with a 'rule of Synod' or with the 'lodge paragraph' of the local constitution, but show the individual the sinfulness of his lodge affiliation."[94] He reminded the reader

> that the congregation disciplines, not the pastor . . . [and] unless the congregation is convinced that in a given case a member is living in sin by affiliation with a lodge, it would be a wicked thing, says Dr. Walther regarding the same matter, to urge a congregation to take steps of church discipline.[95]

After half a century of synodical discussion and action the Bureau of Information on Secret Orders confessed to the Synod at Milwaukee in 1950 that "we cannot admit that the situation in the Church today is perceptibly different from that at the beginning of the century."[96] Suffice it to say that lodge practice at this time was marked by extremes of legalism and laxity. In 1950 the Synod, reflecting the changes in the *Handbook* of 1947, asked congregations "not to administer Holy Communion to members of such lodges."[97] In his triennial report to the Houston convention, Dr. John W. Behnken, president of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, observed: "Unfortunately there are some complaints that some congregations fail to abide by the practice outlined by Synod in 1929 and 1932. Synod's position over against lodgery has not changed."[98] At the same meeting the Commission on Fraternal Orders observed that

> the position of our Church would be far more compelling and convincing if we could show that throughout our Synod all pastors and congregations are not only aware of the lodge evil, but are also, with God's help, grappling with the problem and doing all within their power to preserve their congregations from the inroads of secret oath-bound organizations.[99]

A memorial at Houston indicated that the practice of some pastors was to admit lodge members "in the hope that such closer relationship with the Christian congregation and regular participation in the Sacrament will convince them in time of the irreconcilable conflict between such lodges and Christianity, with the result that they will renounce their lodge membership."[100] In opposition to this practice a memorial called for firmness in lodge

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[92] Graebner, *Handbook,* p. xxxiii.

[93] Ibid., p. xxxv.

[94] Ibid, p. xxxviii.

[95] Ibid., p. xl.

[96] LCMS *Proceedings* (1950), pp. 862—63.

[97] Ibid., p. 555.

[98] LCMS *Proceedings* (1953), p. 11.

[99] Ibid., p. 417. The Commission also reported that they were receiving requests for information from other Lutheran bodies.

[100] Ibid., p. 480.

practice and proposed, once again, that lodgemen be prevented from becoming communicant members. The Synod approved this addition to Section 14.03f but committed further suggested changes to the Commission on Fraternal Orders for study and report in 1956.

At St. Paul in 1956 the commission suggested a revision of 14.03g to read that

> a conscientious pastor may encounter exceptional cases when he is called upon to administer Holy Communion to a person who is still *outwardly* connected with such a lodge.

They also warn against "procrastination" in the matter.[101] The commission also reported that

> in general, our pastors and congregations are fully aware of the lodge evil and Synod's position concerning lodges, that they are testifying against this evil, and that they are also, where the situation makes it necessary, employing disciplinary measures in accordance with Matthew 18:15 ff.[102]

This observation is based on reports from District presidents submitted in 1954. The Synod at St. Paul supported the position suggested by its Commission and incorporated the suggested changes into the *Handbook*.

When the Synod met at San Francisco in 1959, a layman proposed "that lodge members be taken into full membership with the rest of us sinners."[103] The delegates rejected this memorial but added an urgent request that the "President of Synod . . . instruct the District Presidents to make the lodge practice of congregations in their Districts a matter of special concern."[104] One can assume from the memorial and from the response that conditions were far from perfect within the Synod. To this observation on the growing lodge problems could be added the greater amount of work that led the commission to request a full-time director at Cleveland in 1962, which was implemented by the Board of Directors in 1963.

George Beto, president of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, reported in 1961:

> Twenty-six out of one hundred and fourteen returning Springfield and St. Louis vicars this year (1961) indicated that they had observed on their vicarages a relaxed attitude toward lodgery not consistent with the principles taught in the classroom and presented in the pastoral theology books.[105]

It would probably be in order to suggest that practice was changing especially with regard to the so-called animal lodges. To an increasing degree, lodges were playing down their religious character and seeking to gain entire families for membership. The *National Observer* reported in 1966:

> Among the great anachronisms of the age are the fraternal organizations. . . . But a most interesting thing has been quietly going on among these groups in recent years: Here and there, around the country, some fraternal lodges are prospering mightily. And they seem to be achieving

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101 LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1956), p. 349. Italics by author.

