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THE SPIRIT OF TRIUMPHALISM IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--  
MISSOURI SYNOD: THE ROLE OF THE "A STATEMENT"  
OF 1945 IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD.

Vanderbilt University, Ph.D., 1972  
Religion

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THE SPIRIT OF TRIUMPHALISM IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--

MISSOURI SYNOD: THE ROLE OF THE "A STATEMENT"

OF 1945 IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD

By

Jack Treon Robinson

Dissertation

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Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

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## PREFACE

The result of the work involved in the research for and the writing of this dissertation has proved to be an eye-opener to me. As I approached the work some three years ago it was with the general attitude of a Missouri Synod Lutheran who had received his seminary education at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, and graduated in 1952. Although I had also completed a B.D. program through study during several summer sessions at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, I carried in my mind the thought that the "A Statement" of 1945 was to be blamed for the so-called liberal trends in the Missouri Synod. This rather shallow interpretation of the "A Statement" I had not questioned after ten years of serving as a pastor in the Missouri Synod.

When I presented my "Prospectus" to my examining committee it was accepted with the advice that I should make every effort to be objective in my research and writing. I have made every effort to be objective. Whether

or not I have accomplished this the reader will have to judge for himself.

At first I was disappointed that the task I had hoped to accomplish in a year was stretching to two and then three years. But this was a blessing in disguise. After several unproductive starts I began to rework my materials. Theodore Bachmann's "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism'" suggested two basic traits of Missouri Synod Lutheranism which I have expanded and designated characteristics of the Missouri Synod Geist: extremely high respect for the fathers of the Missouri Synod and for its elected officials, and a heavy emphasis on reine Lehre. An extended book review of Moving Frontiers by Leigh D. Jordahl appearing in the magazine Una Sancta, XXII (Pentecost, 1965), 51-56, suggested that a "sharp motif of 'triumphalism'" pervaded Missouri Synod history. At first I thought this was just another sour-grapes review, so often found as a Lutheran of one synod reviews the book of a Lutheran of a different synod. However, while I was still mulling this suggestion over in my mind I began working through the Theodore Graebner Manuscripts Collection at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis. Things began to fall

into place and hang together for me. The spirit which pervaded the life and work of the Missouri Synod was the spirit of triumphalism. I have attempted to demonstrate this in my dissertation.

O. P. Kretzmann, in giving his analysis of the current situation of unrest in the Missouri Synod, said that he believed the Geist is gone out of Missouri. Although he did not expand on this point, he was correct. The Geist that is gone is the spirit of triumphalism. This spirit, which had been nurtured through almost 100 years of Missouri Synod history, was seriously questioned by the appearance of the "A Statement" of 1945. It was shattered by the reaction which followed.

I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to interview eight of the signers of the "A Statement" and former missionary to India, Adolph Brux. Each man was a sincere Christian gentleman who freely and openly answered the questions put to him. I therefore gratefully acknowledge the assistance given to me by Dr. Brux and the following signers of "A Statement": W. E. Bauer, Richard R. Caemmerer, Thomas Coates, E. J. Friedrich, Bernard H.

Hemmeter, A. R. Kretzmann, O. P. Kretzmann, and Herbert Lindemann.

Without the many pieces of correspondence and the unpublished minutes of meetings the dissertation would have been impossible. This material was made available to the writer mainly by Thomas Coates and O. P. Kretzmann. I gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

Gathering basic data on the forty-four signers would have been a monumental task without the valuable aid of John F. Gaertner, Director of Personnel for the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, and his staff. I gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

Research at the Concordia Historical Institute was made pleasant and profitable by the assistance of August R. Suelflow, Director, and especially by Marvin A. Huggins, Reference and Research Assistant. Mrs. Anna Dorn makes a good cup of coffee. I gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

Expert and positive criticism of the dissertation by my advisor, Dr. Richard C. Wolf, and second reader, Dr. Herman Norton, has been most helpful. The other members of my examining committee, Dr. Wilhelm Pauck and



Dr. Henry Lee Swint, have contributed much to my education and have helped to expand my historical perspective. I gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

Two shortened titles are used throughout the dissertation: Synodal-Bericht (with the date) and Proceedings (with the date). These refer to: Synodal-Bericht. Eingaben fur die Delegatensynode Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Synod von Missouri, Ohio und ander Staaten. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (date of the Delegatensynode). Proceedings of the [number of the convention] Regular Convention of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States [after 1947, the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod]. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (date of the convention).

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## INTRODUCTION

The first Lutheran congregations were established in North America in the early seventeenth century. But because of cultural and language differences and because of geographical distribution it was not until August of 1748 that a group of laymen along with six ministers met in Philadelphia and organized the first Lutheran synod in North America.<sup>1</sup> This first organization has, although there were various changes in the name, come to be designated as the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. It did not adopt a formal constitution nor specifically set forth its confession of faith. However, it may be deduced that the intention was present to direct its affairs in keeping with the Lutheran Confessions because when John Nicholas Kurtz was ordained into the ministry in 1748, by the authority of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, he was pledged to teach "nothing whether publicly or privately,

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<sup>1</sup>James William Richard, The Confessional History of the Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1909), p. 602.

but what harmonizes with the Word of God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church . . . ."2 After 1748 the ministerium did adopt a constitution which it changed on occasion. By 1781 the constitution adopted by the ministerium and in force at that time held that "every minister professes that he holds the Word of God and our Symbolical Books in doctrine and life."<3

It would be misleading, however, to give the impression that the words from the constitution of 1781 were specifically and energetically enforced. S. S. Schmucker later maintained that "the exaction of a promise to conform to the Symbolical Books" was never a habitual practice.<sup>4</sup> A loose subscription to the Lutheran Symbolical Books in 1781 had, by 1792, given way almost completely to the trends of German Rationalism as is evident by the fact that the constitution of that year made no mention of any distinctly Lutheran symbols. The only pledge extracted from candidates for the ministry at this time

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>S. S. Schmucker, The American Lutheran Church, Historically, Doctrinally, and Practically Delineated, In Several Occasional Discourses (Springfield: Harbaugh and Butler, 1851), p. 173.

was "to preach the Word of God in its purity according to the law and the gospel."<sup>5</sup> As late as 1841 the Ministerium of Pennsylvania (Synod of Pennsylvania) had failed to require subscription to any specifically Lutheran symbols.<sup>6</sup>

The New York Ministerium, organized in 1786, if anything, was even less specific than the Ministerium of Pennsylvania when it came to a formula for fellowship and ordination. These two groups were the largest Lutheran synods of the day. The constitution of the New York Ministerium in force in 1816 gives the following directives concerning ordination:

We establish it as a fundamental rule of this association, that the person to be ordained shall not be required to make any other engagement than this, that he will faithfully teach, as well as perform all other ministerial duties, and regulate his walk and conversation according to the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as contained in the Holy Scripture, and that he will observe this constitution, while he remains a member of this Ministerium.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Richard, Confessional History, p. 603.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

Up until 1856 this section of the constitution of the New York Ministerium contained no reference to specifically Lutheran symbols.

One need not be surprised, then, that S. S. Schmucker reported that during those years Dr. George Lochman, pastor in the Pennsylvania Ministerium and president of the General Synod (1821), denied the traditional Lutheran view of the depravity of man and that the Reverend Gottlieb Schober of North Carolina, prominent in organizational work of the General Synod and its president in 1825, departed from the Lutheran teaching of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper.<sup>8</sup> During the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century it was becoming more difficult to find the marks which distinguished the Lutheran Communion from that of the Reformed. S. S. Schmucker and others who agreed with him were working hard to establish "American Lutheranism." The underlying principle was the belief that Martin Luther had only begun the Reformation and did not consider his work

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<sup>8</sup>Schmucker, American Lutheran Church, pp. 174-175.

complete.<sup>9</sup> As such men in the West as Thomas and Alexander Campbell considered themselves nineteenth century reformers, so a sizeable segment of the Lutheran ministers in the United States, especially in the East, viewed their calling as one of continuing the Reformation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-60: "Luther had wisely regarded the reformation as unfinished, and exhorted his followers to turn away from his works, and study the bible [sic] more attentively. Unfortunately for the cause of excessive veneration; and death, which translated him to the abode of peace in heaven, made his writings, the source of rancorous contention on earth, imparted a kind of canonical authority to them. Moreover, as the church, established by his instrumentality, was designated by his name, his works gradually were regarded as the standards of orthodoxy, and all attempts to continue the work of reformation so gloriously commenced by him were denounced as treason to his cause!! [sic]

. . . . .  
 Had not the church been denominated by the name of this distinguished servant of Christ; had not his works but the bible [sic] been regarded as the grand source of religious light, as the grand subject of continued study; and had the Augsburg Confession alone been received as an auxiliary test; the church would have enjoyed much more peace, and the whole field of doctrine, except the few points determined in that confession, would have been open to free continued study and scrutiny in the light of God's word. But instead of finding fault with those theological heroes, who vanquished the hosts of Rome, for not accomplishing everything; we should be grateful to God that they were enabled to effect so much."

<sup>10</sup>Paul W. Spaude, The Lutheran Church Under American Influence (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1943), pp. 274-288.

Agitation for reform and staunch resistance to change were in tension in the various religious groups in North America at the turn of the nineteenth century, and the divisions produced by this tension have lasted well into the twentieth century. An analysis by Richard C. Wolf correctly concludes that the Middle Period of American History is equally as important as the Colonial Period if the historian is properly to understand and explain the modern ecclesiastical scene in the United States.<sup>11</sup> This period is of importance also for a basic understanding of the history of Lutheranism in the United States.

S. S. Schmucker traced the development of "American Lutheranism" from 1748 through the middle of the nineteenth century in a seven-point summary. He maintained that the "doctrinal basis and ecclesiastical position of the American Lutheran Church" may be "briefly comprehended" as follows:

1. The patriarchs of our church at first practically profess the former symbolical books of our church in Germany, by avowing them or in most instances the Augsburg Confession at the erection of their houses

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<sup>11</sup>Richard C. Wolf, "The Middle Period, 1800-1870, The Matrix of Modern American Christianity," Religion in Life, XXII (Winter, 1952-53), 72-84.



of worship, and in various cases at the induction of men into the ministerial office.

2. They soon relaxed from the rigor of symbolic requisition, and referred only to the Augsburg Confession, generally omitting all reference to the other former symbolic books, except the use of the Smaller Catechism of Luther in the instruction of the rising generation.

3. Neither they nor their immediate successors ever formally adopted these symbolical books as binding on our church in this country, as tests of admission or discipline.

4. About the beginning of this century [19th century] they ceased, in fact, to require assent even to the Augsburg Confession at licensure and ordination, and demanded only faith in the word of God, thus practically rejecting (as they had a right to do) all the symbolical books as tests; though still respecting and occasionally referring to the Augsburg confession [sic] as a substantial expose of the doctrines which they taught.

5. The actual doctrinal position of our church in this country at the formation of the General Synod, was that of adherence to the fundamental doctrines of Scripture as substantially taught in the Augsburg Confession, with acknowledged dissent on minor points. Ecclesiastical obligations are voluntary and personal, not hereditary. God deals with every man as an individual moral agent, possessing certain unalienable rights, and owing certain unalienable duties. Hence the ministry and laity, that is, the church of every age have as good a right and are as much under obligations to oppose, and, if possible, change what they believe wrong in the religious practices of their predecessors, and to conform it to the word of God, as were Luther and other christians [sic] of the sixteenth century.

6. Whatever moral obligation their practical requisition of assent to the Augsburg Confession, may have imposed on themselves and those thus admitted by them,

it was annulled when, by common consent, they revoked that practice. And as none, so far as we have ever heard, protested or seceded, they thus all practically rejected all those books as binding symbols.

7. Our General Synod found the Lutheran Church in America without any human symbols as tests of admission or discipline, although the Augsburg Confession was still occasionally referred to as a substantial exhibition of the doctrines held by them; and the General Synod ratified the state of doctrine existing among its members, namely, fundamental assent to the Augsburg Confession, with acknowledged deviation in minor or non-fundamental points, and subsequently passed a formal adoption of the Augsburg Confession in this fundamental way, as a test of admission and discipline.<sup>12</sup>

In 1820 the General Synod was organized with the purpose in view to unite the various Lutheran groups in one general body. The Ministerium of Pennsylvania was the leading group desiring the formation of the general body. Among its members, S. S. Schmucker and his supporters were pushing for an "American Lutheranism," a Lutheranism free to revise the old Lutheran Confessions and to establish what would amount to an American Lutheran confession. As "American Lutheranism" as expressed by some in the General Synod grew it was on an unavoidable collision course with the advocates of Confessional Lutheranism.

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<sup>12</sup>Schmucker, American Lutheran Church, pp. 157-158.

Robert Baird, whose Religion in America<sup>13</sup> was published in America in 1844, devotes only minimal space to the Lutheran church bodies in America, although he praises them for their growth:

I know not a single circumstance more promising in regard to true religion in America, than its rapid progress among the vast German population of the United States, as exhibited in the Lutheran and German Reformed Churches. Wonderful, indeed, has been the change during the last twenty years.<sup>14</sup>

Baird considered the "American Lutherans" little different from the Reformed or Calvinistic churches. This is indicated by his placing the "Lutheran and German Reformed Churches" together in the above quotation and also by the fact that his section on the Lutheran churches is found in Chapter XIII under the heading "Smaller Presbyterian Churches: The Lutheran Church."

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Baird, Religion in America; or, an Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States. With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 258. In the 1856 edition, p. 518, Baird deleted the words "and German Reformed Churches." This is of significance. By the time of the 1856 edition, Baird had observed enough change in Lutheranism in the United States to make a clear distinction between it and the German Reformed Church. The trend was away from "American Lutheranism" and toward Confessional Lutheranism.

As Baird, a Presbyterian, viewed the Lutheran scene in the United States he agreed with S. S. Schmucker that a core of agreement existed between European and American Lutherans:

The same doctrines are held as in the evangelical Lutheran churches in the various countries of Europe, with some differences which we shall presently notice. They comprehend the following points: "The Trinity of persons in one Godhead;" "the proper and eternal divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ;" "the universal depravity of our race;" "the vicarious nature and unlimited extent of the atonement;" "that men are justified gratuitously, for Christ's sake, through faith;" "the Word and sacraments [sic, are] means of grace;" "a future judgement, and the award of eternal life and happiness to the righteous, and eternal misery to the wicked." On the subject of election, predestination, etc., they are well known to be rather Arminian than Calvinistic.<sup>15</sup>

Baird also pointed out the differences between European and American Lutherans. He listed seven differences, among which appear the following: (1) "it [American Lutheranism] entirely rejects the authority of the

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<sup>15</sup>Baird, Religion in America, 1844 edition, p. 259. In the 1856 edition, p. 519, Baird changed the phrase "eternal divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ," to "eternal Divinity, etc." This could indicate that between the editions Baird observed a change of emphasis in the Muhlenberg strand of Lutheranism. Or it could have been a typographical error in the 1844 edition. The writer prefers to accept it as an indication that the Muhlenberg strand of Lutheranism in the United States was moving toward a more Confessional Lutheranism.

fathers in ecclesiastical controversy." (2) "it [American Lutheranism] no longer requires assent to the doctrine of the real or bodily presence of the Savior in the Eucharist." (5) "American Lutheranism" has "made a more systematic adjustment of its doctrines." (7) "American Lutheran" ministers are no longer bound to all the minute points of an extended human creed. All that is required of them is belief in the Bible, and in the Augsburg Confession as a substantially correct expression of Bible doctrines."<sup>16</sup>

In establishing the authority for his seven points, Baird acknowledged:

In making this statement, I have been greatly indebted to Professor Schmucker's "Portraiture of Lutheranism," and his "Retrospect of Lutheranism in the United States," both published at the request of the General Synod of the Church.<sup>17</sup>

Baird was indebted to Schmucker indeed! He has listed Schmucker's seven points from his "Portraiture of Lutheranism" almost verbatim. Consequently, Baird's view of Lutheranism in the United States was Schmucker's view.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid. Emphases in the text.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

It is, fortunately, the correct view of Lutheranism in the United States and describes the general conditions among the Muhlenberg strand of Lutheranism when the Confessional Lutherans began to immigrate from Europe. However, Baird's view of Lutheranism in the United States is not a complete account. Also within the Muhlenberg strand of Lutheranism there were individuals who opposed "American Lutheranism" and were moving in the direction of a stronger Confessional Lutheranism.

Baird was also indebted to Schmucker for including the Lutherans under Presbyterian bodies for Schmucker writes: "The government and discipline of each individual church, is essentially like that of our Presbyterian brethren."<sup>18</sup>

The Lutherans who had been in America before the days of the American Revolution, who had been organized by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, and who celebrated the centennial of Muhlenberg's arrival to the American shores in 1842, in general were not advocates of the type of Lutheranism which many of the nineteenth century German Lutheran immigrants included in their spiritual baggage.

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<sup>18</sup>Schmucker, American Lutheran Church, p. 67.

The influx of European confessional influence, especially German, coupled with a growing confessional consciousness within the synod itself, forced the General Synod to take a stand. S. S. Schmucker, the chief proponent of "American Lutheranism" in the early decades of the nineteenth century was considered by some of his contemporaries to be too conservative.<sup>19</sup> However, by the 1850's even the faculty of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg,<sup>20</sup> of which Schmucker was president, was pressing for a more confessional type of Lutheranism. Schmucker, in the process of time, while holding the same position, had become a liberal and felt himself being enclosed with a type of Lutheranism too confining to tolerate.<sup>21</sup> The confessional squeeze pressed from Schmucker his famous, anonymously-issued, and ill-fated Definite Platform.<sup>22</sup> The Definite

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<sup>19</sup>Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c. 1966), p. 99. Abdel Ross Wentz, Pioneer in Christian Unity: Samuel Simon Schmucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c. 1967), p. 178.

<sup>20</sup>The Theological Seminary of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States.

<sup>21</sup>Wolf, Documents, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup>Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinary, for Evangelical Lutheran Synods; Constructed in Accordance with the Principles of the General Synod (Philadelphia:

Platform was a document which called for the elimination of five so-called "errors" from the Augsburg Confession of 1530.<sup>23</sup> Schmucker's Definite Platform of 1855 brought to culmination the battle between Confessional Lutheranism and "American Lutheranism." Confessional Lutheranism won the battle.<sup>24</sup>

The writings of S. S. Schmucker and Robert Baird have been used freely to give the reader a firsthand account of the doctrinal position of many of the Lutherans in the United States when the surge of immigrants from Europe pushed into the Mississippi Valley after 1830. Schmucker was probably the outstanding Lutheran in the United States from 1825 to 1840. His writings demonstrate his wide range of knowledge and his love for the Lutheran Church as he thought it should be.

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Miller and Burlock, 1855). (Typescript copy.) Original in Lutheran Historical Society Library, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

<sup>23</sup>The five "errors": "1. The Approval of the Ceremonies of the Mass. 2. Private Confession and Absolution. 3. Denial of the Divine Obligation of the Christian Sabbath. 4. Baptismal Regeneration. 5. The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of the Savior in the Eucharist." Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Carl Maelshagen, American Lutheranism Surrenders to Forces of Conservatism (Athens: University of Georgia, Division of Publications, 1936).



Robert Baird was the first American Church historian of stature and his description of the Lutheran Church no doubt informed and influenced many an English-reading scholar, painting a picture of the type of Lutheranism in America which was on the way out even at the time his Religion in America was coming from the print shop. Although he failed to sense fully the change in Lutheranism in the United States he does present one with a non-Lutheran's description of "American Lutheranism."

Those Lutheran synods which formed the General Synod in 1820 were more directly influenced by the social-political-cultural-economical currents in the United States than the later German Lutheran immigrants. Some, no doubt, had cast their ballot for Thomas Jefferson in 1800. They might even have been acquainted with the Congregational and Presbyterian "Plan of Union" (1801) for western missions. The Lewis and Clark expedition was undertaken in 1804 and some of the Pennsylvania German Lutherans might even have recalled that it was that same year that the Philadelphia Quakers petitioned the United States Congress regarding the evils of slavery. Before the War of 1812, Baltimore had been made a Roman Catholic Metropolitan See. The year after the Battle of New Orleans (1815), the

American Bible Society had been founded and the African Methodist Episcopal Church had been organized in Philadelphia. Florida was purchased in 1819, the same year that the New England missionaries left for service in Hawaii. In the year of the organization of the General Synod, 1820, the price of public land had been established at \$1.25 per acre; and the big political event was the Missouri Compromise. The close election of 1824 had been settled when the House of Representatives elected John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson. The Erie Canal was completed in October, 1825, a year that witnessed the organization of the American Tract Society and the formation of the American Unitarian Association.

During the years of Andrew Jackson's administration the nation was locked in sectional struggles and concerned with major events relating to the economy of the country. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints was organized in Fayette, New York in 1830, while William Lloyd Garrison founded his Liberator in the same year. Charles G. Finney was a recognized leader among revivalists, publishing his Lectures on Revivals of Religion in 1835. The anti-Roman Catholic feeling among the

Protestant bodies in the United States was fanned to glowing hatred with the publication of the Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk in 1836.

All of these events had occurred in American history before the Saxon immigrants settled in Perry County, Missouri in 1839. The nation was still working its way out of the Depression of 1837 when the Saxons began their community.

James K. Polk of Tennessee, the first dark horse candidate for president, was serving in the office of president during the climax of the great Irish emigration into America (1845-1847). It was also during his term of office (1845-1849) that the Mormons migrated to Utah Territory, Horace Bushnell published his Christian Nurture (1847) and the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod was organized in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago (1847).

The nation had changed in mood from the exhilaration of a new-born child still evident during the administration of Thomas Jefferson to the pleasant "Era of Good Feeling" during the administration of Monroe through the factious sectional spirit of the Jacksonian Era into the world-beating spirit of "Manifest Destiny."

Many of the immigrant Confessional Lutherans also lived in the spirit of "Manifest Destiny." Some of them, especially the immigrants from Saxony, came to the United States with the intention of establishing the true Church of Christ on earth. They believed they would triumph over all difficulties and trials because they believed that God was with them. While they did not consciously write and speak of a spirit of triumphalism they lived in such a spirit.