102 Ibid., p. 399.

103 LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1959), p. 494.

104 LCMS *Proceedings* (1959), p. 268.

105 LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1962), p. 156. A quotation from Dr. Beto's report to a meeting of the college of District presidents in November 1961.

> this success chiefly to the degree that they are ceasing to be, in the old sense, fraternal, beneficial, ritualistic, male-oriented, semi-secret, and self-contained.[106]

Indications of a change in lodges is found in the commission report submitted to the San Francisco synod in 1959, stating that they had approved an "Alternate Initiation Ceremony" in conjunction with the Eagles. The commission found this "acceptable and felt it would replace the ritual completely before long."[107] The College of Presidents, however, found

> it impossible to approve the alternate initiation ceremony, [and] we recommend that we go on record not to affirm any kind of membership on the part of our people in the Order of Eagles by way of the alternate initiation ceremony.[108]

Something was clearly the matter with the lodge practice in the Synod in the early 1960's for it to engender such attention. These were prosperous times, but the lodges did not have the respectability they once enjoyed. Some have observed that they were actually losing out in many areas.[109]

Conditions within the Synod relative to the lodge and the changing image of the lodges were perhaps responsible for the presentation of an extensive doctrinal essay at Cleveland in 1962, in which Dr. Fred Kramer of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, reviewed much of the history.[110] He centered attention on the position of 1926 and 1929 and the lodge paragraphs in Synod's *Handbook* and emphasized the need for better practice in a confessional church like the Missouri Synod.

At the meeting of Synod in Detroit in 1965 the commission reported on its full-time director, Pastor Philip Lochhaas, and on its increasing volume of correspondence. Except for a few changes at Detroit and at the New York synod in 1967, there has been little specific action in recent years by the Synod on lodgery. In its report to the New York meeting, the commission called attention to the changing character of lodgery.

> The fraternal scene in America is slowly changing as greater emphasis is being placed on family participation in the lodge. Officially, however, none of the "old-line" lodges has modified its ritual requirements to reflect this change. As a result there is a growing incongruity between tenets and programs of some of the lodges. The greatest membership gains appear to consist of people who are little concerned about religious ritualism and desire the social advantages of lodge membership. In spite of the fact that, in some instances, local lodges have violated their charters by receiving members without initiation, lodge officials have remained adamant in permitting no modification or setting aside the ritual. . . . The commission continues to suggest to lodge officials that they modify their ritual requirements to express the actual purposes and programs of their organizations.[111]

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[106] "Fraternally Yours, in Ferment," *The National Observer,* Feb. 21, 1966.

[107] LCMS *Reports and Memorials* (1959), p. 492.

[108] Ibid.

[109] "Fraternally Yours in Ferment," *The National Observer,* Feb. 21, 1966. "Lodges Changing, But Still Conflicting with Christianity," *The Lutheran Witness-Reporter,* March 13, 1966.

[110] LCMS *Proceedings* (1962), pp. 33—37. "The Confessional Church Reviews Her Lodge Practice."

[111] LCMS *Workbook,* p. 321.

Some Observations

In the foregoing analysis of periodicals, District and synodical reports, essays, faculty opinions, and tracts concerning the position of the Missouri Synod, one thing stands out clearly: the Missouri Synod has always officially opposed lodges on a doctrinal basis because of their antichristian religious teachings. It has also objected to the element of secrecy. It seems to the present writer that an inordinate amount of time was spent on the secrecy issue in the past. That does not seem to be an important issue today. In the early decades of the Synod's history, writers attacked what they called the "false charity" of the lodges. In the question of how one deals with such groups, there has been a noticeable lack of agreement within the Synod. In addition, it is evident that there has never been complete uniformity of practice within the Synod.