The term spirit of triumphalism as used in this dissertation refers to that deep and abiding motivating force, unarticulated, but coloring the life of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod through more than 100 years of its history. It is a spirit which looked for the final conquest of all opponents. It is a spirit which required perfect harmony among those who would conquer. It is the spirit of "Manifest Destiny" with spiritual connotations and with a name to distinguish it from the political implications which have come to be associated with "Manifest Destiny."

How certain individuals of the same triumphalistic spirit found each other, organized a church body, nurtured

and maintained the spirit of triumphalism until the spirit of triumphalism was seriously questioned and finally shattered is the story that follows.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MISSOURI SYNOD GEIST, TRIUMPHALISM, AND FELLOWSHIP PRIOR TO THE QUADRI- CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE REFORMATION

The Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Synod von Missouri, Ohio und ander Staaten<sup>1</sup> was formally organized in Chicago, Illinois, at First St. Paul's Evangelical

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<sup>1</sup>The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. This name was adopted when the first synodical constitution was approved by the delegates on April 26, 1847 (the original may be found in the Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri) and remained unchanged until 1917 when the "Deutsche" (German) was removed from the official name. (Synodal-Bericht, 1917, p. 86.) At the centennial convention of 1947 the name was changed to "The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod." (Proceedings, 1947, pp. 446-447.) The common designation for the church body is simply the "Missouri Synod." This common designation will be used throughout this dissertation.

Lutheran Church<sup>2</sup> on April 26, 1847.<sup>3</sup> As General Winfield Scott and his American troops were making their victorious way from Vera Cruz to Mexico City in the Mexican War, the Missouri Synod was organized. The gospel of expansion embodied in the whole Mexican affair expressed "Manifest Destiny." The triumphalism of this gospel of expansion was, with a spiritual connotation, built into the life and breath of the Missouri Synod.

The interpretation of the beginning of the Missouri Synod has, in the past, generally credited the Saxon immigration and the leadership of C. F. W. Walther as supplying

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<sup>2</sup>The church was located on the southwest corner of Ohio and LaSalle Streets. "It had been built early in 1844 and was thirty feet wide and sixty feet long.--a bronze memorial tablet was placed on the building now standing there by the Daughters of the Revolution some years ago." Karl Kretzmann, "Gleanings," The Lutheran Witness, LXVI (April 22, 1947), 138. In view of the fact that the place of organization of the Missouri Synod is well known and often documented in the literature of the synod, it is difficult to understand why Gladys Gertrude Leech in her thesis "The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and the Great Depression, 1929-1941" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia College of George Washington University, 1947), could write: "It [the Missouri Synod] was founded in 1847 in Missouri . . . ."

<sup>3</sup>William Warren Sweet incorrectly gives the date of organization of the Missouri Synod as "1846." The Story of Religion in America (revised and enlarged edition; New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 268.

the impulse for founding the Missouri Synod.<sup>4</sup> The tenaciousness of the Saxons and the crusading spirit of Walther has, through the years, evolved into a romanticized type

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<sup>4</sup>This interpretation is found in such standard works as: Martin Gunther, Dr. C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1890); D. H. Steffens, Doctor Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1917); W. H. T. Dau, ed., Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922); W. Gustave Polack, The Story of C. F. W. Walther (1st ed.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), and The Building of a Great Church: A Brief History of The Lutheran Church in America with Special Reference to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (2nd ed.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941); Carl Mauelshagen, American Lutheranism Surrenders to Forces of Conservatism (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, Division of Publications, 1936); Carl S. Munding, Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947). Since Bachmann's thorough analysis of the beginning of the Missouri Synod appeared as a dissertation in 1946 (Ernest Theodore Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism'" [unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1946]) a corrective can be noted, although implicitly rather than explicitly, even in the "official" history prepared by W. A. Baepler for the centennial celebration of the founding of the Missouri Synod. Walther A. Baepler, A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847 to 1947 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947). In the latest and, to date, the best history of the Missouri Synod, August R. Suelflow sets the record straight, explicitly: "The Missouri Synod Organized," Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, edited by Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1964), p. 142.



of Missouri Synod history, not always consistent with fact. "Not C. F. W. Walther and the Saxons, but F. C. D. Wyneken, Wilhelm Sihler, and August Craemer instigated the moves which led to the organization"<sup>5</sup> of the Missouri Synod. Bachmann is correct in emphasizing a fact that Missouri Synod historians have known but have often not emphasized:

. . . one can hardly select a single individual, like Walther, as "the founder" of the Missouri Synod. Walther, because of later prominence, can easily be so magnified, as Sihler, for example, extolled him in his autobiography. But the conditions under which the Missouri Synod originated make it plain that Wyneken, Loehe, Sihler, and others, as well as Walther, were its founders, that their contributions to the common cause were mutually dependent, and that their success, conditioned by lay influence, was that of a group. Better than anything else, the formation of the new synod gave evidence of this group-solidarity. Being pervaded with a clearer consciousness of purpose than exhibited by most other synods, the "Missourians," as they became generally known, flourished under adversity. With Walther they might repeat, "Our bitterest enemies have been more useful than our friends who covered up everything with love."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Suelflow, "The Missouri Synod Organized," p. 142.

<sup>6</sup>Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism,'" pp. 233-234.

F. C. D. Wyneken, the second president of the Missouri Synod (1850-1864), began his career in America in 1838, in mid-summer. His confessional Lutheranism early brought him into conflict with many members of the General Synod, the general Lutheran federation to which he belonged. As the plight of the German Lutherans in America, suffering from the lack of qualified ministers, became known in Germany, largely through a pamphlet written by Wyneken, response was not lacking. One man especially, Johannes Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, pastor at Neuendettelsau in the province of Bavaria, conceived and directed plans to supply confessional Lutheran pastors for the forsaken German Lutherans in America. Through the untiring efforts of Loehe, men for the American mission field were trained and travel was financed. His masterful plan for the colonization of the Saginaw Valley in Michigan has been told to some degree,<sup>7</sup> but Loehe's rightful place in Missouri Synod history has often been minimized because the Missouri Synod clergy and Loehe eventually came to the parting of the ways over the doctrine of the Church and

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<sup>7</sup>Theodore Graebner, Church Bells in the Forest: A Story of Lutheran Pioneer Work on the Michigan Frontier 1840-1850 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944).

Ministry. The Missouri Synod Geist could not hold Loehe in the same respect and honor as C. F. W. Walther because it believed Loehe had deviated from what it considered true doctrine, and deviation from this norm warned of defeatism, not triumphalism. Yet a statistical accounting will indicate immediately that the Loehe element in the organization and formation of the Missouri Synod was the dominant element.<sup>8</sup>

At a meeting in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in July, 1846, a proposed constitution for a new, confessionally oriented, Lutheran synod was hammered out. Three Saxons were present--Walther and Loeber from Missouri and

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 93. A tabulation of the seventy-five pastors who were members of the Missouri Synod in 1849 (two years after its organization) reveals that the Saxon element had contributed 13, whereas the Loehe element had contributed 55. "Analyzing the lists, we discover that twenty-six men came from German universities, and nineteen had Neudettelsau [sic] training. There are 26 Bavarians in the list, 14 Saxons, 8 Prussians, and the rest from scattered parts of Germany. Of the ministers who made up the Missouri Synod in 1849, three had been trained in St. Louis . . . ; 15 in Fort Wayne (Practical Seminary), one in Columbus, and two by Wyneken-Sihler." pp. 92-93.

Of the twenty signatories of the Synodical Constitution of 1847 four were men who had taken part in the Saxon immigration of 1839. The majority of the others were Loehe-men. See Karl Kretzmann, "The Signatories of the Synodical Constitution of 1847," The Lutheran Witness, LXVI (June 17, 1947), 198-199.

Theodore Brohm, from New York. Besides the three Saxons, there were ten others, mostly Loehe-men.<sup>9</sup> After the meeting in Fort Wayne, Walther published the proposed constitution for the new synod in Der Lutheraner, a German language church paper sponsored by Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, and edited by C. F. W. Walther.<sup>10</sup> The publication of the proposed constitution gave pastors and congregations time to examine a document which the framers considered truly Lutheran and confessional.

The Loehe-men were also in the majority when the new synod was organized in 1847. Bachmann is correct in stating: "The Saxons provided the nucleus and the Loehe-Wyneken men the protoplasm out of which a strong synodical body might grow."<sup>11</sup> Involved in the formation of the Missouri Synod were Lutherans of Bavarian and Prussian background as well as Saxons. To overlook this fact is to have a faulty conception of the beginning of the Missouri

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<sup>9</sup>Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism,'" p. 215.

<sup>10</sup>Der Lutheraner, II, September 5, 1846, 2-4; and again in September 19, 1846, pp. 6-7.

<sup>11</sup>Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism,'" p. 229.

Synod and to be without a key in understanding some later phases of its history.<sup>12</sup>

The leaders of the Missouri Synod in the early years quoted Luther as authority, not over and above the Bible, but as one who correctly interpreted the Bible. Der Lutheraner, the periodical which became the official organ of the Missouri Synod after its organization in 1847, carried the following motto on its masthead:

"Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr'vergehet nun und nimmermehr."

(God's Word and Luther's doctrine, now and ever shall endure.) Hermann Frick cast the spirit of Confessional Lutheranism in poetic form in a panegyric entitled "I Am Remaining a Lutheran."<sup>13</sup> The spirit is summed up in the phrase, "Whoever contradicts Luther's doctrine does not believe the Bible."<sup>14</sup>

One might describe this confessional authority with the following equation: The Lutheran Confessions

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<sup>12</sup>This is of significance in understanding how conflicting opinions on the question of church fellowship could be found in a supposedly monolithic Missouri Synod as early as 1917.

<sup>13</sup>Der Lutheraner, XI (September 26, 1854), 22-23. Quoted in Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism,'" p. 292.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

equals Luther equals The Bible equals The Word of God. Although in theory the distinction was maintained between the authority of the Bible, as the only source and norm of Christian doctrine, and the authority of the Lutheran Confessions as a correct exposition of the Bible, in practice the Confessions and Luther were adduced as the accepted position of the synod, not subject to restudy or restatement. It was in this spirit that Walther could quote Luther and agree wholeheartedly, "in most certain and unmistakable terms . . . all doctrine not agreeing with ours is damned and diabolical."<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the underlying principle of "American Lutheranism"<sup>16</sup> that Martin Luther had only begun the Reformation and did not consider his work complete in either doctrine or practice, the Missouri Synod Lutherans, from the very beginning, emphasized their belief that the Reformation was complete in terms of doctrine and only incomplete in terms of practice.<sup>17</sup> That is why Walther could urge Lutherans in the United States to go "back to

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<sup>15</sup>Der Lutheraner, II (May 30, 1846), 80.

<sup>16</sup>See above, Introduction, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism,'" p. 261.

Luther, to his Reformation, to his doctrine."<sup>18</sup> He wrote to A. F. Hoppe:

I am firmly convinced that Luther was the angel who had to fly through the midst of the heavens of the church with the eternal Gospel and had to proclaim judgment. [The reference is to Revelation 14:6,7.] Therefore, he is the last herald of the full truth for all Christendom before the Last Day.<sup>19</sup>

From Luther and the Lutheran Reformation, the Missouri Synod Lutherans considered themselves to be the possessors of reine Lehre (pure doctrine). This possession, they believed, was theirs by the grace of God. But it was theirs! Therefore they believed it to be their sacred duty to protect the doctrinal heritage and to convert others to their position. It was a powerful motivation for mission endeavors. This position allowed no possibility of admitting error or of speaking of open questions in the area of Christian doctrine. The doctrinal system was complete and closed; not subject to

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<sup>18</sup>Der Lutheraner, V (September 12, 1848), 1.

<sup>19</sup>"C. F. W. Walther to A. F. Hoppe: A Letter," dated 8 Nov. 1862 and translated by Robert Kolb, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLII (May, 1969), 80. Hoppe was pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1856-1868.

change.<sup>20</sup> It was, however, a position that gave certainty in religious belief at a time when change was rampant in the United States.

A frontier country was growing into an industrial nation. Agrarianism was giving way to urbanization. The tenor of the day was change: change in numbers of peoples, change in the origin of the immigrants, change in the theories of creation, change in economic status, change in politics, change in corporate business structures, change in the concept of the Union, change in the social sciences. Pure doctrine was a solid foundation, not changing. The rallying cry, "pure doctrine," which had the ring of certainty in the midst of change and uncertainty, was the cry that helped to call together and bind together many of the Confessional Lutherans in the United States.

In the context of its beginning, one of the chief characteristics of the Missouri Synod Geist was the acceptance of the teachings of Luther and the Lutheran

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<sup>20</sup>David W. Lotz, "The Sense of Church History in Representative Missouri Synod Theology," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLII (October, 1971), 597-619. Lotz describes the Biblical interpretation-dogmatics process in the Missouri Synod as a "closed circuit," p. 616. This analysis by Lotz is penetrating and worthy of consideration.



Confessions as the final and sufficient exposition of pure doctrine. This feature of the Missouri Synod Geist had implications for the future. Walther taught what Luther taught. Therefore after his death, the name of Walther could be added to the equation mentioned above: Walther equals The Lutheran Confessions equals Luther equals The Bible equals The Word of God. This is stated quite clearly in the English address by Professor W. Dau at the centennial of Walther's birth (1911).

We buried Walther. Did we really bury Walther? If this cosmopolitan assembly of Lutherans proves anything regarding him, it proves that Walther is not dead. All that we did twenty-four years ago was to place in the Creator's keeping what was perishable of our beloved teacher and leader. And during the past quarter of a century there have faded from our memories those things which are properly counted the evanescences also in a great man's life. But in no other sense has Walther been buried, nor did we intend to bury him. His influence has been different in origin and quality from that which purely secular prestige, or power, or pelf are able to command. It has continued unabated since his eyes were closed in death; yea, it has gathered momentum with the advance of years. The past twenty-four years have furnished additional evidence to what was plain to unbiased minds long ago, viz., that Walther's work contains the seeds of immortality: he chose his aims and ends from, he secured his results by means of, the imperishable Word of God. We rejoice in the unmistakable testimony of this day that Walther still lives; and

we trust that his work shall abide, a present and influential factor in the activities of the Lutheran Church.<sup>21</sup>

The triumphalism of the Missouri Synod as it moved toward its manifest destiny would not be defeated. It was bound to succeed:

Walther's work is a legacy. We are his legatees. For generations to come he has written the program for our activity as a church body. Ignorance of what Lutheranism really is, bias and prejudice, caused Walther to be not understood, or misunderstood, in his day. It falls to our lot, it is our privilege to continue his work as Providence leads us, and to widen the influence that has blessed us in the past, so that it may extend to many others. Let us tell to our own generation in our tongue those truths, old, yet perennially new, for which Walther became a spokesman.<sup>22</sup>

The equation of authority in the Missouri Synod had one more name to add before it would be complete. Franz August Otto Pieper<sup>23</sup> (1852-1931), became Walther's heir apparent. He continued in Walther's footsteps and was added to the equation of practical authority which finally

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<sup>21</sup>Synodal-Bericht, 1911, p. 204.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>23</sup>President of Concordia Seminary (1887-1931) and president of the Missouri Synod (1899-1911). See below, pp. 74-77.

came to be: Pieper equals Walther equals The Lutheran Confessions equals Luther equals The Bible equals The Word of God.

Probably in no other major Protestant denomination in the United States were the words of founding fathers and leading dogmaticians accepted with such respect and given such authority as in the Missouri Synod.

The acceptance of a closed doctrinal system, the belief that it had as its heritage pure doctrine, and the profound respect accorded to the fathers of the Missouri Synod coupled with the spirit of triumphalism to give birth to a unique multi-volumed work published between the years 1907 and 1917 in seven volumes. The Reverend E. Eckhardt of Blair, Nebraska, gathered, culled, catalogued, and indexed the opinions of the fathers of the Missouri Synod from the official Synodical Minutes, District Minutes, official church papers, official church journals, and other sources.<sup>24</sup> Although the work is a veritable gold mine for official treatment of various topics, it reflects a selectivity by the compiler which

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<sup>24</sup>See listing of sources on p. 5 of the first volume. Publication data in footnote 26, below.

ignored all contradictory positions. Theodore Graebner complained:

. . . Eckhardt . . . , faithful old soul that he was, considered nothing more meritorious than to make his entries a catalog of opinions inerrantly orthodox and uno tenore from 1847 to 1917. All contradictory and discordant statements found in his meticulous study of our literature were simply ignored and this work more than any other has given rise to the reputation of infallibility in the Missouri Synod.<sup>25</sup>

The work of Eckhardt, which came to be used by Missouri Synod clergymen in a manner similar to the attorney searching for precedents in common law, was entitled Homiletisches Reallexikon nebst Index Rerum.<sup>26</sup> This voluminous work, conceived and born of the spirit of triumphalism in the Missouri Synod, nurtured and perpetuated that spirit until it reached maturity in infallibility. After almost 50 years of ministerial service, 35 of which were spent as editor and professor, Theodore Graebner in 1948 analyzed the burden of infallibility in the Missouri Synod:

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<sup>25</sup>Theodore Graebner, "The Burden of Infallibility: A Study in the History of Dogma," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XXXVIII (July, 1965), 89.

<sup>26</sup>E. Eckhardt, Homiletisches Reallexikon nebst Index Rerum (7 vols.; St. Louis: Success Printing Company, 1907-1917).

A simple test will show whether a church composed of sinful and erring human beings is charging itself with the duty of carrying the burden of infallibility. When questions arise in the field of life or of dogma, does the church ask itself, what does the Word of God say, or does it ask: What have we been saying in the past? Of course, it is quite unthinkable that any church outside of the Roman system consciously and publicly makes its past record a guide to new pronouncements in the field of dogma or practice. Yet it is possible for any church which stresses its own orthodox character to lapse into the fault of squinting sharply at its former record of profession even while investigating the inspired Scroll for guidance in its perplexities. And certainly a church which is in the habit of quoting from its fathers even while disavowing with great earnestness and sincerity any inclination to be guided by these fathers, rather than by Scripture alone, cannot deny that it is in peril of placing human authority on the level with and above the Scriptures when passing judgments in matters of faith and life.<sup>27</sup>

Graebner writes as one well acquainted with and, indeed, as an important servant of the Missouri Synod. His intention was not to destroy but to correct and to heal. Yet, when he recognized the schizophrenic personality of the Missouri Synod in its attempt to live only by the Scriptures and yet to honor the fathers, he did not hesitate to make his diagnosis public.

Infallibility had its burdens. Infallibility required a continual show of right. It allowed for no change.

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<sup>27</sup>Graebner, "The Burden of Infallibility," p. 88.

It required the development of an historical sight which could overlook the errors and disputes of the fathers and find in them only truth and righteousness.<sup>28</sup> Eckhardt's work is the most obvious example of such conditioned historical sight. In the area of church fellowship, the burden of infallibility required that before the Missouri Synod could extend the hand of fellowship to other Lutheran bodies, such bodies must confess all past sins and errors, even if over the years their official and practical positions had changed. It required others to say to the Missouri Synod, "pater peccavi." This is one reason why the free conferences of the first decade of the Twentieth Century made no progress.<sup>29</sup> This is why the Missouri Synod developed the modus operandi of adopting a statement of its own doctrinal position and requiring the other body to accept the statement in its entirety before fellowship could be established.

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<sup>28</sup>For a penetrating analysis of Missouri Synod historical sense see: Lotz, "The Sense of Church History in Representative Missouri Synod Theology."

<sup>29</sup>A series of five free conferences were held from 1903-1906. The intent of the conferences was to discuss the issues dividing the Lutheran bodies in the United States with the hope of removing any misunderstandings and bringing the various Lutheran bodies closer together. See below, pp. 87-91.

In the context of its beginning, the second of the chief characteristics of the Missouri Synod Geist was its determination to seek out strong leaders and to give them wholehearted voluntary submission and support. This was especially true of the president of the synod and the president of Concordia Seminary of St. Louis. However, respect for authority in the person of elected officials extended down the line to the least office. It is not our purpose here to determine if this respect for authority developed from some strictly German characteristic, as does Howard Becker,<sup>30</sup> or is dependent upon the distinction between the man and the office in a sociological setting, the approach of Heinrich Herman Mauer.<sup>31</sup> Rather it is our purpose here to describe this characteristic of the Missouri Synod Geist.

Wilhelm Sihler, the first vice-president of the Missouri Synod in 1847, and others, considered C. F. W.

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<sup>30</sup>Howard Becker, "Sargasso Iceberg: A Study in Cultural Lag and Institutional Disintegration," The American Journal of Sociology, 34 (November, 1928), 492-506.

<sup>31</sup>Heinrich Herman Mauer, "Studies in the Sociology of Religion: V. The Fellowship Law of a Fundamentalist Group, the Missouri Synod," The American Journal of Sociology, XXXI (July, 1925), 39-57. See also articles by the same author in the volume for the year 1925.

Walther an organizational genius mainly because of his insight that "the synod is merely a human arrangement, only an advisory ecclesiastical body, without legislative or judicial power over its constituent congregations."<sup>32</sup>

Walther himself considered this to be of the utmost importance, freeing congregations from ecclesiastical hierarchy and allowing them to develop their own practical methods. In praise of this church polity Walther wrote: "God has decided to remove the rubbish under which our precious Evangelical Lutheran Church even here in America has laid buried for a long time . . . ." <sup>33</sup>

The constitution of the Missouri Synod reflected Walther's position, describing the relationship between the synod and its congregations as "advisory." One reason for the formation of a synodical organization, set forth in Article I of the original constitution is: "Preservation and advancement of the unity in the true confession . . . and united defense against separatism and

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<sup>32</sup> Wilhelm Sihler, Lebenslauf von W. Sihler bis zu seiner Ankunft in New York (St. Louis: Druckerei des Lutherischen Concordia-Verlags, 1879), p. 53. Quoted in Bachmann, "The Rise of 'Missouri Lutheranism,'" p. 212.

<sup>33</sup> Der Lutheraner, III (September 5, 1846), 1.



sectarianism."<sup>34</sup> In order to preserve and advance unity some form of discipline was required. How was an advisory body to exercise discipline over its members? How was it to advance unity? Walther had faced the force of such questions and in his presidential address at the second convention of the Missouri Synod, 1848, set forth the intention of the framers of the constitution:

Perhaps all of us, the one more, the other less, are filled with concern by the thought that our deliberations might easily be unproductive; I mean the thought that, according to the constitution under which our synodical union exists, we have merely the power to advise one another, that we have only the power of the Word, and of convincing. According to our constitution, we have no right to formulate decrees, to pass laws and regulations, and to make a judicial decision, to which our congregations would have to submit unconditionally in any matter involving the imposing of something upon them. Our constitution by no means makes us a consistory, by no means a supreme court of our congregations. It rather grants them the most perfect liberty in everything, excepting nothing but the Word of God, faith, and charity. According to our constitution we are not above our congregations, but in them and at their side.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>"Original of First Synodical Constitution," The Lutheran Witness, LXVI (June 17, 1947), 198. Translation by Karl Kretzmann.

<sup>35</sup>Proceedings, 1848, p. 5. A translation appears in the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXXIII (April, 1960), 12-20, and in August R. Suelflow, "Walther and Church Polity," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (October, 1961), 637.

If the key to a successful synodical system depended upon "advice," application of the "power of the Word," and "convincing," then the answer lay in the election to the office of president of the synod a strong personality with ability to apply the Word of God and to persuade others. Such an individual was to be completely committed to the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. Strong personalities were necessary to head the educational institutions of the Missouri Synod, especially the seminary at St. Louis, if unity were to be maintained. The strong personalities were found and placed into office and unity, at least outwardly, was maintained.

When a strong, persuasive leader emerged, the constituency of the Missouri Synod elected him to office, acknowledged his leadership, willingly, by perpetuating him in office. The following tabulation reflects that point.

Presidents of the Missouri Synod<sup>36</sup>

Dates	Names
1847-1850	C. F. W. Walther
1850-1864	F. C. D. Wyneken
1864-1878	C. F. W. Walther
1878-1899	H. C. Schwan
1899-1911	Franz Pieper
1911-1935	F. Pfotenhauer
1935-1962	J. W. Behnken
1962-1969	Oliver R. Harms
1969-	J. A. O. Preus

Presidents of the St. Louis Seminary<sup>37</sup>

Dates	Names
1854-1887	C. F. W. Walther
1887-1931	Franz Pieper
1931-1943	Ludwig E. Fuerbringer
1943-1952	Louis J. Sieck
1952-1969	Alfred O. Fuerbringer
1969-	John H. Tietjen

The spirit of triumphalism in the context of Missouri Synod polity demanded continuity to prevent any motion toward change in the area of doctrine. Continuity not only guaranteed self-preservation for the synod itself,

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<sup>36</sup>The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1970 Statistical Yearbook (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), p. 48.

<sup>37</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, pp. 436-441.

it also formed a firm base for mission expansion, its manifest destiny, and ultimate victory.

During the first 100 years of its existence, i.e., 1847-1947, only six men had served as president of the Missouri Synod. During the same time only four men had served as president of the St. Louis seminary.<sup>38</sup> C. F. W. Walther occupied both the office of president of the Missouri Synod and the office of president of the St. Louis seminary concurrently for fourteen years, 1864-1878. Franz Pieper held both offices concurrently for twelve years, 1899-1911. They were the only men to occupy both offices concurrently. Needless to say, their influence on the Missouri Synod has been greater than any other individuals. Together they directly influenced the theological education of the Missouri Synod for a total of 77 years, or until 1931. Walther was the most influential personage during the first generation of the Missouri Synod. Pieper was the most influential personage during the second generation of the Missouri Synod. Their doctrinal positions

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<sup>38</sup>The so-called "Practical Seminary" which was moved to Springfield, Illinois in 1875, although older in serving the function of a seminary, was, in general, considered of secondary stature to the seminary in St. Louis. It exerted less influence on the life of the Missouri Synod than did the St. Louis seminary.

were essentially the same. Walther served as president of the St. Louis seminary for 33 years. Pieper served in the same capacity for the next 44 years. We now turn our attention to these two most important leaders and note their contributions to the Missouri Synod, especially in the area of the doctrine and practice of church fellowship.

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was born on October 25, 1811, the fourth son and eighth child of the Reverend Gottlob Heinrich Walther and his wife Johanna Wilhelmia, nee Zschenderlein, in Langenchursdorf, Saxony.<sup>39</sup> Pastor Gottlob Walther was himself responsible for giving his children the rudiments of education. Until he was eight years old, Ferdinand was taught at home by his father, later attending the town school at Hohenstein. In July, 1821, before he was ten years old, he was enrolled in the Gymnasium at Schneeberg, where he remained for

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<sup>39</sup>Although a critical life of Walther has yet to be written, enough details of his life are available also in English. See the following: W. G. Polack, The Story of C. F. W. Walther (revised edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947); Lewis W. Spitz, Sr., The Life of Dr. C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961); and the Sesquicentennial Number of the Concordia Theological Monthly (Published to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Walther's birth), XXXII (October, 1961), the entire issue.

eight years, completing his course of studies with highest honors before he was eighteen.

Walther's elder brother, Otto Hermann, had, by the late summer of 1829, completed two years of theology at the University of Leipzig and was vacationing at home. Ferdinand and Otto discussed at length the study of theology. These heart-to-heart talks, coupled with the impact that the reading of the life of Jean Frederick Oberlin written by G. H. Schubert produced, impelled C. F. W. Walther into the study of theology, also at the University of Leipzig.

Later in life Walther recalled: "I was eighteen years old when I left the Gymnasium, and I had never had a Bible nor a Catechism, but a miserable manual, which contained heathen morality."<sup>40</sup> This was the situation when he entered the University of Leipzig at the end of October, 1829. However the impact of Oberlin's outstanding faith-life kindled Walther's desire to have a copy of the Scriptures for himself. Although he did not have extra money for books, Walther, after some soul searching,

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<sup>40</sup>Polack, C. F. W. Walther, p. 7. Polack gives the source of this quotation as follows: "In one of his [Walther's] lectures at Concordia Seminary St. Louis, about sixty years later [after his graduation from Gymnasium] . . . ." p. 6.

used the unexpected gift of a thaler to purchase his own copy of the Bible. From that day forward he was a student of the Bible.

Otto Hermann Walther and several other students at the University of Leipzig had formed a study-prayer group, a little "holy club," in order to study devotional books, read the Scriptures, and pray for their growth in faith. The group was opposed to the Rationalism which was rampant at the university and generally throughout Germany at that time. Included in the little circle besides Otto Hermann Walther and C. F. W. Walther were J. F. Buenger, Ottomar Fuerbringer, Theodore Brohm, and E. G. W. Keyle (all afterward would become members of the Missouri Synod). Legalism and pietism describe the tenets of the little "holy club" as it had then developed. The literature was usually pietistic, commanding an emotional experience without great regard for doctrine. For C. F. W. Walther, especially, the road of pietistic good works led to a dark and abysmal condemnation. He turned to the pastors in the area for advice and comfort. However he did not find comfort until he was finally directed to an evangelical pastor serving in Dresden, Martin Stephan.

Stephan was not a highly educated man but because of his apparent concern for people and his ability to effectively apply the Gospel of Christ to the individual, he had gained a reputation, even among the rationalistic pastors, and a following from among the people, including rich and poor, professional workers and manual laborers, young and old.<sup>41</sup>

Walther could not visit Pastor Martin Stephan at Dresden in person, so he wrote a letter to him baring his heart by expressing his doubts and concerns and asking his counsel. When the answer was finally received from Stephan, assuring Walther that his sins most certainly were forgiven through the blood of Christ and that justification was his through faith, Walther felt that he had been translated from Hell to Heaven.<sup>42</sup> His heart was now filled with peace and joy. But this same Stephan, within a few short years, would cause Walther great anguish and the emigrants from Saxony to Missouri heartaches and agony.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Mundinger, Government, pp. 52-53.

<sup>42</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des weiland erwürdigen Pastor Job. Friedr. Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), p. 29.

<sup>43</sup>For a detailed study of Martin Stephan and his personality see Mundinger, Government, pp. 41-84.



Ill health forced Walther to interrupt his university studies during the winter of 1831-32. He was under the care of his mother at the parsonage in Langenchursdorf. During this time Walther eagerly devoured the volumes of Luther's writings which he discovered in his father's library. His reading impressed Walther with the importance and relevance of Luther's teachings for his own day. After regaining his health, Walther returned to the university and completed his course in theology in the spring of 1833.

Walther assumed his first parish at Braeunsdorf and soon concluded that the rationalistic ideas of the schoolmaster and the church superintendent had induced spiritual decay into the life of the congregation. Of his first and only charge in Germany, which he served for less than two years, the young Walther wrote: ". . . as far as the . . . condition of the congregation is concerned, I soon came to the conclusion that real spiritual life is not to be found in a single one of its members."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri 1839-1841 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 49. The Walther quotation is from: Letter, C. F. W. Walther to von Einsiedel, n.d. [January, 1837].

Although some authorities contend that the power of Rationalism in Saxony at this time was very weak, it was, nevertheless, strong enough, and had advocates in high enough places, to make the preaching and teaching of Confessional Lutheranism very difficult.<sup>45</sup> While the desire for religious freedom was not the only reason for emigration (some emigrated for economic reasons), it was important enough so that when Martin Stephan called upon his adherents to follow him to America to establish a true church, 665 men, women, and children responded. Of this total, twenty men were either clergymen or candidates of theology, and only one of these was over thirty years of age.<sup>46</sup> Walther was one of the young clergymen.

October and November, 1838, were busy months for those who would leave Saxony with Martin Stephan for a land of freedom and the opportunity to worship as they pleased, without interference from the State. Five ships were chartered to convey the emigrants and their possessions to New Orleans. There the emigrants planned to

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<sup>45</sup>Mundinger, Government, pp. 19-25.

<sup>46</sup>For the number of immigrants the writer follows Forster, Zion, pp. 540-559.

charter river boats and travel up the Mississippi River to St. Louis.

The first ship to leave, the Copernicus, weighed anchor on November 3, 1838, and was followed within a month by the Johann Georg, the Republik, the Olbers, and the Amalia.<sup>47</sup> Walther was scheduled to be a passenger aboard the Amalia, but due to last minute difficulties with authorities in Saxony sailed earlier on the Johann Georg. The Amalia was lost at sea.

The Copernicus arrived in New Orleans on December 31, 1838, and was followed by the other ships, save the Amalia, the last arriving on January 20, 1839.

The immigrants proceeded by river streamers from New Orleans to St. Louis, arriving in that city in January and February, 1839.<sup>48</sup> While the leader of the band, Martin Stephan, enjoyed the finest temporal accommodations which St. Louis of 1839 could afford, the remainder of the band

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<sup>47</sup>Polack, C. F. W. Walther, pp. 35-39, gives a description of the sea voyage from the entries of a diary kept by G. Guenther, one of the passengers on the Olbers, the ship that conveyed Martin Stephan and O. H. Walther.

<sup>48</sup>Baepler, A Century of Grace, p. 28, gives details of the trip by river steamers.

were cared for in boarding houses and private homes in the community. In April, over 4,000 acres of land in Perry County, Missouri, approximately 100 miles southeast of St. Louis, were purchased and the majority of the immigrants moved to that area. Some, however, remained in St. Louis.

After a short stay in St. Louis, C. F. W. Walther joined the immigrants in Perry County. The colonists were not prepared for life in the sparsely settled land of southeastern Missouri. And, although their number was increased by German Lutherans arriving from other parts of Germany, the hardships and the dwindling treasury of the enterprise caused extreme physical hardships for the settlers. The greatest blow to the colonists, however, came when their bishop, Martin Stephan, was discovered to be incompetent in secular business affairs, concerned largely with his own comfort, and finally found to be guilty of immorality. One can understand the deep sorrow and the gnawing uncertainty which then gripped the colonists. They had followed the man, Martin Stephan, to America to establish a free religious community, a community which, according to their belief, was the only true

Church existing at that time.<sup>49</sup> This true visible church had gathered about Martin Stephan, who was revered to such an extent that he had been gladly given authority over temporal as well as spiritual affairs, and the immigrants had willingly promised submission and faithfulness to him. He had counseled many of them, including C. F. W. Walther, and had been responsible for their finding joy and peace in Christ. Now this highly respected man and their leader had been deposed--for immorality! How faith-shattering! Who would lead the immigrants now?

The immigrants had no acquaintance with democracy in church government. It was not their concern to establish some new type of congregational authority. They thought in terms of a replacement for the bishop, if they could assure themselves that they were still a church and had the privilege to call ministers. Some of them began to question the immigration itself and came to the conclusion that their hardships were the result of the sin of leaving the church in Germany. The laymen were despondent, uncertain, fearful and in sore need of a strong leader.

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<sup>49</sup>W. Dalimann, W. H. T. Dau, and T. Engelder, eds., Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. v. This assertion is found in the "Foreword" to the work by F. Pfotenhauer.

Because of their previous loyalty to the deposed bishop, the leadership of the clergy was seriously challenged. In fact, some of the clergy were also questioning the immigration itself and accusing themselves of transgressing God's will in taking part in it. C. F. W. Walther did not join the other pastors in making public confession of sin in connection with his part in the immigration. He refused to call the immigration per se sinful.

No one immediately assumed leadership among the Perry County Lutherans and as a result a two-party faction was in the making. For them the natural division was made between laity and clergy and in general a lay party and a clergy party developed. The lay party, led by Dr. Carl Eduard Vehse, perhaps the most learned man among the Saxon immigrants, was very suspicious of any proposed solution which, in any way, appeared hierarchical in nature. Any move by the clergy at this time was carefully scrutinized. Yet the lay party was not fully united in point of major emphasis. One group of the lay party placed the primary emphasis upon the absolute prerogatives of their spiritual priesthood and upon the supreme rights of the congregation. The other group maintained that when the immigrants left their homeland they severed themselves from the church and

that because there was now no true church among them they had no right to call ministers. This, they contended, meant the clergy among the immigrants had no valid call and were actually renegade ministers. With at least a few of the clergy agreeing with one or the other faction of the lay party and no strong leader, in the space of almost two years, having come forth to inspire confidence and courage, the situation was fast approaching chaos. After Stephan had been deposed in May of 1839, the unrest had steadily increased. A few of the more wealthy immigrants had already returned to Germany.

During the winter of 1841, the congregation Walther was serving in Perry County had been dissolved. Shortly thereafter Walther was confined to the home of Pastor Keyl, his brother-in-law, with a persistent illness which lingered for several months. For the second time in his life Walther spent his convalescing hours in a serious study of the works of Luther. This time he combed the reformer's writings for his teachings on the Church and Ministry. He compared Luther and the Scriptures with the situation in Perry County. The real issues in dispute and the proper solution began to form in his mind. He concluded that one faction of the lay party was substantially correct but that

the solution had been carried to improper extremes. This was, indeed, a revelation of considerable import, for Walther, along with the other pastors, had been schooled in the hierarchical form of church organization and for a number of years had defended it. It was a painful process to unlearn and refashion his thinking, but he did it.

The contending parties in Perry County had reached an agreement to air both sides of the problem, which was now critical, and attempt to arrive at a final solution. The subject would be brought before the public--in this case the interested immigrants--in the form of a debate. Dr. F. Adolph Marbach and Pastor Buerger would represent the faction which maintained that no church existed among the immigrants, while Walther along with Pastors Keyl and Loeber would defend the position that because of the priesthood of believers the church was indeed present. The major disputants were Marbach and Walther.

Walther composed a manuscript in preparation for the disputation in which the following statements are of interest:



God removed a great destroyer from our midst, to whom, we, against the will of God, had entrusted ourselves as to a guide from heaven. But what would have become of us if God had not had further compassion on us?

. . . He awakened men among us who gave public testimony of what they recognized as a remaining corruption. With cordial gratitude I must here remind of that document which, now almost a year and a half ago, Doctor Vehse, . . . gave to us. It was this document in particular which gave us a powerful impulse to recognize the remaining corruption more and more and to endeavor to remove it. Without this document--I now confess it with a living conviction--we might yet have pursued our way of error, from which we have now made our escape, for a long time. I confess this with an even deeper sense of shame, the more ungrateful I showed myself at first over against the precious gift of God. But although many with me handled with great unfaithfulness the light which was granted us, yet God did not cease to cause ever more beams of His truth to fall into our perverseness, sought to hold, to uncover to us great and perilous spiritual injuries, and to lead our hearts more and more in the way of truth . . . .

. . . . .  
 In the first place I find that some of us, in exposing and reproving the sins committed by certain ones, do not make a proper distinction and thereby cause many consciences to be burdened beyond endurance. Do not some now seek to obliterate the distinction between the seducers and those who were led astray? . . .

The second point that causes serious fears in me is the fact that a goodly number among us now present it either as a consideration or as an established fact that there is in our midst neither the Christian Church nor a congregation nor the ministerial office nor a valid Sacrament nor divine absolution nor the call nor the spiritual priesthood, etc. It is not only presented as a controverted point that there is a Lutheran congregation in our midst, but that there is at all a Christian congregation and that the treasures of the Church are here administered.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Quoted in P. E. Kretzmann, "The Altenburg Debate," Concordia Theological Monthly, XII (March, 1941), 168-170.

Several important observations can be made on the basis of Walther's manuscript. By the time of the debate, called the Altenburg Debate, Walther was able to rid himself of the feeling of guilt in having followed Martin Stephan to the United States. Even in the deposition of Stephan he was able to discern the providential hand of God which guided him to understand the proper application of the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. He gave credit to the laymen who had first advanced this doctrine as the basis of church organization. And having the firm conviction himself that the Church was indeed present in their midst, Walther was able to convince the majority that his position was indeed Scriptural and Lutheran. In firming up and clarifying this position, Walther was largely responsible for rekindling the spirit and vision of the immigrants. In the midst of hardship and doubt, it appeared that God had used them to accomplish His purpose of establishing the proper form of congregational organization. The defeatist attitude was replaced with the rudiments of triumphalism and Walther was directly responsible. The prominence of Walther and the spirit of triumphalism would grow together in the years to follow.

In the debate, Walther presented his position in the form of eight theses which he explained, supported by Scripture, defended by quotations from Luther, Johann Gerhard, and other Lutheran fathers, and in so doing convincingly won the day. Walther's Altenburg Theses are significant enough to present in their entirety. They form the basis for all of Walther's later writings concerning the doctrine of the Church and Ministry and bare directly on the Missouri Synod's position on church fellowship.

#### I.

The true Church, in the most real and most perfect sense is the totality (Gesamtheit) of all true believers, who from the beginning to the end of the world from among all peoples and tongues have been called and sanctified by the Holy Spirit through the Word. And since God alone knows these true believers (2 Tim. 2:19), the Church is also called invisible. No one belongs to this true Church who is not spiritually united with Christ, for it is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ.

#### II.

The name of the true Church belongs also to all those visible groups of men among whom God's Word is purely taught and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the institution of Christ. True, in this Church there are godless men, hypocrites and heretics, but they are not true members of it, nor do they constitute the Church.

## III.

The name Church, and, in a certain sense, the name true Church, belongs also to those visible groups of men who have united under the confession of a falsified faith and therefore have incurred the guilt of a partial departure from the truth; provided that they possess so much of God's Word and the Holy Sacraments in purity that children of God may thereby be born. When such groups are called true churches, it is not the intention to state that they are faithful, but only that they are real churches as opposed to all worldly organizations.

## IV.

The name Church is not improperly applied to heterodox groups, but according to the manner of speech of the Word of God itself. It is also not immaterial that this high name is allowed to such communions, for out of this follows:

1. That members also of such groups may be saved; for without the Church there is no salvation.

## V.

2. The outward separation of a heterodox group from an orthodox Church is not necessarily a separation from the universal Christian Church nor a relapse into heathenism and does not yet deprive that company of the name Church.

## VI.

3. Even heterodox companies have Church power; even among them the goods of the Church may be validly administered, the ministry established, the Sacraments validly administered, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven exercised.

## VII.

4. Even heterodox groups are not to be dissolved, but reformed.

## VIII.

The orthodox Church is chiefly to be judged by the common, orthodox, public confession to which its members acknowledge and confess themselves to be pledged.<sup>51</sup>

The Altenburg Debate proved to be the pivotal crisis in Walther's career in the United States and in the lives of the immigrants. From the pathos of the struggle emerged a new church life which was beginning to throb with the spirit of life and of conquest. The type of church government which unfolded was new to Lutheranism in America. The laymen were actively and directly involved in the affairs of the congregations from the time of the Altenburg Debate forward. Later this would prove to be a strong unifying force.

The search of Scripture, the combing of Luther's works, and the dire need of the immigrants all combined to press a statement on Church and Ministry from Walther. The agony, study, and prayer spent in preparation for the debate at Altenburg laid the ground work for three classic

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<sup>51</sup>Polack, C. F. W. Walther, pp. 53-54. Other translations may be found in the Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by E. L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1954), p. 21; and Kretzmann, "The Altenburg Debate," pp. 171-172.

statements on Church and Ministry produced by Walther.

These three are: Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt (The Voice of Our Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry), 1852; Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate, unabhaengigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde (The Correct Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State), 1863; and Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden (The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth), 1867. We will return to the major points in Walther's doctrine of the Church and Ministry below, but first let us bring this brief biographical presentation to its conclusion.

On April 26, 1841, Walther accepted the call to become pastor of the congregation in St. Louis which would shortly adopt the name Trinity Lutheran Church, succeeding his brother Otto Hermann who had died, it is said, of a broken heart as the result of the unworthiness of Stephan. Walther would remain until his death as pastor and then senior pastor of Trinity and of the Gesamtgemeinde which included the area or district congregations--Immanuel, Zion, and Holy Cross--mothered by Trinity congregation.

During a period of history when books and magazines were perhaps the only means of continued contact with scattered groups of the same interest--such as the scattered Confessional Lutherans--Walther conceived the plan to begin a publication in order to draw the scattered brethren of similar persuasion together. He could not finance the venture. He therefore presented his proposal to the voting body of the congregation and after a thorough discussion of the matter the congregation was committed to back the publication of a church paper that would be mailed to known Lutherans in many parts of the country.