While there has been no uniformity as to practice, the question of how one deals with the lodge problem evangelically has been the crucial issue during most of the Synod's history. The evangelical tone which permitted congregations to commune weak Christians while these persons struggled with a decision concerning their lodge membership was set by the Eastern District in 1858. The District stressed that lodge problems could be rightly handled only by the local pastor and congregation *(Privatseelsorge)*. In a statement adopted in 1863, the Synod declared that the matter of lodge practice was not and should not be considered a matter of doctrine. The Synod in 1863 and the lectures and letters of C. F. W. Walther continued this evangelical motif. Already in 1871, however, the caution was introduced that procrastination should be avoided. By 1904 the Synodical Conference, to which the Synod belonged, had established the principle that no lodge member could commune. In the 1931 issue of *Lehre und Wehre* Prof. F. Bente pleaded for the continuation of Walther's evangelical approach. By 1926 the attitude of the Synod itself had crystallized in a legislation of pastoral practice, despite frequent earlier pronouncements that this matter could be handled only by the local pastor. But at the 1929 convention the Synod urged continuing concern for Christians with lodge problems and for congregations with lodge members. Thus there is ample evidence of a continuing evangelical concern despite almost cyclical efforts to legislate a single, firm practice, and there is ample evidence of the Synod's refusal to make lodge practice a doctrinal matter.

The problem of lax or strict practice can be correlated with certain cultural and economic conditions which tie in with growing or decreasing lodge membership and influence. There has been a close affinity between prosperous times and the rise in the membership of lodges. When they have been in the ascendancy, interest within the Missouri Synod has grown.

Thus in 1863 interest was high, for the nation was in the midst of prosperous times and the lodges were making inroads especially among the new German immigrants. The years 1926 and 1929 found us again in times of greater abundance. It also found the Synod in a period of transition from that of collecting immigrant members to that of an openness to both new mission challenges and to other Lutherans. When Lutheran fellowship negotiations failed and the Synod rejected the Chicago

Theses, it also adopted a position on lodge practice which many assume to be clearer than that of other Lutheran synods in the United States. This decision was thus both culturally and theologically conditioned.

Despite the Synod's interest in the use of the Scripture, one finds little reference to it in the matter of practice. As we have seen, the passages used dealt primarily with oaths and secrecy. Only Matthew 18 is used when referring to practice with regard to the lodges. Theodore Nickel has most recently reminded us of the major issue in our position on lodgery:

> In short, the Christian pastor will work with the Gospel; he will make every endeavor to surround the lodge member with the full awareness of the height and the depth of the love of Christ.

This study has shown that the position of the Synod today was formulated approximately 40 years ago. There has been little willingness to take a deeper look at the problem during these years. Perhaps this reflects an opinion widely held even today that there is no likelihood of progress in the matter of dealing with lodges. Such an attitude, however, betrays a lack of understanding both of the former practice of the Synod and also of the former positions of lodges and also fails to reckon with cultural factors which have been at work. The present writer believes that after 40 years it would seem mandatory to take a further look at both the lodges and the general practice within our church.

As has been pointed out by the director of activities of the commission,[112] the images of lodges are changing on the American social scene and religious aspects do not loom as large for their members as formerly. It should, however, be noted that their religious features have not vanished, and this factor must also be included in such a restudy today. The secular press supports this analysis, as the *National Observer* noted. These observations are made with special reference to the so-called animal lodges, such as the Elks, Moose, and Eagles. Undoubtedly, they are taking on a new image, and there is need for restudy here by the Synod.

It is no longer adequate to repeat lodge paragraphs that were developed in another era and then practice in yet another manner. Things have changed, as even Dr. Graebner foresaw in the later days of his life:

> So far as I am acquainted with our literature of the past 35 years there is no evidence of any readiness to assume — even for the sake of bringing the discussion down to the Scriptural level — that possibly some earlier issue of the *CTM* or *Lutheran Witness* or *Der Lutheraner* has been in error. Not only is the underlying principle on which we based our attitudes upheld as Scriptural, but it is assumed that nowhere outside of our Synod may conditions suffer such a change as its condemnations of a certain institution or organization must be modified. There is one exception to this rule and one only — the attitude toward secret orders which have made some essential changes in their ritual.[113]

St. Louis, Mo.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Theodore Graebner, "The Burden of Infallibility," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XXXVIII (1965), 90. Written in 1948 and circulated privately.