The first number of the publication was dated September 7, 1844, and was named simply, Der Lutheraner (The Lutheran). C. F. W. Walther was its editor. In the opening article Walther pointed out the necessity of such a paper to help bring together Lutherans of the Augsburg Confession who were scattered along the western fringe of the settled areas of the United States. It intended to develop a Lutheran consciousness and to make its readers familiar with the "doctrine, treasures, and history of the Lutheran Church."<sup>52</sup> Another intent of the paper was to

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<sup>52</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Der Lutheraner, September 7, 1844, p. 1.

combat error and oppose "pseudo-Lutherans." Walther was thirty-three years old at the time he assumed the editorship of Der Lutheraner. The impact of the periodical in gathering together like-minded Lutherans would be hard to exaggerate. It was a major tool in bringing together a large segment of Confessional Lutherans in the United States.

Walther also became editor, in 1855, of the professional theological journal of the Missouri Synod, Lehre und Wehre (Doctrine and Defense). Most of the early history of the Missouri Synod can be traced through these two publications. Walther's sphere of influence was expanded by the circulation of the periodicals, and this, in part, explains his popularity with German Lutherans of other-than-Saxon origin.

The favorable reception of Der Lutheraner was a contributing factor in the formation of the Missouri Synod in 1847. It was also one of the major reasons for Walther's election as the first president of the Missouri Synod, a position he filled from 1847-1850 and again from 1864-1878.

From the brief presentation of Walther's life, above, several observations may be made. Walther was not immediately a leader among the immigrants. It is difficult



to determine if he had aspirations for leadership. If he did possess aspirations for leadership, his early life prepared the way for his advance to prominence among the German Lutherans.

He had undergone a personal spiritual experience when he received the letter from Stephan assuring him that his sins were indeed forgiven in Christ. He had fought the rationalistic superintendent and school teacher at his only parish in Germany. He was spared from death when at the last minute he changed passage from the Amalia to the Johann Georg. These things appealed to the romantic spirit which is difficult to pinpoint but which, nonetheless, was present with the immigrant German Lutherans.

The difficulties the immigrants experienced and overcame in Perry County intensified their romantic spirit. No one was better qualified to lead a group with such a spirit than Walther, whose life was an embodiment of that spirit. That Walther was also a Confessional Lutheran theologian of some stature was fortunate for the Confessional Lutheran movement in the United States.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>The most complimentary article on the importance of Walther to the cause of Confessional Lutheranism in America is: H. H. Walker, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, D.D., the Luther of America, reprinted from the Lutheran

At the center of Walther's theology was the doctrine of justification by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>54</sup> Walther believed that all other doctrines served the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as presuppositions, or flowed from it as conclusions.<sup>55</sup> Although the doctrine of the Church and Ministry occupies the most space in the writings of Walther, it is nevertheless based on the central doctrine of justification by grace through faith. "His primary concern was to make sure that a visible organization of the church would not become an intermediate savior . . . ."<sup>56</sup> There was also a connection between the doctrine of justification by grace through faith and the doctrine of Scripture. According to Walther:

We [the Missouri Synod] have adhered, first to the supreme principle of all Christianity, that the canonical books of the Old and New Testament are, from the first to the last letter, the inspired Word of the

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Quarterly, July, 1912 (Gettysburg, Pa.: Gettysburg Compiler Print, 1912).

<sup>54</sup>Erwin L. Lueker, "Justification in the Theology of Walther," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (October, 1961), 598.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 599.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 605.

great God, the only rule and norm of faith and life, of all doctrine and all teachers, and the supreme judge in all religious controversies. Next we have adhered to the second supreme principle of our truly evangelical Church, that the article of the justification of the poor sinner before God by grace alone, for the sake of Christ alone, and therefore through faith alone, is the chief fundamental article of the whole Christian religion, with which the Church stands or falls.<sup>57</sup>

Walther defined the Church as the "totality of all true believers."<sup>58</sup> It consists of believers, and only believers, in Christ and in its fellowship there are no hypocrites or heretics. It is wider than any one denomination and includes the faithful of all time and from all nations. Since membership in the Church depends on a true faith in Christ, and since only God can look upon the heart, Walther stressed the point that the Church in its primary sense is invisible. In a certain sense the name Church could also be applied to the visible church or congregation because in its membership are included true

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<sup>57</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Lutherische Brosamen: Predigten und Reden, seit 1847 theils in Pamphletform, theils in Zeitschriften bereits erschienen, in einem Sammelband aufs Neue dargeboten (St. Louis: M. C. Barthel, 1876), p. 556. Quoted in Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder, eds., Walther and the Church, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup>See above, "Altenberg Theses," p. 57.

believers. It is because of these true believers, members of the invisible Church, that any visible church or congregation receives its power and authority. Hypocrites or heretics, although at times adhering to the visible church, are not true members of it.<sup>59</sup> Because of the true believers the visible church has the authority to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), a power given to the invisible Church. True believers have the obligation to separate themselves from churches which do not teach the Word of God in its purity and administer the sacraments according to Christ's institution. Although erring bodies which still possess the Gospel can properly be called churches they are not to be encouraged in their error but should be reformed. Churches are to be judged on the basis of the common, public confession which its members acknowledge. If one is to attain salvation it is essential that he be a member of the invisible Church where a spiritual fellowship already exists with all other true believers.

The office of the ministry is an office of service instituted by Christ and distinct from the priesthood of

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

all believers. The congregation, by virtue of the true believers among its membership, has the authority to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments and delegates the authority it has received from God to the pastor by virtue of its calling him to serve as minister. The office of the ministry is to be respected, and the minister obeyed when he speaks God's Word, but he has no authority to lord it over the congregation by issuing laws or ordinances. From the office of the ministry all other offices in the church receive their authority, therefore, there is no higher office in the church than that of serving as pastor of a congregation. The right to judge in doctrinal matters lies with the laymen as well as with the office of the ministry. Ordination, although a respected tradition, is not essential to the office of the ministry.<sup>60</sup>

Walther's doctrine of the Church with its invisible-visible sides became the accepted position in the Missouri Synod. Because of the distinction made between invisible and visible in the doctrine of the Church it was possible

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<sup>60</sup>This summary of Walther's doctrine of the Ministry is based on "The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and Ministry," in Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder, eds., Walther and the Church, pp. 71-86.

for the Missouri Synod to be very serious in its concern for fellowship with other Lutherans and other Christian church bodies without practicing visible fellowship. Since true spiritual fellowship was a gift of God to all members of the invisible Church, in the final analysis it was not absolutely essential to work for fellowship in the visible church on any less basis than complete agreement in doctrine and practice. Error, in doctrine especially, could not be tolerated. Yet, although the Evangelical Lutheran Church was the true visible Church of God on earth it was not the only church in which one could find salvation. It is little wonder that others misunderstood what the Missouri Synod was attempting to maintain with its distinction between invisible and visible. The accusations lodged against the Missouri Synod in this matter and its own self-understanding emerge in the following quotation from a tract published by a society formed in 1871 by the St. Louis pastoral conference of the Missouri Synod:

The Ev. Lutheran Church is indeed the true visible church on earth, for she has the marks of the Gospel preached in purity and the sacraments properly administered. To be sure, our opponents are much offended by this statement and say: "Yes, we hold that the Lutheran Church is a church of Christ, but not the

church." This objection obviously rests upon the idea that there is not only one, but a number of true churches and therefore the Lutheran Church has no right to claim this name. . . . But with this sweet dream of many true churches, whereby they quietly comfort themselves, they only soothe their consciences which cry out. Thus they openly testify of themselves that they are a sect and not the church of Christ.

Therefore do you believe that the Lutheran Church is that which alone confers sanctification?

No! Not at all. Our opponents have charged us falsely with such an unholy error. When we say: The Lutheran Church is the true visible church of God on earth, they scream: "There, we've heard it! They want to be the sole church in which salvation is possible and whoever does not think and believe as they must be damned . . . !" We are by no means so fanatic and narrow that we would limit the invisible reign of our Lord Jesus Christ to the small borders of the Lutheran Church. . . . The Evangelical Lutheran Church is not the one holy Christian Church on earth outside of which there is no salvation and sanctification. . . . But the Lutheran Church is the only one which believes correctly and therefore it is the true visible church of God on earth.<sup>61</sup>

It is informative to note that those who disagree with the Missouri Synod position on the doctrine of the Church are called opponents, not erring brethren. The terminology suggests a subtle, but firm, belief, common in the Missouri Synod, that all those who were not for

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<sup>61</sup>Was ist ein Lutheraner? oder warum nennst du dich "lutherisch?" (St. Louis: Deutsch-amerikanischen evangelisch-lutherischen Tractat Verein, n.d.), pp. 11-12. Quoted in: F. Dean Lueking, Mission in the Making: The Missionary Enterprise Among Missouri Synod Lutherans 1846-1963 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1964), p. 65.

them completely, were against them, and therefore their opponents. This was not in keeping with the principle set down in Walther's theses on the Church which recognized even the heterodox as erring brethren whose Churches should be reformed, not disbanded. Here, as in other matters, Missouri Synod practice did not follow unswervingly Missouri Synod principle. The attitude hidden behind the term "opponents" has lasted well into the twentieth century. In the book Ebenezer, prepared in observance of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Missouri Synod, the same term, "opponents," is used to refer to other Christian bodies not in complete doctrinal agreement with the Missouri Synod.<sup>62</sup>

How Walther envisioned the practical application of the principles set down in his doctrine of the church can be ascertained from his sermon based on the Epistle for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity:

"Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," v. 3 [Ephesians 4]; in our day these words of our text they frequently call their watchword who have begun or embraced a so-called church

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<sup>62</sup>Dau, Ebenezer, p. 389.



union. They suppose that with these words the apostolic and divine seal has been pressed upon their union. . . . these words are, therefore, often urged upon true Christians who do not want to take part in this newly organized church union, and it is thought that these words reprimand and judge them.

But as they deal with many other passages of Scripture in our day, so also with this one; careful thought is not given to it; they misunderstand and misuse it.

For what is really the unity which they try to found by this so-called church union? It is only an external, physical, earthly, visible one. Whilst in their heart and mind Christians believe different things, think differently, are minded differently, they intend to found a unity which consists in carrying on certain pious works, e.g., the work of missions and the spreading of the Bible; calling each other at least brothers and sisters, although they are not in their hearts; holding one formal divine service together; appearing together at one altar, and accepting certain rites. And he who does not want to take part in a mere outward union is called a foe of Christian unity and is told: Have you not read what the apostle writes: "Endeavor to keep the unity"? [sic]

However, the apostle does not write only this but: "Endeavor to keep the unity OF THE SPIRIT." It, therefore, is not the mere outward unity to which the apostle exhorts but "the unity OF THE SPIRIT." The true unity of Christians or the true Christian Church, therefore, consists of an inner, invisible unity, one of heart, mind, soul, and spirit. . . . The true unity of the Christian Church does not consist in being joined together externally like the dead stones [sic, stones] of a house, but like living members of a living body which is pervaded and suffused by one Spirit, namely, the Holy Spirit.

. . . . .  
All external unity without the inner unity of the Spirit is nothing else but the unity of a corpse in the cemetery; no matter how much it glitters in men's

eyes it counts for nothing in God's; it is an illusion, yes, it is a positive sign of spiritual death.<sup>63</sup>

Walther preached into the hearts of his hearers what he himself had accepted as true. Only the agreement in doctrine united people in true church fellowship. It was in that fellowship, which is bound together by the spiritual reality of the invisible Church, that Christian charity was to be shown. However, as we shall see from the conclusion of the sermon, Walther envisioned the extent of this fellowship in a very limited manner. He concludes:

And thus it is; when God has granted unity of the Spirit on the basis of unity of faith and confession, then no one dare judge the other; then among each other no one dare cast everything upon the scales; then one must rather be prepared to overlook much, very much, pardon all manner of weaknesses and failings in each other, and cover them; then one must gladly give in to the other; then no one dare try to win followers for himself. Yes, in this way and no other the precious treasure of true unity is maintained and preserved.

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<sup>63</sup> Donald E. Heck, trans., C. F. W. Walther's Standard Epistles, Part 2 (Livermore, Iowa: Mimeograph manuscript, 1948), p. 416. Heck has translated the Standard Epistles from C. F. W. Walther, Amerikanisch-Lutherische Epistel Postille: Predigten uber die meisten epistolischen Perikopen des Kirchenjahrs und freie Texte, Zweite Auflage (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1882). The emphasis is in the text.

Well then, my dear hearers, our faithful God in great mercy has granted us also this treasure. For our church and congregation is built upon the principle: "ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE Baptism!" Then let us listen to the exhortation of the apostle in our text: "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit." Let us be on guard against false unity and false peace like against a poisonous serpent with a shining, glittering skin; but let us carefully cultivate true unity of the Spirit, faith, and confession by gentle, humble, patient, loving toward [sic] each other, briefly, "in the bond of peace;" thus the God of peace be with us. And finally when this time of strife and conflict will be past, we will enter into the mansions of eternal peace, where no struggle, no conflict will any more disturb our unity, where we will all be perfectly one with the Father, Son, and Spirit, and with all the angels and elect praise and laud him with one mouth into all eternity.<sup>64</sup>

In calling for a "unity of faith and confession" Walther was in effect calling for the preservation of reine Lehre. Nothing was more important for the visible church. If in the battle to retain purity of doctrine there is "strife and conflict" then it will be settled when believers reach "the mansions of eternal peace." The Missouri Synod could battle, tooth and nail at times vehemently, all who did not agree with her in doctrine and practice and at the same time be convinced that in "the mansions of eternal peace" their opponents would be their neighbors. Although it is not said in so many words, it

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<sup>64</sup>Heck, Walther's Standard Epistles, p. 418.

is implied that their opponents would be their neighbors because their opponents would finally, in the invisible Church realized in the Church Triumphant, come to agree with them. One should also note in passing that had Walther's admonition for brotherly love toward the fellow-believer been heeded, much grief might have been avoided within the Missouri Synod.

On the basis of Walther's teaching on the doctrine of the Church, which the Missouri Synod accepted as Scriptural and therefore correct,<sup>65</sup> the synod adopted as its formula for church fellowship complete agreement in doctrine and practice.

The life of Franz August Otto Pieper lacks the spectacular elements that are found in the life of Walther.<sup>66</sup> Franz Pieper was born on June 27, 1852, at Karwitz (Carwitz) in Pomerania. He completed his education

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<sup>65</sup>The Voice of Our Church on the Question of the Church and Ministry was unanimously adopted at the fifth convention of the Missouri Synod at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1851.

<sup>66</sup>Details of the life of Franz Pieper are taken from two main sources: Theodore Graebner, Dr. Francis Pieper, A Biographical Sketch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1931), and three articles in the Concordia Theological Monthly, II (October, 1931) 721-736, 761-771.

through the Gymnasium level in Pomerania before immigrating to the United States in 1870 with his widowed mother and four of his brothers. Two brothers had preceded the rest of the family to the United States while one sister remained behind in Pomerania. The mother and her five sons settled at Watertown, Wisconsin, where Franz completed a course of study at Northwestern University (later called Northwestern College) in 1872. Since the Wisconsin Synod, of which Pieper was a member, had no seminary of its own at that time, Pieper attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, graduating from that institution in 1875.

After serving a dual parish at Centerville, Wisconsin, for a little more than a year and serving the First German Evangelical Lutheran Church at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, Pieper was elected to a professorship at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1878. He assumed his duties at that institution on October 1, 1878. Pieper remained at Concordia Seminary as professor and later also as president until his death in 1931. The professorship filled by Pieper was created so that in "systematic theology a professor should be engaged who during the lifetime of Prof. Dr. Walther

should work himself into this office."<sup>67</sup> The reason for the creation of the professorship is of significance. The new professor was to be introduced into office by Walther, guided by him, encouraged by him, in order to continue the Walther tradition which the Missouri Synod had developed. Elijah's mantle was to fall on Elisha. In this way the church body was assuring itself that it would continue in pure doctrine. The strategy worked extremely well. Walther's work was carried on by Pieper; systematized and refined by him. The continuity of confessional attitude and the spirit of triumphalism were maintained.

Pieper exerted a great influence on his students. One later wrote: "To listen to Pieper in his genial and spirited conversation was an intellectual feast."<sup>68</sup> Another commented:

The thing about Pieper that I remember is that you forgave him a lot of things when you heard him with eloquence and passion talk about the satisfactio vicaria [vicarious atonement]. That was very, very impressive. And personally, he was a very kind man.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Graebner, Pieper, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> W. H. T. Dau, "Dr. Francis Pieper the Churchman," Concordia Theological Monthly, II (October, 1931), 734.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with O. P. Kretzmann.

Perhaps the genial character of Franz Pieper can best be understood from the following comment: "He enjoyed a good cigar, but was also able to accept and smoke a bad one graciously."<sup>70</sup> He had a certain reserved dignity, however he never became overly impressed with himself.

Pieper continued Walther's emphasis on the centrality of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. In his opus magnum, Christliche Dogmatik,<sup>71</sup> he makes that point abundantly clear. He also accepted and refined Walther's doctrine of the Church.

Pieper's doctrine of the Church can be set forth from several sources, including his Dogmatik. Here we will unfold the doctrine on the basis of a volume first published in 1893 by the Lutheran Publication Society.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Graebner, Pieper, p. 54.

<sup>71</sup>Franz A. O. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (3 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917-1924). The Dogmatik builds on Walther's position and expands it by means of argumentation and quotations from the fathers. The work was translated into English and appears as: Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, trans. by Theodore Engelder, Walter W. Albrecht and J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950-1953).

<sup>72</sup>The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (3rd ed.; Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society,

At the suggestion of a lay member of the society, representatives of the various general Lutheran bodies were invited to set forth the distinctive doctrines and usages of their respective bodies. Of the seven essays in the book, only the essay concerning the Synodical Conference, written by Franz Pieper, develops along a polemical line. The other writers present the positions of their various bodies in an historical context. Pieper makes his presentation in strictly dogmatic categories and terms. For example, in his presentation of the doctrine of Predestination, Pieper hashes over again the doctrine, once in controversy, in a dogmatic instead of an historical format. When near the end of the essay he writes, "For this and none other is the doctrinal position of the Lutheran Church,"<sup>73</sup> he is taking an obvious swing at other Lutheran bodies in the United States. Polemics, not reconciliation, here come first. Such an approach was not necessary at the time of its writing and is one more example of Missouri

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c. 1902). The volume was copyrighted first in 1893 and again in 1902. It aroused enough interest that it went through four editions, the last being published in 1914. On this basis it is considered of importance to the movement toward Lutheran union and unity.

<sup>73</sup>Distinctive Doctrines, p. 164.



Synod triumphalism. Pieper was insinuating that the Synodical Conference<sup>74</sup> was the keeper of reine Lehre and therefore the truly Lutheran Church. If the others would be Lutheran and attain the victory, they would have to agree with the doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference.

During and immediately after the Controversy over Predestination (1879-1883) the Missouri Synod, and other members of the Synodical Conference, had developed the modus operandi of using the Lutheran Confessions as a wall instead of as a bridge. This use of the Confessions became normative for the Missouri Synod and prevailed at least until 1945.

In his essay concerning the Synodical Conference it is clear that Pieper is building walls also in his presentation of the doctrine of the Church.

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<sup>74</sup>The Synodical Conference was formed in 1872 by the Missouri Synod, the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Norwegian Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and the Illinois Synod. The controversy over the doctrine of predestination caused the Ohio Synod and the Norwegian Synod to withdraw from the conference in the 1880's.

At the beginning of the essay Pieper goes to some length to show that "what is necessarily or commonly connected with it must not be confounded with the Church itself."<sup>75</sup> For example, Christ is the Head of the Church, but Christ is not the Church itself. He is the Head and the Church is his "spiritual body."<sup>76</sup> The Lord's Supper, Baptism and the Word of God are necessarily connected with the Church but they are not the Church. They are "the true marks of the Church, but they are not the Church itself, nor any part of it."<sup>77</sup> In this connection, Pieper makes a statement that should have encouraged a modified position concerning church fellowship, but which only served to strengthen a position of separatism. He writes:

. . . Christians dwelling together in the same place are bound to unite also in external fellowship for the purpose of preaching and hearing the Word of God, etc., and they may enter into a larger ecclesiastical organization with other Churches, but no external ecclesiastical organization of any kind is the Church itself, or part of it, the Church being "properly nothing else than the congregation of all believers and saints" (Augsb. Conf., Art. VIII). The Church

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<sup>75</sup>Distinctive Doctrines, p. 120.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

is not a mere sum of ordinances, institutions, ceremonies, etc., but the great spiritual body of men believing in Christ.<sup>78</sup>

In practice the distinction between what is necessarily a part of the Church and what is only connected with the Church works itself out in the following manner:

. . . by keeping in view that the Church is the congregation of believers, we shall not, for the purpose of building and extending the Church, resort to wrong names, such as temporal power, external force, human ordinances, church-fairs, church-fellowship with errorists; for by such means faith in Christ is neither wrought nor preserved, but, on the contrary, hindered or destroyed.<sup>79</sup>

Pieper is careful to state that the Evangelical Lutheran Church does not consider itself to be the only saving church. He writes:

The so-called "Missourians," although emphasizing the distinction between orthodox and heterodox Churches, have always rejected the doctrine that the orthodox Lutheran Church is the Church, i.e., the Church without which there is no salvation.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-121. Emphases in the original.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

"The Church is, and always remains, in this life invisible."<sup>81</sup> Pieper contends that although the church has a visible side, the members of a congregation being visible, the visibility is not necessarily connected with the Church and should not be confounded with the Church itself. He adds, "The Church itself, therefore, can not be called visible on account of the audible and visible means of grace."<sup>82</sup>

Pieper maintains Walther's distinction between the universal Church and particular churches or local congregations. He writes:

The particular (i.e., local) Churches, therefore, properly speaking, consist of true believers only, the hypocrites being intermingled with the Church through external fellowship solely, forming no part of the particular Church itself.<sup>83</sup>

In relating the universal Church to particular churches, Pieper makes this concluding statement:

The relation between the particular Churches and the one universal Church may, therefore, be stated thus: the aggregate of the particular Churches (with the

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

addition of those single believers who are cut off from all external Church-fellowship) is the one universal Church, embracing all true believers in all parts of the world.<sup>84</sup>

Particular churches are of two kinds, orthodox or heterodox. One determines the kind of particular church "by its relation to the Word of God."<sup>85</sup> Pieper insists that nowhere does the Bible itself give permission to any church or any minister to teach or preach anything that is not pure doctrine. "The stress laid on the 'pure doctrine' or 'pure Gospel' must not be ridiculed since the Gospel generates and preserves faith only so far as it is pure."<sup>86</sup> The church that adheres to the Bible, preaches and proclaims pure doctrine and administers the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) according to Christ's command, Pieper considers to be of the orthodox Lutheran Church. Any church that allows false doctrine to be taught in its midst or that does not administer the sacraments according to Christ's command must be called heterodox. Pieper writes:

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

. . . it should be distinctly understood that the character of the Churches as to their orthodoxy, is determined by the doctrine which is actually taught, not by the "officially acknowledged confession" kept perhaps in the archives only; for Christ commanded all the articles of the Christian faith to be taught, and not kept on record only.<sup>87</sup>

At this point Pieper makes a slight but important adjustment in the position of Walther as set forth in the Altenburg Theses, VIII.<sup>88</sup> There Walther wrote that one was to determine the orthodox character of a church body by the "public confession to which its members acknowledge and confess themselves to be pledged."<sup>89</sup> Here Pieper expands the criterion for determining orthodoxy to "the doctrine which is actually taught," in a church body. It appears that this adjustment was made as a result of the controversy in some of the Lutheran synods over the doctrine of predestination.<sup>90</sup> The practical result of this adjustment for the Missouri Synod was that it reinforced its spirit of triumphalism by encouraging isolation from any Lutheran synod in which it detected a departure from

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>88</sup>See above, p. 59.

<sup>89</sup>Distinctive Doctrines, p. 126.

<sup>90</sup>See below, pp. 86-87.

reine Lehre. It was easy enough for the Missouri Synod to find here or there in the other synods individuals who taught things it considered to be out of harmony with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Pieper's adjustment of Walther meant that even though other Lutheran synods accepted the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as their public confessions they were to be considered a heterodox body if certain individuals within that body taught things the Missouri Synod considered to be out of harmony with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

In connection with the doctrine of the Church, Pieper sets forth his formula for church fellowship. He writes:

It is not according to the good pleasure of God--as modern theologians teach--that sects exist, for all Christians are required to agree on all articles of faith revealed in Holy Scripture . . . , but sects arose and exist by God's forbearance only, like other sins. Sects arise and continue, not for the purpose that Christians should join them, but for the purpose that Christians should prove their allegiance to God by avoiding them, as the Scriptures explicitly teach . . . .<sup>91</sup>

Pieper insisted that "to unite with heterodox Churches, must not be excused by pointing to the fact

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<sup>91</sup>Distinctive Doctrines, p. 127.

that many dear children of God are found among them."<sup>92</sup> By this he did not mean that there were no children of God in heterodox churches but that church fellowship could not be declared on that basis. Pieper, and with him the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, maintained the position that church fellowship required complete agreement in doctrine and practice.

After the organization of the Missouri Synod in 1847, efforts were made in the direction of a wider Lutheran union. To this end Walther encouraged free conferences of Lutheran pastors from various synods. During the years 1856-1859, four free conferences were held. They did not accomplish the goal of uniting American Lutheranism, but it can be safely maintained that the formation of the Synodical Conference in 1872 was one of the fruits of the free conferences.<sup>93</sup>

The Synodical Conference was disrupted by a controversy over the doctrine of predestination and election

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>For a useable and thoroughly documented account of the free conferences see: Erwin L. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856-1859," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (August, 1944), 529-563.



(1879-1883).<sup>94</sup> Walther and F. A. Schmidt, of the Norwegian Synod, were the chief contestants. Wentz is correct when he maintains, "certainly the long and bitter controversy on predestination did more to split up the Lutheranism of America than all the issues raised in an earlier generation by the ill-fated 'American Lutheranism.'"<sup>95</sup> The acrimony produced by the Predestination Controversy extended well into the twentieth century. However, at the turn of the century, an effort was made in the direction of reconciliation. Between 1903 and 1906 the attempt was made to bring together the Lutheran synods in America, especially in the mid-western states. Following the method used by Walther in the 1850's, a series of free conferences were convened.

The first of the five conferences was held in Watertown, Wisconsin, April 29-30, 1903.<sup>96</sup> It was the

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<sup>94</sup>For details on the controversy see: Roy Arthur Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-Five Years of Its Existence, 1872-1897" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946). For an excellent general summary of the controversy see: Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (revised edition; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 205-210.

<sup>95</sup>Wentz, History of Lutheranism, p. 205.

<sup>96</sup>For a description of these conferences see: Charles F. Bunzel, "The Missouri Synod and the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses" (unpublished S.T.M. thesis,

intent of the conference to "discuss the issues that were dividing the bodies from one another and to remove as much as possible the misunderstandings and prejudices . . . ." <sup>97</sup> Professor Franz Pieper of the Missouri Synod was the main speaker, delivering a paper on the theme, "Grace in the Doctrine of Conversion and Election." After his paper was presented, discussion by members of the conference followed. Although complete agreement could not be reached, the members of the conference thought that some good had been accomplished. A committee was appointed to make arrangements for a second free conference.

The second free conference was held in Lincoln Hall, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on September 9-11, 1903. This conference was attended by about 700 Lutheran ministers and professors and several laymen. <sup>98</sup> Dr. H. A. Allwart of the Ohio Synod presented an exegetical paper. The discussion after the presentation indicated that nothing much was gained from this meeting, although it was well attended.

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Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1964), pp. 10-20. Martin W. Flor, "The Free Conferences of 1903-1906 and the Concept of Analogia Fidei," Concordia Theological Monthly, XL (April, 1969), 218-227.

<sup>97</sup>Bunzel, "Chicago Theses," p. 11.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

The third free conference met in Detroit from April 6-8, 1904, with 305 pastors and professors present.<sup>99</sup> If numbers can be a gauge, it becomes evident that at this point the effectiveness of the conferences already was decreasing. Only about half of the number attended this conference as the one before. In spite of the fact that the free conferences were not producing the desired results, there was an agreement to have another conference in the near future.

The fourth free conference was held at St. John's Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on August 8, 1905.<sup>100</sup> The Synodical Conference had a meeting between the fourth and final free conferences and, it is reported, the pastors present at the Synodical Conference Convention "unanimously resolved not to take further part in any meetings of the Intersynodical Conference."<sup>101</sup> However a fifth, and final, conference was held in Fort Wayne, on October 24-25, 1906.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

The free conferences failed because each synodical organization represented wanted the others to capitulate. None, especially the Missouri Synod, would admit error in the past and the possibility of reconciliation based on a changed position. A report in the Lutheran Standard offers the complaint: "Whoever wants to get in harmony with Missouri, must adopt the Missourian policy, shifting as it may be . . . with regard to the points now in controversy . . . ."103 As the Missouri Synod viewed the situation, ". . . it would seem that everybody expects Missouri to yield, but wants to maintain his own position."104 Reflecting on the free conferences, Professor George H. Schodde of the Ohio Synod wrote in the Columbus Theological Magazine:

The five Intersynodical Conferences which have been held during the past few years have in more respects than one "pointed a moral and told a tale." Chief among their lessons has been the conviction that, humbly speaking, a reunion of the old confessional forces of the Lutheran Church in this country, as represented on the one hand by the Synodical

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<sup>103</sup>F. W. Stellhorn, "Meeting of the Intersynodical Conference at Fort Wayne, Ind., October 24 and 25," Lutheran Standard, LXIV (November 3, 1906), 694. Quoted in Bunzel, "Chicago Theses," p. 19.

<sup>104</sup>[C. A.] W[eiss], "Church News and Comments," The Lutheran Witness, XXV (November 15, 1906), 182.

Conference and on the other by the Independent Synods of Ohio and Iowa, is now an impossibility. In fact, the debatable ground between the two contending forces seems now to be greater than it was a quarter of a century ago . . . .<sup>105</sup>

In spite of the failure of the free conferences, the pervading desire for rapprochement among Lutherans in America could not be denied. Even in the Missouri Synod the desire for rapprochement was present. That is why, in spite of the failure of the free conferences, the Missouri Synod Convention in 1914 gave authorization to its president to appoint a committee to look into the possibility of resuming intersynodical conferences.<sup>106</sup>

Immediately prior to the Quadricentennial Celebration of the Reformation, old animosities still existed among the various Lutheran bodies. Attempts at reconciliation and rapprochement had, with certain important exceptions, failed. However the spirit of the day was

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<sup>105</sup>[George] R[omoser], "Lutheran Intersynodical Conferences and the Scriptures," The Lutheran Witness, XXVI (May 30, 1907), 82. Reference is made to Prof. Schodde's article in the Columbus Theological Magazine and the quotation is included as part of the article by Romoser.

<sup>106</sup>Synodal-Bericht, 1914, p. 175.

calling for closer ties among the heirs of the Lutheran Reformation. Rapprochement would soon come, at least in part, to the divided Lutheranism of the United States.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY CHALLENGES TO THE SPIRIT OF TRIUMPHALISM: THE REMOTE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF "A STATEMENT"

Although the motion toward Lutheran union had begun before the Quadricentennial of the Reformation, even reaching some success, for example, among the Norwegian Lutherans, the centennial celebration quickened and intensified the motion and produced larger direct results. This quickened and intensified interest in Lutheran union agitated reaction also in the Missouri Synod. Possibly more than any other man in the Missouri Synod at the time, O. H. Pannkoke was directly connected with this reviving and growing interest in Lutheran union. In a number of ways his life and work in behalf of Lutheranism in the United States and the reaction to his work from within the Missouri Synod illustrate the attitude of that church body during the second and third decades of the twentieth century.

O. H. Pannkoke was born in Germany, and attended the Gymnasium in Hamelin.<sup>1</sup> After completing his course of study at Concordia College, Milwaukee, in the spring of 1905, he entered Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in the fall of the same year.<sup>2</sup> From 1905 through the spring of 1908 he was a student there. In his autobiography<sup>3</sup> Pannkoke recalls incidents and impressions from his years at the seminary. Of the stress placed on the Orthodox Theologians he writes:

Frequently on Saturdays, the libraries of deceased ministers were auctioned at the seminary. It was amazing that most of the books were the pigskin-covered volumes of the "Age of Orthodoxy." In fact, Professor F. A. W. Krauss in my day gave a course discussing the important books in the history of theology. The course stopped before 1800. The orthodox theologians were not only a source of theological thought, they were the source, practically to the exclusion of everything else.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Hermann Pannkoke, A Great Church Finds Itself: The Lutheran Church Between The Wars (Quitman, Ga.: privately printed, c. 1966), p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. In the preface Pannkoke writes: "Upon the suggestion of Professor Theodore G. Tappert of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, I have chosen the autobiographical method of telling this story." p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 20.



The president of Concordia Seminary during Pannkoke's student days was Franz Pieper. Pieper was revered by members of the Missouri Synod as its chief dogmatician. According to Pannkoke's own recollection it was in 1907, while serving on a student committee, that he reached "the turning point" in his life.<sup>5</sup> He describes the incident as follows:

Our committee was to urge the faculty to change its classroom technique of dictating paragraph after paragraph of material. I ventured to question the effectiveness of endless memorizing. Dr. Pieper turned to me and said, "Mein lieber, memorieren sie nur. Zwanzig jahre muessen sie memorieren. Dann koennen sie zu denken anfangen." ["Memorize! Twenty years you must memorize, then you can begin to think."]<sup>6</sup>

By and large Pannkoke's life, after graduating from the seminary in 1908, was lived in reaction to Pieper's statement. He asserted and insisted upon his own right to think, and to think new and innovative thoughts.

Upon graduation, Pannkoke's first charge was a small parish in western North Dakota. While serving this parish Pannkoke maintains that he came to understand the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

Gospel and to gain spiritual freedom from what he calls the Missouri Synod "system."

Every month for eight months, I read my Greek New Testament from cover to cover. I found the Christian faith as Luther found it and I have never lost it. In the New Testament I discovered the living God. I discovered the Compassionate Christ. I discovered human beings of flesh and blood confronting the great issues of life. I discovered the great spiritual ideals in the teachings of Christ which have inspired men and given them a vision of a better world. The Christian faith took on life and meaning to me. I won spiritual freedom.<sup>7</sup>

O. H. Pannkoke's second parish was a mission congregation in Brooklyn, New York. While serving the mission he engaged in graduate study at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, pursuing a course of study in cultural history with emphasis on the Reformation Era. A. C. McGiffert, W. W. Rockwell, James Harvey Robinson, and E. R. Seligman were some of the professors with whom he studied. Pannkoke became devoted to scholarship and gained "an organic view of life, of history, of religion."<sup>8</sup> He was one of few, if not the only, graduate from Concordia Seminary from about 1900 to at least 1908, who did graduate work at a university in the United States.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

When in early 1915 the Lutheran Society<sup>9</sup> organized the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee, O. H. Pannkoke, then 27 years old, was chosen to serve as executive director and accepted the position.<sup>10</sup> His interest in public relations, a new field for the Lutheran Church, and his friendship with Pastor William S. Schoenfeld, "the moving spirit behind the committee,"<sup>11</sup> were major factors in his being chosen to serve as director. The aim of this committee was to "promote a nationwide civic recognition of the Reformation."<sup>12</sup> Although it is an exaggerated statement when Pannkoke writes, "Lutheran cooperation was born in the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee in 1915,"<sup>13</sup> it cannot be denied that the centennial committee's work added impetus to the desire for cooperation among the various Lutheran bodies in the United States as the Reformation anniversary approached.

Three major committees were organized to direct the observance of the anniversary of the Reformation in 1917.

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<sup>9</sup>See below, p. 99.

<sup>10</sup>Pannkoke, A Great Church, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

As early as 1909, the General Council called upon the General Synod, the United Synod South, and other Lutheran bodies to establish a committee to plan an effective centennial celebration. On September 1, 1914, representatives of the General Council, the General Synod and the United Synod South met at Atlantic City and formed the Joint Committee on the Celebration of the Quadri-Centennial of the Reformation, 1917. Reverend Howard R. Gold was chosen as executive secretary and the committee established its headquarters in Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup>

The second major committee was that established by the Missouri Synod. The enabling resolution was presented to and adopted by the Delegate Convention of the Missouri Synod held in Chicago, Illinois, in 1914.<sup>15</sup> The celebration planned by this committee centered on October 31, 1917 and included such things as special children's services, publication of pamphlets in both German and English, the publication of a Reformation booklet, and the reception of a special offering of thanksgiving.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>15</sup>Synodal-Bericht, 1914, pp. 179-181.

The third major committee was formed under the auspices of the Lutheran Society of New York. The Lutheran Society was an organization of some 500 laymen from the various Lutheran synods of the greater New York area, including members of the General Council, General Synod, Augustana Synod, the Ohio Synod, the Missouri Synod, and the Norwegian synods. It is probably correct to say that the Lutheran Society of New York in 1915 was "the most influential lay group anywhere in the Lutheran Church in America."<sup>16</sup> The aim of the committee was to stress the civil recognition of the Reformation and to add another dimension to the religious aspects of the celebration.<sup>17</sup> This committee proposed "to enlist the nation's intellectual, educational, religious, political leadership appropriately to recognize the great influence on civilization of the Lutheran Reformation."<sup>18</sup> In December, 1916, the initial issue of the New York Reformation Bulletin set forth the plan for action:

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<sup>16</sup>Pannkoke, A Great Church, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

. . . to stimulate every group and institution likely to be interested in the Reformation to recognize it, to serve as a clearing-house of ideas and plans in order to avoid duplication of effort and conflict of dates, to serve in the arrangement of lectures and lecture centers and to be the effective center for gaining wide publicity, and to promote and arrange general events.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the fact that a declaration of war was promulgated against Germany on April 6, 1917, the Reformation celebration committees continued their work and carried through with positive results. The New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee had gathered and published "a collection of seventy-five statements from outstanding public men and university leaders"<sup>20</sup> by the time that war was declared. This small bit of public relations probably exerted an influence far beyond expectation at a time when anti-German fanaticism was becoming widespread. Such well known men as Theodore Roosevelt, David Starr Jordan, and William Jennings Bryan added their statements in praise of Luther.<sup>21</sup> The wisdom in developing the civic side of the quadricentennial is borne out

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

by the success which crowned the final phases of the celebration. A mass meeting held at Carnegie Hall on October 31, 1917, included P. P. Claxton, national commissioner of education, and Governor Brumbough of Pennsylvania on the speakers' platform. At the final event, a formal dinner held at the Hotel Astor, Governor Charles S. Whitman of New York spoke on the subject, "The Reformation and Liberty."<sup>22</sup> From the standpoint of public relations the Quadricentennial of the Reformation was successful in spite of the anti-German sentiment pervading the nation in 1917.

Many of the Missouri Synod, especially the synodical officials, took a dim view of the composition and work of the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee. The committee was composed of representatives of many of the Lutheran synods in the United States, including those Eastern synods whom the Missouri Synod Lutherans, especially in the Mid-West, considered to be deficient in doctrinal knowledge and ecclesiastical practice. The committee also encouraged lectures by non-Lutherans. In 1916, Theodore Graebner, Missouri Synod professor and editor of an official organ of the church body, The Lutheran

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

Witness, warned that a proper celebration of the Reformation anniversary would avoid unionism, even the appearance of unionism, the engagement of non-Lutheran speakers for the Lutheran celebration, and would not set aside the straight forward polemics called for by the celebration.<sup>23</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that through the pages of The Lutheran Witness, Graebner condemned the work of the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee as "offensive to God and as betrayal of true Lutheranism."<sup>24</sup>

In the fall of 1916, Graebner visited New York and made an attempt to disband the committee. In so doing he was exercising authority not actually his own. Although he persuaded a number of Missouri Synod pastors that the "program of the Committee was evil,"<sup>25</sup> he was unable to disrupt the work of the committee or cause it to disband. Since O. H. Pannkoke, a member of the Missouri Synod, was executive director of the committee he became the chief

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<sup>23</sup>[Theodore] G[raebner], "Shall It Be a Denatured Jubilee?" The Lutheran Witness, XXXV (November 14, 1916), 349-352. See also C. S. Meyer, "Some Aspects of the Observance of the Reformation Quadricentennial by America's Lutherans," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLI (February, 1968), 14-35.

<sup>24</sup>Pannkoke, A Great Church, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 55.



target for attack from the Missouri Synod and especially from Graebner. This precipitated strained relations between Pannkoke and Graebner, relations which were never repaired. The anti-Graebner theme is evident throughout Pannkoke's autobiography and the anti-Pannkoke theme is present with Graebner as late as 1937. In April of that year he wrote to Karl Kretzmann, a Missouri Synod pastor at Orange, New Jersey: "And when will our Eastern boys admit that I was right in my judgment of Pannkoke in 1917?"<sup>26</sup>

Pannkoke recalls the visit of Graebner to New York and his efforts to disrupt the work of the committee:

After the meeting a number of us walked toward Broadway to catch the subway. Graebner walked side by side with me and told me, "Why don't you devote your talents to the Missouri Synod? We will see that you get a break." Graebner never forgave me this assertion of my independence.<sup>27</sup>

It is asserting too much to conclude, as Pannkoke does, that Graebner's failure to disrupt the work of the committee "marks the beginning of the revolution in the

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<sup>26</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Karl Kretzmann, April 27, 1937, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner, MSS, box 106, I.

<sup>27</sup>Pannkoke, A Great Church, p. 55.

Missouri Synod against the antocratic [sic, autocratic] control of the ecclesiastical organization and its refusal to face . . . changes . . . ."28 And Pannkoke is certainly claiming too much influence for himself when he writes: "I was the first to defy the organization. Because the program of the Quadricentenary Committee was so successful, many of the young men became my followers."29 Such an assertion does not take into consideration the differences within the Missouri Synod that existed between the Mid-Western element and the Eastern element. This difference became more evident as the Missouri Synod sought to serve its men in the Armed Services after the United States entered World War I.

As the work of the New York Reformation Quadricentenary Committee neared completion consideration was given to some type of continued cooperative work. In November of 1917 the committee members organized the Lutheran Bureau. The bureau was intended to serve all Lutheran bodies as a research agency, a clearinghouse for service projects, and as a national publicity agency.

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28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

Pannkoke remained as executive director and Theodore Lamprecht, an influential Missouri Synod layman, became treasurer.<sup>30</sup> Although the bureau failed in its aim to serve all the Lutheran bodies in the United States, it did have opportunity to serve many of them. After the National Lutheran Council was organized in September of 1918, the bureau voted to align itself with the council in order to serve the largest number of Lutherans. Theodore Lamprecht, the treasurer of the bureau wrote:

. . . the Officers of the Bureau were unable to carry out their desire to be an independent organization for service to the whole Lutheran Church. Hence, we voted in favor of connecting it with the National Lutheran Council, as the body representing the largest number of Lutheran Synods, as well as individual members.<sup>31</sup>

The decision to align itself with the National Lutheran Council brought swift and stinging reaction from the Missouri Synod's self-appointed watchdog, Theodore Graebner. His criticism was directed at O. H. Pannkoke

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>31</sup> Letter, T. H. Lamprecht to Professor Theodore Graebner, February 21, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 6. Emphases in the text.

as well as at the Lutheran Bureau as an organization.

Graebner wrote:

The Lutheran Bureau of New York has received the official approval [sic] of the Merger [Graebner's pejorative title for the National Lutheran Council]. This was a foregone conclusion. The Merger is a unionistic organization, and so is the Bureau; both standing on the principle that those may be united for church-work who do not agree in doctrine.

.....  
Also, the former Missouri Synod pastor employed as secretary by the Bureau has already served in Home Mission Fund campaigns in synods now connected with the Merger. The Bureau offers its services indiscriminately to all Lutheran Synods for such purposes.

.....  
However, the deception practiced by an agent of the Bureau who camouflages its unionistic character by means of certain purposes that are per se harmless, is being recognized by the brethren.<sup>32</sup>

Pannkoke complained to Graebner about the attack:

"Again I want to point out that your course is against every rule of our Synod, is unfair, unbrotherly and unchristian."<sup>33</sup> Finally Pannkoke submitted formal charges against Graebner to both Reverend O. C. Kreinheder, president of the English District of the Missouri Synod, and

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<sup>32</sup>Theodore Graebner, "The Lutheran Bureau of New York," The Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (December 24, 1918), 411.

<sup>33</sup>Letter, O. H. Pannkoke to Prof. T. H. Graebner, January 7, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 60.

F. Pfotenhauer, president of the Missouri Synod.<sup>34</sup> A meeting in St. Louis was scheduled in order to hear the contending parties and to attempt to reach a solution. Graebner thought T. H. Lamprecht was attempting to exert undue influence on behalf of Pannkoke as is evidenced by the fact that at the top of the letter from Lamprecht, Graebner wrote: "Why was this sent to reach me on date of meeting with P.[annkoke] at St. L.??"<sup>35</sup> The undue influence was being exerted by Graebner, however, and he knew that he had the backing of the official leadership of the Missouri Synod.<sup>36</sup> Pannkoke was caught in the squeeze between the Missouri Synod's insistence on reine Lehre and its extremely high regard for its elected officials. He had moved into areas of cooperation with other Lutheran bodies not then acceptable to the Missouri Synod. He

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<sup>34</sup>Letter, Rev. O. C. Kreinheder to Prof. Graebner, January 28, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 60.

<sup>35</sup>See above, note 31.

<sup>36</sup>President Pfotenhauer wrote to Graebner: "I thank God that in the editors at St. Louis we have such an excellent safety catch for our Synod." Letter, President Pfotenhauer to Theodore Graebner, December 8, 1917, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 123. Translation by Alan Graebner.

failed to establish a Biblical base for such action, proceeding along practical lines. He had attempted to be his own man and in so doing he had failed to submit to the elected officials of the Missouri Synod. He found himself out of harmony with the two major characteristics of the Missouri Synod Geist. As a result he was officially removed from the clergy roster of the Missouri Synod.<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to understand why, but Pannkoke remained in the Missouri Synod as a lay member. He faced new trials from the synod after 1933, but, after a lengthy process and several apologies on his part, finally was exonerated of the later charges by the Synodical Board of Appeals in 1947.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Reverend O. C. Kreinheder president of the English District, informed Theodore Graebner to include the following announcement in The Lutheran Witness: "Since, notwithstanding repeated efforts to have him do so, the Rev. O. H. Pannkoke has not severed his connection with the Lutheran Bureau of the National Lutheran Council, he can no longer be regarded as a clerical member of our Synod." Letter, Rev. O. C. Kreinheder to Prof. Graebner, January 3, 1919 [sic, the date should be January 3, 1920 since hearings went on during 1919 and the notice appeared in The Lutheran Witness in 1920], Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 60. The announcement appeared in The Lutheran Witness, XXXIX (January 20, 1920), 30. At the bottom of the page of the letter from Kreinheder, above, Graebner wrote in large red letters, "Finis."

<sup>38</sup>In 1933 Pannkoke was sued for divorce. The course of action taken by the congregation to which he belonged at

Before the work of the various Reformation Centennial committees reached fruition with the major celebrations on October 31, 1917, the United States, after an attempt at neutrality, entered World War I on the side of the Allies. As early as April 26, 1917, the Inner Mission Board of the General Synod called for cooperation from the General Council and the United Synod of the South in serving the hundreds of Lutheran men being called into the service of their country. The result was the establishment of the United Inner Mission on May 16, 1917.<sup>39</sup> Other Lutherans were interested in the same ministry. Interest, in general, kept pace with the mushrooming war effort.

Capitalizing on the cooperative success of the Reformation centennial committees and utilizing the services of men who had gained experience in the earlier ventures at cooperation among Lutherans in the United

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that time, Trinity Lutheran Church, Oak Park, Illinois, resulted in Pannkoke being pronounced self-excommunicated. The sentence was appealed by Pannkoke and he finally was upheld in the matter to the great disappointment of the officials of the congregation and of the English District. See: Pannkoke, A Great Church, p. 240; Proceedings, 1944, pp. 346-355; Proceedings, 1947, pp. 630-634.

<sup>39</sup>Wolf, Documents, p. 293.

States, seven general Lutheran bodies took part in the formation of the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare in 1917.<sup>40</sup> The cooperating bodies grew from the original seven general Lutheran bodies to a high of thirteen general Lutheran bodies. It was a monumental task to secure such cooperation but within six months after the United States had entered the war, twelve of the church bodies were cooperating fully in the commission and the Synodical Conference at least maintained a degree of cooperation in external matters. The extent to which the Missouri Synod would cooperate with the commission was a question which brought to light the existence of a crack in the supposed monolithic structure of that synod.

At the June, 1917, convention of the Missouri Synod, the president was instructed by the delegates to appoint a new board to provide for the spiritual care of the men in the Armed Services.<sup>41</sup> Although the board, appointed from the Chicago area, conducted its first sessions

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>41</sup>Proceedings, 1917, p. 35.



in German and even assumed a German name,<sup>42</sup> more prudent consideration caused the board to conduct its sessions in English and to adopt the name "Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy."<sup>43</sup>

The new board faced difficult decisions in determining how best to serve the men in the military. The United States government had adopted the policy of dealing with all Protestants through the Federal Council of Churches and the Y.M.C.A., a policy which was distasteful to many of the Lutheran bodies. The realization soon came that it would be wise for the Lutherans to work together in order, as a group, to receive recognition from the government. Experience had taught that the governmental agency in charge would not recognize the distinctions of the various Lutheran synods in dealing with their men in the military.

The Missouri Synod's Board for Army and Navy, if it wanted to reach the largest number of its men in service, was faced with making certain practical adjustments in its

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<sup>42</sup>Evangelische Lutherische Missionsbehoerde fuer Heer und Flotte.

<sup>43</sup>Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union: Documents from the Army and Navy Board, 1917 and 1918," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLI (May, 1968), 51.

stance over against the other Lutheran bodies. The pressure of governmental control during wartime helped push the Missouri Synod into areas of cooperation with other Lutherans not engaged in before. After the war was over the synod reverted to its former position which the president of the synod was bold enough to designate as a position of "isolation."<sup>44</sup>

The significance of World War I in producing a change in the Missouri Synod from the almost exclusive use of the German language to a growing use of English is common knowledge. One cannot underestimate the importance of this development. It did have certain important influences on the Missouri Synod's position on church fellowship. At least Lutherans of the various bodies, if they used the same language, could listen to one another and make the attempt to understand. There is another significant detail, often overlooked, which came to light during this period. The Missouri Synod was not the solid monolithic organization that it imagined itself to be, a

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<sup>44</sup>Letter, President Pfotenhauer to Theodore Graebner, September 21, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 123. Translation by Alan Graebner in "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 60.

position often expressed in its periodicals.<sup>45</sup> There were areas, notably in the East, where members of the Missouri Synod were much more open to fellowship with other Lutherans than was the case in the Mid-West. One instance is found in the work of the New York Quadricentennial Committee described above.<sup>46</sup> Another, more important instance, is found in developments during World War I in which two different boards in the Missouri Synod were attempting to gain control over the procedure the synod would follow in cooperative efforts with other Lutheran bodies in its ministry to men in the Armed Forces. That story follows.

From the efforts of a group of Lutheran Laymen concerned with the spiritual welfare of men in the Armed Forces the National Lutheran Association came into being.<sup>47</sup> Its

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<sup>45</sup>One example from The Lutheran Witness is: "There are no liberals, there are no rationalists, and there are no modernists and there are no unionists. God has graciously preserved the Missouri Synod from being overrun with these parasites who sap the life-blood of a number of church bodies." [Martin S. Sommer], "The Differences of Opinions in the Missouri Synod," The Lutheran Witness, XLII (April 10, 1923), 119.

<sup>46</sup>See above, pp. 99-105.

<sup>47</sup>Wentz, History of Lutheranism, p. 292.

name apparently was changed to the National Lutheran Commission during 1917.<sup>48</sup>

The National Lutheran Commission was headquartered in New York City. On October 12, 1917, President Pfotenhauer authorized representation from the Missouri Synod at the next meeting of the commission.<sup>49</sup> After several meetings with the commission and intervening meetings of the Missouri Synod's Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy, the following five-point agreement was reached.

1. The Synodical Conference will co-operate with the National Lutheran Commission in every way possible;
2. Pay their share of all general expenses;
3. Co-operate completely with the National Lutheran Commission or its representatives in dealing with the government, camp and cantonment commandants, the Federal Council of Churches, the Y.M.C.A., etc.
4. Have their appointees as camp pastors sanctioned by this commission.
5. But the Synodical Conference reserves the right to minister to the spiritual needs of the men from

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<sup>48</sup>Evidence for this connection and the change of name is not available in any detail. The writer follows Alan Graebner in what appears to be an apparent name change. In November, 1917, the organization is called the National Lutheran Association by F. C. Streufert. In March of 1918 it is called the National Lutheran Commission by Karl Kretzmann in a letter to Theodore Graebner. See Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," pp. 52-53.

<sup>49</sup>Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 52.

their congregations through their own representatives wherever it is possible to do so.<sup>50</sup>

At its November 14, 1917, meeting the Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy agreed that it was time to inform the general membership of the Missouri Synod of its work and its cooperative agreements. F. C. Streufert, secretary for the board, addressed the following letter to Theodore Graebner who at that time was editor of both Der Lutheraner and The Lutheran Witness.

A few weeks ago the Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy was requested to attend a meeting of the various Lutheran Church bodies of this country to consider Soldiers' and Sailors' welfare [sic]. The vast importance of this work made it imperative to have this Board represented at said meeting. It was pointed out that if the Lutheran Church as such intended to minister effectively to the needs of their boys it would be absolutely necessary to present a united front with the government as well as with other church bodies, Y.M.C.A., Federal Council of Churches, etc.

After careful and prayerful consideration of the entire situation we deemed it a necessity to co-operate with the National Lutheran Association [sic, Commission] and we agreed to join in this movement provided satisfactory arrangements could be made; arrangements which would not necessitate unionistic work on our part. . . .

This new body was then organized as the "National Lutheran Association [sic, Commission] for Soldiers'

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<sup>50</sup> Letter, Karl Kretzmann to Theodore Graebner, March 7, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, Kark Kretzmann MSS. Quoted in Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 53.

and Sailors' Welfare" with offices in New York. Rev. Arth. Brunn of our body was named as member of the Executive Committee.

. . . . .  
 Under selfsame conditions mentioned in the above this Board is cooperating with the "Lutheran Brotherhood of America." Their object and purpose being to erect barracks within the camps and on the battle-field. Thus a grand opportunity will be offered us for public worship with our boys as also a place of recreation. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Upon receipt of the letter, Theodore Graebner answered Streufert and warned him of the unionism involved in the position the board had adopted and sent a copy of the letter to President Pfotenhauer. To Graebner's letter, Pfotenhauer responded in December, 1917:

Your copy received. I thank God that in the editors at St. Louis we have such an excellent safety catch for our Synod[!!].

I have told them [members of the Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy] that in possible connections with the Y.M.C.A., Brotherhood, and so forth, we must limit ourselves to externals only. If any kind of mixed service is demanded of us, we may in no case join, even if we could then serve our boys, very economically. Our boys may not after all come back from

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<sup>51</sup>Letter, F. C. Streufert to Theodore Graebner, November 14, 1917, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 123. Quoted in Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 53.

the camps spiritually infected and God does not demand from us more than we can do in good conscience.<sup>52</sup>

President Pfotenhauer's response to the effort at cooperation expressed the accepted Missouri Synod position. Worship with Lutherans, other than Synodical Conference Lutherans, may cause Missouri Synod boys to return from the military "spiritually infected." The extent of cooperation was to be in "externals only." This term referred to furnishing chapels, barracks for recreation or worship services, dealing with the governmental agencies, and looking to the material needs of the men in service. It did not include any form of joint worship and attempted to avoid any appearance of agreement with those who were in doctrinal error. It was not always easy to maintain agreement in "externals only" without unionistic practices.

Through the influence of Theodore Graebner and President Pfotenhauer the Missouri Synod's Lutheran Church Board for Army and Navy, based in Chicago, reversed its earlier position and resolved to sever all relations with the National Lutheran Commission and the Lutheran

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<sup>52</sup>Letter, President Pfotenhauer to Theodore Graebner, December 8, 1917, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 123. Translation by Alan Graebner in "World War I and Lutheran Union," pp. 53-54.

Brotherhood of America.<sup>53</sup> The action by the Chicago board was opposed by the men in the East who had been cooperating with the National Lutheran Commission. To demonstrate their displeasure with the reversal of the Chicago board the New York Pastoral Conference called a meeting for January, 1918, and after adopting a position statement of its own, made this known to the Chicago based Board for Army and Navy. The disagreement was strong enough to cause the president of the Missouri Synod to refer the matter to the faculty of the synod's seminary at St. Louis for consideration, a methodology that had been established by tradition. After the meeting with the seminary faculty, the Chicago based board receded from its position in certain areas, but not to the extent which the New York group desired. In retaliation an Eastern Army and Navy Board of the Lutheran Church was organized by Missouri Synod pastors along the Eastern Seaboard. The minutes of a meeting held on February 12, 1918, reveal the concern, the geographical area of those concerned, and the aims of the newly organized board.

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<sup>53</sup>Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 56.



In order that chaplaincy work among our Lutheran boys in the various camps and cantonments along the Atlantic Coast be done as effectively as possible, the following resolutions were passed at a meeting of the Pastors of the Metropolitan District of New York, together with representation of the New England District Conference of the Atlantic District and members of the Buffalo and Baltimore Conference of the Eastern District of the Missouri Synod.

1. That a Board be appointed to take charge of chaplaincy work among our Lutheran boys in the camps along the Atlantic Coast, in a territory running from Buffalo south on a line to the Gulf.

2. That this Board consist, for the first, of the Mission Board of the Atlantic District, which in turn will appoint representatives from different parts of the territory under its jurisdiction.

3. This Board will cooperate in external matters with the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare.

. . . . .  
RESOLVED to take desk-room with the National Lutheran Commission in . . . New York, and to offer to pay our fair share of the office expenses.

. . . . .  
RESOLVED to notify all Camp Pastors now working under the supervision of the Chicago Board in our territory, of our action, and in case they decide to do their work under the direction of the Eastern Board, to offer to accredit them and, if they so desire, to extend to them a call.<sup>54</sup>

The importance of the action of the Eastern group in relation to the Missouri Synod's accepted position on fellowship and unionism is that it amounted, in military terms, to an about face. If the Missouri Synod, as represented by the Chicago board, would not, because of doctrinal

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<sup>54</sup>Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

concerns, adopt the necessary methods and means to serve the men in the Armed Forces, then the Missouri Synod men in the East would take matters in their own hands and work with other Lutheran bodies to an extent not engaged in before. If such action meant claiming for themselves a geographical territory of operation, then they would claim that territory as they did. Karl Kretzmann, one of the Eastern pastors, and later a signer of A Statement, wrote his brother, Paul E. Kretzmann, concerning the action of the Eastern men:

This war, it seems has shot more things to pieces than the Cathedral of Rheims. For instance we here in the East are working hand in hand with the National Lutheran Commission through our Eastern War Board in spite of the frantic protests of the Chicago Board, but with the approval of the St. Louis faculty. Of course the cooperation is in externals only, it is said.<sup>55</sup>

Paul Lindemann, editor of The American Lutheran, a publication of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, wrote:

We hoped that the spirit of distrust prevalent among the members of the Western Board against the members

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<sup>55</sup>February 16, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, Karl Kretzmann MSS. Quoted in Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 58.

of the National Lutheran Commission would in the course of time disappear. This has not been the case. . . .

. . . . .  
I am not inclined to conjure up any spooks, but there is not only among our laity, but also among our clergy a very violent spirit of resentment against the policy which our Synodical Conference is pursuing at the present time. . . .

. . . . .  
I am personally most deeply concerned lest a breach should occur in our synod and it is not an idle fear that such a breach is possible.<sup>56</sup>

W. C. Kohn, to whom the above letter had been addressed, turned to Theodore Graebner for advice and support.<sup>57</sup> Kohn was not disappointed. Graebner responded with a strongly worded letter supporting the position of the Chicago board.

I talked the matter over with Prof. [Ludwig] F[uerbringer] this morning and we agree that you ought to make a stand for our Scriptural principles even if a break should come, yes, even if there should be a split. Better have that now than later, when through such agencies as the Lutheran Bureau, the Lutheran Survey, Brotherhood literature, etc., etc., our Synod has been poisoned in head and members. . . . No, there can be no union with such people, who, besides, never

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<sup>56</sup>Letter, Paul Lindemann to W. C. Kohn, October 4, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 123. Quoted in Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," p. 62.

<sup>57</sup>W. C. Kohn was president of Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois, from 1913-1939. He replaced Carl Eissfeldt as chairman of the Chicago Board in March, 1918.

fail to rail at our "Pharisaic holier-than-thou attitude," our "Calvinism" etc. . . . You cannot possibly lose out even if the matter should be brought before . . . the Delegate Synod. I believe however that there will be precious few who will dare to take the plunge. Even if there were hundreds, better be rid of them now lest we have the same situation soon that obtains in the Norwegian Synod. . . .<sup>58</sup>

The end of the war on November 11, 1918, removed the pressure for cooperation with other Lutheran bodies, especially from the officials of the Missouri Synod. The possibility of an actual split in the Missouri Synod was averted. However the attitude of the Eastern pastors could not be changed simply because the most urgent practical necessity of cooperation with other Lutherans was removed. This attitude remained and slowly gained a following in the Missouri Synod. It was evident, now, that the Missouri Synod was not the monolithic body it presented itself to be. However, the synod was not willing to admit that differences existed and continued to act as if it were monolithic. Differences, especially in the area of the practice of church fellowship, nevertheless existed between members of the synod in the East and the Mid-West.

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<sup>58</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to W. C. Kohn, November 11, 1918, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 123. Quoted in Alan Graebner, "World War I and Lutheran Union," pp. 62-63.

Because the synod's strength was found in the Mid-West the changes advocated by the men in the East would be a long time in coming.

The unprecedented cooperation of Lutherans of various general bodies through the Reformation centennial committees spilled over into the cooperative efforts undertaken by the Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare. One effort at cooperative action was reinforced quickly by another and yet a third was to follow.<sup>59</sup>

As early as 1915 the Joint Synod of Ohio had fostered a plan for a federation of Lutheran Churches in America and had drawn up a constitution for such a federation.<sup>60</sup> In 1918 the National Lutheran Editors' Association appealed for a federation of Lutheran bodies.

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<sup>59</sup>"The purpose of the Joint Lutheran Committee for the Celebration of the Quadricentennial, in 1917, as stated on its letterhead, was 'To celebrate the Reformation of the 16th Century and to hasten the transformation of the 20th.' The national Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare double hastened it in the area of Lutheran cooperation." Helen M. Knubel, "The National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare: As Revealed Largely Through the Official Correspondence," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XL (October, 1967), 132.

<sup>60</sup>Frederick K. Wentz, Lutherans in Concert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c. 1968), p. 12.

The Lutheran Bureau, an outgrowth of the New York Quadri-centennial Committee, was also agitating for such an agency. But the success experienced in the joint work of the Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare was most directly responsible for the formation of a new inter-Lutheran agency, the National Lutheran Council.

After meetings at Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the National Lutheran Council was organized in Chicago on September 6, 1918. With the exception of members of the Synodical Conference, of which the Missouri Synod was a member, the majority of the major Lutheran bodies in the United States became members of the National Lutheran Council. Since the new agency was to be a federation it could accommodate the various Lutheran bodies who differed in a greater or lesser degree on the interpretation of the Lutheran symbols.<sup>61</sup> The newly formed council would enjoy forty-eight years of life before being replaced by another federation. A sense of urgency on the part of the different Lutheran bodies gave birth to the federation in a little less than two months from the time of its conception. Wentz observes: ". . . the Council sprang

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<sup>61</sup>Wolf, Documents, p. 293.

into action. It was born running. World events and the prior activities of the Commission gave the Council a full agenda from the start."<sup>62</sup>

The Missouri Synod declined to be officially represented in the National Lutheran Council. It was considered to be a unionistic agency, at least by the synod's vocal officialdom. Theodore Graebner wrote: "The Merger is a unionistic organization . . . standing on the principle that those may be united for church-work who do not agree in doctrine."<sup>63</sup> When one recalls the rebellion of the Eastern clergymen of the Missouri Synod in their desire to provide for the spiritual needs of the men in the Armed Forces it becomes apparent that the easiest and safest method to avoid any impediment to a triumphalistic progress of the synod was for the Mid-Western majority to maintain the position of isolationism.

The suspicion with which the Missouri Synod viewed the formation of the National Lutheran Council carried over into a suspicion of the Lutheran World Convention and the Lutheran World Federation. As suspicion often

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<sup>62</sup>Wentz, Lutherans in Concert, p. 19.

<sup>63</sup>"The Lutheran Bureau of New York," The Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (December 24, 1918), 411.

does, it produced a language of polemic against the National Lutheran Council and the later Lutheran federations. Theodore Graebner, influential in developing the polemic language, labels the National Lutheran Council members "our Adversaries."<sup>64</sup> While suspicion of, and polemic against, the National Lutheran Council enhanced the spirit of triumphalism in the Missouri Synod, it had a lasting adverse effect on efforts toward fellowship with other Lutheran bodies in the United States.

The spirit of triumphalism in the Missouri Synod did not continue to go unchallenged. It met its most serious challenge prior to 1945 from a Missouri Synod missionary serving in India. The story of that missionary, Adolph A. Brux, follows.

Adolph August Brux was born to Ernst Ferdinand and Emma Rohleder Brux at Racine, Wisconsin, June 9, 1893. Both parents were natives of Germany. Ernst Ferdinand had settled in Racine because an old friend there had offered him employment in a brickyard. Through the influence of the friend, Adolph Hilker (young Adolph Brux received his

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<sup>64</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Rev. Walter Hohenstein, Bloomington, Illinois, January 28, 1919, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 60.



given name from this Adolph), Ernst and Emma Brux had become members of the Evangelical Synod. However, as their children reached school age, the concern for a German-language education led the parents to send them to the German Lutheran School in Racine. As a result of this interest in a German-language education for their children, Ernst and Emma Brux soon left the Evangelical Synod and became members of the Missouri Synod congregation in Racine.

Adolph Brux evidently was a consistently good student as he progressed through his elementary education for the pastor of the congregation, Reverend J. F. Boerger, encouraged him to prepare for the pastoral ministry by enrolling at Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Ernst and Emma Brux concurred with Reverend Boerger's opinion and their son, Adolph, entered Concordia College in 1907. Completing the preparatory stage of ministerial training at Milwaukee, Adolph entered Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1913. After one year at the seminary young Adolph served as an assistant to the pastor of a congregation near Joliet, Illinois, teaching school and preaching. Adolph Brux graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1917 and received a call to teach for two years

at Concordia College, Milwaukee, the school from which he had graduated four years earlier. The fact that he was extended a call to teach indicates that others besides his pastor in Racine recognized in him certain special talents. Brux taught at Concordia College, Milwaukee, from 1917 to 1919.

Pursuing an interest in languages, Adolph Brux engaged in summer study at the University of Chicago in 1918. Once more his potential was recognized as his instructor in Arabic, Dr. Martin Sprengling, encouraged him to apply for a fellowship and to continue his studies. The suggestion went unheeded until Brux faced the fact that his teaching position at Concordia was reaching its termination in the spring of 1919. Then it was, almost at the last moment, that he applied for a fellowship at the University of Chicago, submitting as the required essay a paper written in German for a course he had completed at Concordia Seminary under Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer. He was awarded the fellowship, studying at the University of Chicago from 1919 until 1923. His major was Arabic and his minor was Hebrew. Adolph A. Brux was eligible

to be addressed as Doctor Brux after being awarded the Ph.D. in Arabic Studies on June 12, 1923.<sup>65</sup>

Dr. Brux was now well qualified to pursue his goal of serving as a missionary among the Moslems. The Mission Board of the Missouri Synod recognized his qualifications and made preparations to send him to the mission field in India almost immediately upon graduation. It is not stretching the truth to say that Dr. Adolph A. Brux, from the standpoint of training, was "one of the ablest men the Missouri Synod ever sent abroad."<sup>66</sup>

Dr. Brux's course of study at the University of Chicago had more far reaching effects than simply preparing him in the area of language. At that time Shailer Matthews, G. B. Smith, J. M. P. Smith, and Shirley Jackson Case were teaching in the Divinity School of the University. The school was gaining a reputation for its liberalism, a theological outlook and methodology that would come to be known as the Chicago School. While not directly connected with the Divinity School program, Brux

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<sup>65</sup>Details of the life of Adolph A. Brux were obtained from a personal interview with the subject. The interview was tape recorded and is in the possession of the writer.

<sup>66</sup>Lueking, Mission in the Making, p. 270.

did audit several courses in that school and came into direct contact with liberalism. According to his recollections, he was forced to answer the claims of liberalism on his own thought and convictions. His reaction, after some reflection, was negative. Rethinking his heritage he decided to stay with the convictions he had. He believed the position of liberalism could not be proven to the point of certainty.<sup>67</sup>

One positive influence of the Chicago School that did remain with Brux was the desire to "find out what actually happened" in the history of the early Church.<sup>68</sup> The desire was instilled in young Brux by Shirley Jackson Case whose course he audited. "I regard him very highly," Dr. Brux recounted in 1970.<sup>69</sup> This desire to find out what actually happened and what conditions actually existed in the early Church would soon lead Dr. Brux to question a doctrinal position which tradition had hallowed in the framework of the Missouri Synod.

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<sup>67</sup>Interview with Brux.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

By July of 1923, Dr. and Mrs. Brux were en route to India. They traveled from Chicago to New York where they embarked for Beirut. Dr. Brux believed, and evidently the Board of Missions had concurred in this matter, that his work among the Moslems in India would profit if he spent some time with missionaries in the Middle East who had been working with Moslems for a number of years. He was especially anxious to discuss the work with the best known missionary to the Moslems, Dr. Samuel Zwemer of the Reformed faith, and to attend the language school conducted by the Presbyterian Church in the highlands of Syria. He visited the language school and observed their methods for about a month and a half.

While in Beirut, Dr. and Mrs. Brux were guests in the home of a Dr. Nickel, a Presbyterian missionary. Although his training in doctrine caused him to question this practice at first, Dr. Brux and his wife soon joined the table devotions conducted by Dr. Nickel for his family. Coming to know Dr. Nickel as a Christian gentleman, who treasured the Scriptures as he himself did, Dr. Brux, in his own mind, began to question the correctness of the position on church fellowship maintained by the Missouri Synod. It is important to note that this question came

to the mind of Dr. Brux after he had been commissioned for missionary work and was on the way to India.

Dr. Brux traveled to Cairo to visit Dr. Zwemer and then to Damascus to visit a Danish missionary and observe his work and his methods. A trip to Palestine brought with it another opportunity for Dr. Brux to come into contact with a Christian, other than a Missouri Synod one, whose work and faith he still recalls but whose name he cannot recall. The young man whom he met was a colporteur who distributed the Christian Scriptures among the Arabic speaking peoples of Palestine. The colporteur lived his life and conducted his work in such an attitude of prayer that Dr. Brux was strengthened in his growing conviction that the Missouri Synod's position on church fellowship was not thoroughly Scriptural.<sup>70</sup>

From Beirut, Dr. and Mrs. Brux traveled to Port Said where they boarded a ship for India which had among its passengers several other Missouri Synod missionaries who were returning to India. On the first day of 1924 they arrived at Karachi and on January 2, 1925, they arrived at Bombay. Two other missionary couples and three single

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

women, all sent by the Missouri Synod, were included in the party.<sup>71</sup> The missionary party spent the night of January 2, 1924, at a Protestant hospice in Bombay. Missionaries Richard W. Goerss and Milton G. Kuolt found it convenient to take a walk after the evening meal. Evidently this was done because, as a returning missionary, Goerss was acquainted with the fact that the manager of the hospice conducted evening devotions to which all the guests at the hospice were invited. One wonders why Goerss failed to mention the fact to Dr. Brux. Perhaps he was, thereby, being put to a test. At any rate, if one were not present he would not have to explain why he felt he could not attend the devotions. The short devotions consisted simply of Scripture reading and prayer. Of the missionary party, Dr. and Mrs. Brux, Miss Strieter, and Mrs. Kuolt accepted the invitation and attended the evening devotions.<sup>72</sup> Nothing was said to the women for attending the devotions but for Dr. Brux, who by his attendance was going counter to the accepted position of the Missouri

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<sup>71</sup>Lueking is incorrect in dating the arrival in Bombay as the first day of 1924. Lueking, Mission in the Making, p. 271. Dr. Brux himself gives the dates as presented above.

<sup>72</sup>Interview with Brux.

Synod on church fellowship, this seemingly unimportant and innocent event would, in the course of sixteen years, lead to his resignation from the Missouri Synod.

On January 3, 1924, as the missionary party continued its journey together to Vaniyambadi, Goerss and Kuolt questioned Brux about his position on church fellowship, following a "condemnatory approach."<sup>73</sup> Brux maintained that unionism was not involved in what he had done. The other two maintained, in good Missouri Synod fashion, that any form of cooperation in worship before complete agreement had been established in doctrine and practice was unionism. Brux thought it strange, therefore, that the women were never censured for attending the devotions. It illustrates what Dr. Brux contends was a "sneaky feeling that something was just not right about the Missouri Synod position on prayer fellowship" that existed among the missionaries.<sup>74</sup>

Because the position that Dr. Brux was taking on church and prayer fellowship ran counter to the accepted or traditional position of the Missouri Synod, it was only

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.



natural that the small missionary conference of the North Arcot District of India (later the North Ambur District) make it an item for discussion. The outgrowth of the discussion was that Dr. Brux was asked to present a paper on "Christian Prayer and Unionism" at the next conference to be held in Krishnagiri on April 22-25, 1924.<sup>75</sup> In the paper Brux considered all the Bible passages traditionally used by the Missouri Synod in maintaining its stance on prayer fellowship and unionism. In good Missouri Synod fashion Brux used Eckhardt's Reallexikon<sup>76</sup> to establish the basics. However he went considerably beyond the accepted synodical position. Brux contended, "that our current theory and practice respecting prayer-fellowship with Christians of other denominations goes beyond what a sound interpretation of these Bible passages warrants."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Adolph Brux, An Appeal to Synod with History of Case Including Charges Against the Board of Foreign Missions and Its General Secretary and Charges Against the President of Synod (Racine, Wisconsin: privately printed, 1934), p. 6.

<sup>76</sup>See above, pp. 33-34.

<sup>77</sup>Brux, Appeal, p. 6.

He went so far as to claim that the Missouri Synod's position was "unscriptural."<sup>78</sup>

The reaction to the Brux presentation is set forth in the Minutes of the 127th Northern District Conference (India), page 1:

Cited Scripture passages and deductions made therefrom were discussed at great length. It was finally resolved that on account of differing interpretations of Scripture, and a full agreement not being reached in this session, Brother Blaess be asked to write an essay on the same topic, and both essays be presented for discussion at the next conference.<sup>79</sup>

It is significant to note that among the Missouri Synod missionaries there were "differing interpretations of Scripture." Three more conferences gave consideration to the issue raised by Brux before Brux was asked to put his paper in final form and to send it, along with the remarks of the other missionaries, to the Board of Foreign Missions in the United States. The missionaries could not resolve the difference among themselves. The easiest and most practical way to move away from the issue without resolving it was to let the board take jurisdiction. It

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

took until May, 1925, to put the essay in final form. But the remarks from the other missionaries that were to be sent along with the essay were not forthcoming. Dr. Brux held the essay until 1927, waiting for the response, and by that time the Caste Controversy<sup>80</sup> required the attention of the Missouri Synod missionaries. Not wishing to add any further controversy, Brux held his paper in file in India until he returned to the United States on furlough in 1931.

Among the Missouri Synod missionaries in India, the Brux position on church and prayer fellowship and unionism found little support. There was "no absolute straightforward support," although there was some "questioning support."<sup>81</sup> Missionaries Kuolt and Blaess stood

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<sup>80</sup>This was probably the most bitter controversy in the history of the Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission. Disagreement became very sharp over the attempt to answer the following: "Is it in accordance with the Gospel to permit two groups of Christians to worship separately for the social reason of caste? Does the principle of Christian fellowship allow separate worship even though common worship is geographically convenient? Does caste have any validity as a factor in having separate worship services among Christians?" See Herbert M. Zorn, Much Cause for Joy--and Some for Learning: A Report on 75 Years of Mission in India (Vaniyambadi, India: Concordia Press, 1970), pp. 32-33. The issues involved in the Caste Controversy were never officially resolved. The controversy simply wore itself out.

<sup>81</sup>Interview with Brux.

firm in the traditional Missouri Synod position saying simply "No!" to the position advocated by Brux. Missionary Paul Heckel was not so ready to condemn but was willing to suggest: "Maybe the Missouri Synod has gone too far and perhaps the question should be studied."<sup>82</sup> The reaction on the mission field was also a fair gauge of the reaction in the United States among Missouri Synod Lutherans.

As a result of his essay, Dr. Brux was asked by some of his fellow-missionaries, "Why did you ever come out here if you don't hold to the synod's position on prayer fellowship and unionism?"<sup>83</sup> Brux recalls that he was watched very carefully by the other Missouri Synod missionaries and definitely felt as if he "lived in a fish bowl."<sup>84</sup>

The reaction of the Missouri Synod missionaries in India to the position assumed by Dr. Brux after he arrived on the field was typical of the Missouri Synod. Brux raised an issue concerning the proper interpretation

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

of Scripture passages pertaining to church fellowship, especially to prayer fellowship and unionism. The missionaries were not able to reach an acceptable conclusion based on Scripture alone. By training and disposition tradition was too well established with them to question accepted exegesis, especially when it led to new conclusions. All that the most progressive missionary would concede was that the matter should be studied.<sup>85</sup> The missionary conference failed to face the issue squarely. This inability or unwillingness, whichever it may be, to face a new interpretation, or a new practice, squarely on the basis of Scripture alone, while at the same time considering the questioning party a brother in the faith, became a trait of the Missouri Synod as it passed through the post-war years into the 1960's.

Dr. Brand, General Secretary for the Board of Foreign Missions, acknowledged receipt of two copies of the Brux essay on August 22, 1931.<sup>86</sup> This officially began a series of meetings, extensive correspondence, charges and countercharges between Dr. Brux, Dr. Brand,

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Brux, Appeal, p. 7.

the Board of Foreign Missions, the president of the Missouri Synod, Dr. F. Pfothauer, and the officials of the South Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod.<sup>87</sup>

In submitting his essay to the Board of Foreign Missions, Dr. Brux intended that the two copies be circulated among the members of the Board. One copy was intended for the men in the St. Louis area, and one copy was intended for the men residing outside of the St. Louis area. Two copies would facilitate the expected reading of the essay. However, not more than four members of the board read the complete essay.<sup>88</sup> They nonetheless felt themselves competent to pass judgment on Brux and his position. The members of the board simply assumed that since the position being advocated by Dr. Brux was against the accepted synodical position it was therefore wrong. Remember the deviation, if it can thus be called, was in the doctrine of church fellowship and in no other area. However, in a church body where complete agreement in doctrine and practice was the necessary ingredient for

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-31.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 7, 9. The four board members were Dr. Brand, Prof. Sommer, Rev. Boerger, and Dr. Ylvisaker.

unity, that one deviation was enough to appear extremely dangerous.

A committee appointed by the Board of Foreign Missions and composed of Professor Martin Sommer of St. Louis and Reverend J. F. Boerger of Racine, met with Brux on at least three different occasions. The third meeting, held in Racine in Reverend Boerger's study on October 19, 1931, brought forth a statement from Professor Sommer which characterized the position of the members of the board. Professor Sommer emphatically declared: "I am not open to instruction in this matter. I ceased to be open to instruction from the day I took office in the ministry."<sup>89</sup> Since this attitude could brook no change, Brux, although valiantly championing his position on church fellowship, had absolutely no chance to be heard fairly.

The Foreign Mission Board referred Brux to two faculty members of Concordia Seminary for discussion of his paper and for their analysis. Brux reports the meeting as follows:

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

The meeting took place on Feb. 19, 1932, in the president's office. To begin with, Dr. Fuerbringer, the president of Concordia Seminary confessed that he had not read my paper at all, because, as I was informed by him later, he had not been told that he should read my essay before the meeting took place. He asked me to state my case. I outlined my position. While engaged in this Dr. [Theodore] Graebner entered. When I had finished, Dr. Graebner stated that he had read only 4-5 pages of the essay and then laid it aside as unworthy of further study. Later he denied having said this, and then set the number of pages read by him at "more than 20", out of a total of 50. Some discussion of Bible passages and other matters ensued, but failure on the part of Drs. Fuerbringer and Graebner to study the essay prevented our going into details of exegesis, because they were not prepared to argue some of the grammatical and lexicographical points taken up. Naturally, the result of our meeting was negative. Yet these brethren passed judgment on my position and reported their "findings" to the Board!<sup>90</sup>

The findings of Drs. Fuerbringer and Graebner reinforced the position already assumed by the members of the board. On October 11, 1932, Brux was invited to the meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions for what appeared to be the final hearing of his case. Before the meeting, members had all been supplied copies of the essay and other

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 8. It is interesting to note that Theodore Graebner "laid it [the essay] aside as unworthy." By 1945, Graebner himself had assumed the same position as Brux here advocates. See Graebner's position as expressed in his Prayer Fellowship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [1945]), especially pp. 3-10. However, Graebner maintained until his death that he had not changed his position.



pertinent data, and one can put the best construction on the matter and assume that this time they read the essay. However, at the meeting, instead of considering the exegesis of each Bible passage, the argument centered on Romans 16:17-18. This indicates that by 1932 the passage was considered vital to the Missouri Synod position on church fellowship. "When the question was asked whether there was to be a discussion of the other passages involved, a brother replied that Dr. Brux interpreted all the other passages in the light of his conception of Romans 16,17s [sic]." <sup>91</sup> Dr. Brux recalls:

Thus, out of a dozen Scripture passages dealt with in my paper, only ONE, viz. Rom. 16, 17-18 [sic] received careful attention. The rest . . . were summarily disposed of by the statement that I interpret all the other passages in the light of my conception of Rom. 16, 17s [sic] . . . ." <sup>92</sup>

The plenary meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions took action on the Brux case on October 12, 1932, adopting the following resolutions:

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<sup>91</sup>From the Minutes of the Board of Foreign Missions. Quoted in Brux, Appeal, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

1. Since Dr. Brux in his paper on "Prayer-Fellowship" has departed from the accepted Scriptural position of our Synod with respect to prayer with heterodox Christians, as he himself acknowledges, and since our long continued efforts to convince him of the error of his position have been unavailing, RESOLVED that we cannot return him to the field in India if he does not recede from his position . . . .

2. RESOLVED furthermore that we await the definite answer of Dr. Brux referred to in the foregoing, and that if he continues to hold his present position, his connection with our Board terminate Oct. 31, 1932, and that his salary cease Nov. 30, 1932.<sup>93</sup>

Brux was quick to call the attention of the board to the fact that they were attempting to end the difficulties with an ultimatum instead of giving close and honest attention to the questions of interpretation raised by his essay. He is correct in writing: "the Board is undertaking to judge my position by the 'accepted Scriptural position of our Synod', instead of by the Scriptures alone . . . ." <sup>94</sup> Brux contended that this approach was "violating the most sacred principle of the Lutheran Church."<sup>95</sup> In questioning the accepted Scriptural position as supreme authority Brux articulated a basic

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<sup>93</sup>From the Minutes of the Board of Foreign Missions. Quoted in Brux, Appeal, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

question which would occupy the time and efforts of the Missouri Synod for years to come.<sup>96</sup>

Dr. Brux did not exactly pour oil on the troubled waters of disagreement when he wrote on December 8, 1932:

By taking your stand on "the accepted Scriptural position of our Synod", [sic] you brethren have in reality, albeit unwittingly, placed yourselves on the same platform adopted by the Scribes and Pharisees of old in their battle against Christ, and by the Roman Catholic Church in its battle against Luther.<sup>97</sup>

This type of polemic led to distinct personality clashes in the strife of brother against brother. Brux should have resisted the impulse to illustrate the board's position with that of the Pharisees and the Roman Catholic Church, the two most unacceptable and disagreeable terms which could have been applied to any Missouri Synod member. Perhaps that, although the comparison may have been true, is one of the main reasons the board and the synod

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<sup>96</sup>The Convention of the Missouri Synod in 1971 wrestled with the same issue raised by Dr. Brux in 1932. To what extent is the accepted position or exegesis binding on individual members of the synod? This is indication enough that the difficult task of drawing lines limiting authority in a confessional church body is a task which may never be complete in a changing society. The Board of Foreign Missions in dealing with Dr. Adolph Brux certainly did not decide the issue.

<sup>97</sup>Brux, Appeal, p. 15.

itself failed to understand and heed what Dr. Brux was saying to them. He restates the heart of the matter:

Where I differ from the current theory and practice of our Synod, I do so with the conviction that the theory and practice of our Synod is unscriptural, inasmuch as it exceeds Scriptural limits and bounds. It is my conviction that in the matter of prayer with Christians of other denominations our Synod applies texts in violation of the essentials of text and context, and errs fundamentally (basically) in treating joint prayer with Christians of other denominations as under all circumstances forming a part of church-(denominational) fellowship [sic] and therefore involving unionism.<sup>98</sup>

Basic to the Brux position was a shift of emphasis from dogmatics to exegesis. Pieper, the chief dogmatician of the Missouri Synod, had taught for years, and had also taught Brux as a student, that the clear passages of Scripture, which need no interpretation or exegesis, form the basis of dogmatics. Exegesis is necessary only for the more difficult passages. Dogmatics first; Exegesis second--that had been the Missouri Synod emphasis since its early history. It was the contention of Brux, in his controversy with the Board of Foreign Missions, that the matter should be reversed, that exegesis should receive the major emphasis.

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 19. Emphasis in the text.

The point of controversy then is still the proper exegesis and application of the pertinent Bible passages. It must necessarily be so, even when the question is one of doctrine. Exegesis and application of a Bible passage are not dependent on doctrine, but doctrine is always dependent on the exegesis and application of a passage according to sound hermeneutical principles. How there can be doubt concerning "the full scope and application of some of these passages," and at the same time certainly in regard to the full scope and application of the doctrine derived from these passages?<sup>99</sup>

As the controversy dragged along, Dr. Brux asked the president of the Missouri Synod and the Board of Foreign Missions to establish a "Fiduciary Committee" composed of men not directly involved in the controversy.<sup>100</sup> To this request the board agreed.<sup>101</sup> The committee appointed by the president of the synod was composed of H. Diab, Theodore Laetsch, and W. H. T. Dau, the latter chosen by Dr. Brux and confirmed by the president. This truth-seeking, fact-finding, committee was to make its report to the Board of Foreign Missions and to the president of the Missouri Synod, F. Pfotenhauer. However, before the committee had ample time to meet and

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid. Emphasis is in the text.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

ascertain the facts, much less make their recommendations, the president of the synod in January, 1933, at a meeting of the District Presidents of the Missouri Synod, announced that Brux was uncommendable and ineligible for a call.<sup>102</sup> The president had apparently already made up his mind that it was time that Brux should be removed from the clergy roster of the Missouri Synod and the findings of a Fiduciary Committee would not change that. This is borne out in what actually did transpire.

The Fiduciary Committee made its report to the president of the Missouri Synod, to the Board of Foreign Missions, and to Dr. Brux on May 20, 1933.

The Fiduciary Committee, organized to examine the differences that have arisen between Dr. A. Brux and his Board of Foreign Missions, reports with regret that it has been unable to arrive at a unanimous conclusion as regards the doctrinal differences between Dr. A. Brux and the Board.

The Committee, however, is unanimous in the conviction that in the important issue that has been created, a fraternal discussion of the points in controversy should be continued. And the committee suggests that for such discussion with Dr. Brux the Board choose one of its members and one who is not a member of the Board, the latter to be agreeable to Dr. Brux.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Adolph A. Brux, Re-Appeal to Synod (n.p., privately printed, 1938), p. 56.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

On the recommendation of President Pfotenhauer, the Board of Foreign Missions rejected the report of the Fiduciary Committee and considered itself finished with the Brux case.<sup>104</sup> The board itself declared Brux ineligible for a call. This was against the by-laws of the Missouri Synod which leave such a declaration in the hands of the district presidents alone. Although other attempts were made to settle the Brux case properly, each attempt met with the obstinacy of the Board of Foreign Missions which was fully assured that its position in the matter had the full backing of the president of the Missouri Synod. The strong personality of the man in the highest office of the church body would prevail against any other maneuver, however correct. Dr. Adolph Brux's serious questioning of an accepted synodical position was never seriously considered point by point, but was rejected because its conclusions were against the traditional position. His case was disposed of by delay, stalling, and final autocratic power. With the synodical president

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<sup>104</sup>John J. Marschhausen, "Dr. Adolph A. Brux and Prayer Fellowship in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod" (unpublished research paper, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1970), pp. 33-37.

and the director of the Board of Foreign Missions both opposed to him, Brux felt:

They were aiming to squeeze me out; keep me waiting so I would have no job, no income; turn on the economic thumb screws, in hope I would quit cold, drop the whole thing and they would be rid of Brux.<sup>105</sup>

Although the "board wanted to keep things quiet and under the rug,"<sup>106</sup> with the aid of his parents and several other interested parties, Brux was able to get together enough money to publish the facts in his case and finally to win his back pay. Because of what he considered unethical treatment at the hands of Missouri Synod officials, Brux resigned from the Missouri Synod in 1940.<sup>107</sup>

The Missouri Synod Convention in 1967 to some extent admitted its guilt in the Brux case and attempted to right the wrong done to him. It adopted a resolution concerning him with the last two resolves as follows:

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Brux.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



Resolved, That the Synod assure Dr. Brux that we desire to resolve the causes of misunderstanding in the spirit of Christian love; and be it finally

Resolved, That we implore the blessings of God upon Dr. Brux in the evening years of his life.<sup>108</sup>

The Brux case has been related in some detail because it reflects, accurately, the general attitude of the Missouri Synod toward fellowship during the years between the two World Wars. Wholehearted acceptance of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions was not enough if one were to be, and remain, a member in good standing of the Missouri Synod. Synodical statements and resolutions, statements of the fathers, especially as compiled by Eckhardt,<sup>109</sup> and the traditional exegesis of key Scriptural passages also had to be accepted. The accumulation of accepted positions of the Missouri Synod, based on the writings of the founding fathers and traditional exegesis, together with the emphasis on dogmatics over exegesis, had pushed the Missouri Synod along the road of triumphalism into a posture extremely susceptible to a legalistic application of doctrine. This tendency toward legalism was enhanced by the power and prestige accorded,

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<sup>108</sup>Proceedings, 1967, p. 163.

<sup>109</sup>See below, pp. 33-34.

willingly, by the clergy of the Missouri Synod to their elected officials, especially the president of the synod.

The only major official effort made by the Missouri Synod in the decade of the 1920's toward rapprochement with Lutherans in the United States was that made by its committee in the formulation of the Intersynodical (Chicago) Theses. Although the theologians on the Missouri Synod's Intersynodical Committee, including Theodore Graebner, approved the theses developed in consultation with representatives from the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, and Wisconsin Synods, the theses were rejected by the Missouri Synod Convention of 1929.<sup>110</sup> The theses had been developed with the intention that they serve as a basis for church fellowship between the consulting bodies. The intention failed to reach fruition.

The resolution that was adopted by the Missouri Synod Convention in 1929 to reject the Intersynodical Theses gave three reasons for rejection. It was stated that "many serious objections have been raised by members of Synod," that any discussion of doctrine should begin

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<sup>110</sup>Bunzel, "Chicago Theses," pp. 75-81, concludes that the theses were rejected because the synodical officials, especially President Pfotenhauer, were against them.

"with the status controversiae," and that the theses should be rejected because of "the move toward a closer union between the Ohio and Iowa Synods, . . . and the party of the Norwegian Opgjoer."<sup>111</sup> No doubt the reasons advanced for rejecting the theses were valid for many members of the Missouri Synod. However there was an unstated reason for the rejection, which reason can be deduced from the fact that the convention committee felt it necessary to urge the delegates not to be suspicious of the theological position or personal faith of the members of the Intersynodical Committee even though they had approved the theses which the synod rejected. Since the war years the subsurface concern in the Missouri Synod centered on the possibility of a split in the ranks. Because President Pfotenhauer evidently believed that the adoption of the theses would further strain relations between the Missouri Synod men in the East and the Missouri Synod men in the Mid-West

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<sup>111</sup>Proceedings, 1929, p. 112. The Opgjoer or Madison Agreement was a document adopted in 1912 by the United Church (Norwegian) and the Norwegian Synod bringing them into pulpit and altar fellowship. The Missouri Synod considered the document to be unionistic.

he was "ganz und gar gegen die Theses."<sup>112</sup> In his opening address to the Missouri Synod Convention in 1929, President Pfotenhauer stated:

The universal tendency of our times is to "get together." Isolation in church-life is regarded as intolerable. Those who keep themselves separate for the sake of truth are denounced as bigots. The well being and prosperity of the Church is sought in the merger of church-bodies even at the cost of truth. Sad to say, this destructive virus of unionism has infected also many Lutheran circles.<sup>113</sup>

He reiterated the Missouri Synod's spirit of triumphalism in the same address:

. . . even though we, with our brethren in the Synodical Conference, must feel ever more the sting of isolation, the true foundation of Israel will richly flow for us in the Word of God; heaven will stand open; we shall have a cheerful conscience, sweet comfort in life and death, and unfailing strength for a life of godliness. And God will use our testimony as a guide for many also outside of our Synod.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>"Completely against the theses." Letter, J. T. Mueller to F. Pieper, January 2, 1928, Concordia Historical Institute, Pieper MSS. Quoted in Bunzel, "Chicago Theses," p. 49.

<sup>113</sup>Proceedings, 1929, p. 7.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

Pfotenhauer, who had been in office during the battle of the boards,<sup>115</sup> wished to avoid any further cause for discord. He as much as said, "If we can remain true to the Word and get along ourselves, then we do not need other Lutherans." The Missouri Synod would triumph! Such was the general, however not unanimous, feeling in the Missouri Synod toward church fellowship as the decade of the 1930's began.

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<sup>115</sup>See below, pp. 113-122.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SPIRIT OF TRIUMPHALISM IS MAINTAINED: THE IMMEDIATE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF "A STATEMENT"

The decade of the flapper, the speakeasy, and the post-war boom was a decade of ballyhoo pervaded with a general feeling of well-being and prosperity. Against that backdrop the nation failed to heed the signs of impending economic tragedy evident in the increase of the number of unemployed, ailing textile and coal industries, artificially stimulated financial speculation, and the deflation of the farm dollar.<sup>1</sup> The Missouri Synod imbibed the spirit of ballyhoo by making a conscientious effort to utilize the methods of the public relationists in advertising itself. The laity called for modern business practices to be established in handling the funds of the synod while radio work, community Lenten services, and other mass religious celebrations were being employed to

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<sup>1</sup>George Soule, Prosperity Decade From War to Depression: 1917-1929, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 107-126.

publicize the synod and to increase self-awareness and righteous pride. The decade of good feeling lost its levity with the Great Depression of 1929.

Although the 1930's posed grave problems for the nation and for the major denominations in the United States, the Missouri Synod emerged from the depression years strengthened in most respects. The synod faced severe and difficult problems, as did other church bodies, but overcame them, developing better academic programs in its schools, experiencing the greatest percentage growth among major Protestant churches during the depression years, and eliminating its debt.<sup>2</sup> However in the area of church fellowship, to the frustration of a growing number of members, the old position of isolation was successfully maintained by the leadership of the Missouri Synod.

The same resolution which rejected the Inter-synodical (Chicago) Theses in 1929 contained two other

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<sup>2</sup>Leech, "The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in the Great Depression." This work must be used with caution. While it contains some useful basic research, its conclusions are sometimes based on conjecture rather than fact.

important directives. The president of the synod was directed to appoint a committee to continue discussions with the synods which intended to form the new American Lutheran Church if the Norwegian position could "first be adjusted according to the Word of God."<sup>3</sup> Such an adjustment was not made to the satisfaction of the Missouri Synod. Not until 1935 would the quest for Lutheran unity be officially resumed by the Missouri Synod. The other directive authorized the delegates to elect a committee which was "instructed to formulate theses which, beginning with the status controversiae, . . . present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple manner."<sup>4</sup> These directives appear to have been aimed at restoring doctrinal unity within the Missouri Synod without its being encumbered with official negotiations with other Lutheran bodies.

The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States was the title for the theses presented by

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<sup>3</sup>Proceedings, 1929, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



the committee<sup>5</sup> and adopted by the Missouri Synod Convention in 1932, however, the statement itself was not incorporated in the Proceedings until the centennial convention of the Missouri Synod in 1947.<sup>6</sup> Although the statement was the work of a committee, the chief author was Franz Pieper.<sup>7</sup> The Brief Statement<sup>8</sup> has been called Pieper's "testament to the Missouri Synod and to the Lutheran Church"<sup>9</sup> because it was adopted the year after his death.

It is true that "A Brief Statement is a reaction to the total theological climate of the 1880s to the late 1920s, particularly to the events in Lutheranism in

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<sup>5</sup>Members of the committee were F. Pieper, W. Wenger, E. A. Mayer, L. A. Heerboth, and Th. Engelder. Proceedings, 1932, pp. 154-155.

<sup>6</sup>Proceedings, 1932, pp. 154-155; Proceedings, 1947, 476-492.

<sup>7</sup>Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement,'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (September, 1961), 539. The article is published in three parts in the Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII: (July, 1961), 403-428; (August, 1961), 466-482; (September, 1961), 526-542.

<sup>8</sup>Instead of referring to the full title the statement is commonly designated simply Brief Statement. We follow the common practice.

<sup>9</sup>Theodore Graebner, Dr. Francis Pieper, p. 59.

America."<sup>10</sup> The statement is divided into sections or articles. The article "Of the Holy Scriptures," reflects the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. The articles, "Of Creation," and "Of Man and Sin," take exception to the theory of evolution. The article "Of Man and Sin," also reflects a basic disagreement with the Social Gospel Movement. And, although not mentioned by name, the article "Of Good Works," sets forth a basic philosophy in conflict with pragmatism.<sup>11</sup>

The Brief Statement's article "Of the Church" recapitulates the position set forth by Franz Pieper as early as 1893 and repeated in various of his writings in 1897 and 1922.<sup>12</sup> The subheading "On Church-Fellowship" reflects a stance that had not changed since Pieper wrote his chapter in The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of

<sup>10</sup>Carl S. Meyer, "Historical Background," (September, 1961), 542.

<sup>11</sup>We here use the Brief Statement as it is incorporated in the Proceedings, 1947, pp. 476-492, although it is the same in all English editions. The statement was first published in the Concordia Theological Monthly, II (May, 1931), 321-336, in German, and in II (June, 1931), 401-416, in English. It was also published in several pamphlet editions by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>12</sup>Carl S. Meyer, "Historical Background," (September, 1961), 541.

the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

The formula for church fellowship set forth in the sub-heading was intended to guide any further negotiations to prevent a reoccurrence of the difficulties faced by the Missouri Synod Convention in 1929 when it had to recognize that some of its leading theologians agreed with the Chicago Theses which were rejected by the convention itself. It is not out of place to quote in full the paragraphs "On Church-Fellowship."

Since God ordained that His word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4,11; John 8,31.32; 1 Tim. 6,3.4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7,15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16, 17. 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.

The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors,

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<sup>13</sup>See above, pp. 77-86.

provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20,30; 1 Tim. 1,3.<sup>14</sup>

The spirit of triumphalism demands the ever onward, ever upward movement of people perfectly united in a common cause. Dissension in the ranks dulls the edge of triumphalism. The Brief Statement was adopted in 1932, it appears, to help close the ranks and remove dissension. It is not surprising, therefore, that as dissension grew, especially in the area of church fellowship, the role of the Brief Statement in the Missouri Synod expanded until, in 1959, it was elevated to a position that, de facto if not de jure, equated it with the classical Confessions of the Lutheran Church.<sup>15</sup> The Brief Statement was the document which formed the basis for discussions between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church after 1935. Since that time it has played a key role in the Missouri Synod's efforts toward Lutheran unity and union.

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<sup>14</sup>Proceedings, 1947, p. 485. Emphases in text.

<sup>15</sup>Proceedings, 1959, pp. 191-192. For an analysis of the changing role of the statement see: Carl S. Meyer, "The Role of A Brief Statement Since 1932," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (April, 1962), 199-209.

Lest one conclude that the adoption of the Brief Statement, and the attitude which produced it, had no redeeming qualities it should be pointed out that this was not the case. If Robert T. Handy is correct in his analysis of the American religious depression of 1925 through 1935, and his arguments are quite plausible, then it was a blessing in disguise that the Missouri Synod had remained aloof from the identification of Christianity with Americanism.<sup>16</sup> Since there was no "amalgamation of evangelical Protestantism with Americanism"<sup>17</sup> as far as the Missouri Synod was concerned, that synod did not have to unlearn any of its theological precepts. In fact it was partly in reaction to the prevailing external religious situation and the prevailing intellectual climate that the Missouri Synod had, in 1932, adopted the Brief Statement which reiterated its theological stance which it held at the close of the nineteenth century. For many members of the Missouri Synod the Brief Statement supplied

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<sup>16</sup>Robert T. Handy, The American Religious Depression 1925-1935, Facet Books Historical Series (American Church), edited by Richard C. Wolf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968). This study was originally published as "The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935," in Church History, XXIX (1930), 3-16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 10. The phrase is Sidney E. Mead's.

solid ground in the midst of the shifting sands of doctrine. It was the ground that the Missouri Synod occupied through the Great Depression years.

At their respective conventions in 1934, both the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America adopted resolutions calling for closer relationships among the Lutherans in the United States. Both appointed committees to confer with the other Lutheran bodies and especially with the Missouri Synod. Both addressed communications to the Missouri Synod for its formal consideration at its convention in 1935.<sup>18</sup> The Missouri Synod's reaction to these communications will be traced presently. First, let us take note of a significant publication, The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays by Theodore Graebner,<sup>19</sup> which appeared after the conventions in 1934 and before the Missouri Synod convention in 1935. The author's intent was to urge the Missouri Synod not to make any hasty affirmative decisions concerning Lutheran union and unity before it first settled the historical questions involved. Graebner presented what he considered

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<sup>18</sup>Proceedings, 1935, p. 221.

<sup>19</sup>St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935.

to be abundant documentary evidence to reveal that in doctrine and practice the Lutheran bodies in the United States were not united but very much disunited. In the true fashion of triumphalism he exposes the sins, failings, and shortcomings of the other Lutheran bodies while praising the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference. He does want it understood that:

Before we enter into the discussion of the various American Lutheran bodies, will you please (mentally) underscore this sentence with a red pencil:--By refusing fellowship to a church-body, we do not "excommunicate" that body or declare that there are no Christians in that body.<sup>20</sup>

After describing what he considers to be the "conservative and radical elements" that exist side by side in the other Lutheran bodies, Graebner concludes:

As for the major thesis of this essay: That by joining any of the bodies mentioned [mainly the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church] we would join only a faction and either become the cause of new and sharper conflicts or, worse still, ourselves become tolerant of false doctrine through such new associations--this has surely been proved to the satisfaction of every reader.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Graebner, Problem of Lutheran Union, pp. 17-18.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

Yet Graebner holds forth one small glimmer of hope when he suggests that the "problem of Lutheran union is not insoluble."<sup>22</sup>

Graebner's book was reviewed by Charles M. Jacobs of the United Lutheran Church in America, who wrote that the book was "a strong book, a brave and sincere and honest book," one which clears the air with the "effect of a thunder-shower."<sup>23</sup> Jacobs believed that it was Graebner's intent to reestablish the lines of division instead of trying to establish paths toward Lutheran cooperation. One paragraph in the review precipitated reaction from the Missouri Synod for some years to come. Jacobs wrote:

That the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church are an adequate basis for Lutheran union is not the position of Prof. Graebner or of his synod. Their standards of Lutheranism are theological rather

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Charles M. Jacobs, "A Review of The Problem of Lutheran Union by Theodore Graebner," in The Lutheran Church Quarterly, VIII (October, 1935), 411-414. The book review was a means used by members of the various Lutheran bodies to castigate other Lutherans. It is difficult to find favorable reviews except in the journals of the bodies to which the authors belonged. An interesting study could be made concerning the influence of book reviews on Lutheran fellowship in the United States.



than confessional. Lutheranism is for them a system of theology. This system is, in its essential features, that of seventeenth century orthodoxy. The tradition which they defend so stoutly, and so conscientiously, is not that of Luther and Chemnitz, but that of Gerhard and Calov. It represents an interpretation of the Lutheran Confessions younger by two generations than the Confessions themselves. We recognize that this system of theology contains elements of great and permanent value, but we shall firmly refuse to commit the wrong that the Roman Church did when it virtually canonized the system of Thomas Aquinas. Every system of theology is the product of its own age, and contains, along with its elements of truth, which are permanent, a larger or smaller mass of metaphysical apparatus, which is transitory. We believe that we have the right and the duty to attempt our own solutions of the problems of our own day, in the light of knowledge which the seventeenth century did not possess. Therefore we refuse to have our Lutheranism judged by extraconfessional standards.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of the suspicion between them, as is demonstrated by Graebner's book and Jacob's response, the Lutheran bodies in the United States could not escape the deeper, often unarticulated, desire for closer cooperation. The overtures to the 1935 Missouri Synod Convention from both the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church calling for closer ties demonstrate this desire. The desire can be detected also in the response of the Missouri Synod, for in 1935 the synod resolved

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

"that we declare our willingness to confer with other Lutheran bodies on problems of Lutheran union."<sup>25</sup> The Missouri Synod demonstrated that willingness by authorizing the appointment of a committee of five to negotiate with other Lutheran bodies. The committee was to be known as the "Committee on Lutheran Church Union."<sup>26</sup> Not everyone in the Missouri Synod, however, expected this committee to produce positive results. For example, E. Eckhardt wrote:

The Missouri Synod has a standing commission ready to discuss doctrinal differences with other bodies. If a true union in faith and doctrine cannot be obtained, the divisions within the Lutheran Church must naturally continue.<sup>27</sup>

Nor did everyone in the American Lutheran Church expect definite positive results. Gerhard E. Lenski, clergyman and professor in the American Lutheran Church and author of a multi-volumed commentary on the New Testament wrote in 1957:

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<sup>25</sup>Proceedings, 1935, p. 221.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. The Committee was composed of William Arndt, C. F. Brommer, F. H. Brunn, Theodore Engelder, and Karl Kretzmann, p. 228.

<sup>27</sup>The Lutheran Witness, LV (June 16, 1936), 194.

Imitating Disraeli, our Missouri friends are definitely on the side of the angels. They want the rest of us to stand there, too. If, in the face of their brave stand, we do not follow suit and choose the company of devils, well, that will be just too bad for us!<sup>28</sup>

The sarcasm of Lenski's remark may have been well deserved by the Missouri Synod. In so many words Lenski is describing the spirit of triumphalism which was basic to the Missouri Synod position on church fellowship. He also complained about the procedure that grew out of the spirit of triumphalism: "Missouri officials stand ready to act, even to unite the church--but let the other man first purge himself and let him offer proper apologies for past errors."<sup>29</sup>

In spite of the fact that some members of the Missouri Synod did not look with expectation on its labors, the Committee on Lutheran Church Union took its work seriously. Before the 1938 convention of the Missouri Synod the committee had met twice with representatives of the United Lutheran Church and six times with representatives of the American Lutheran Church. The Brief Statement

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<sup>28</sup>Gerhard E. Lenski, "The Road to Lutheran Unity," The Lutheran Church Quarterly (July, 1937), p. 246.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

was used by the committee as the basis for discussion.

After the second meeting with the United Lutheran Church representatives it was determined that "it was impossible for the two parties to come to an agreement" on the doctrine of inspiration.<sup>30</sup> No further meetings were held.

The results of the negotiations with the American Lutheran Church representatives were quite different.

As a result of these meetings the representatives of the American Lutheran Church accepted the doctrinal contents of the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, but in order to supplement and emphasize their position, the representatives of the American Lutheran Church made an official statement called The Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church. The Brief Statement . . . together with the Declaration . . . show the doctrinal position which the American Lutheran Church representatives accepted.<sup>31</sup>

The resolution submitted by the Missouri Synod convention's floor committee on "Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters"<sup>32</sup> took note of certain unresolved questions

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<sup>30</sup>Proceedings, 1938, p. 227.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 228

<sup>32</sup>Committee 16. Pastors: H. Meyer (Minn.), Michel (S. Cal.), Abel (N. Ill.), Aker (Cent.), Herm. Meier (East.). Professors: Fuerbringer, Maier, Hemmeter. Teachers: Scheer (Kans.), Huelle (S. Nebr.). Laymen: Dorpat (S. Wis.), Nitz (Mich.), Horst (Engl.), Wagehoft (S. Ill.). Ibid., pp. 30-31.

in relation to the American Lutheran Church but stated that the Brief Statement together with the Declaration "be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church."<sup>33</sup> The two bodies were to work toward uniformity in practice as well as doctrine by encouraging their pastors to meet together in smaller conference groups to discuss doctrine and practice. If church fellowship could be established it was to "be announced officially by the President of Synod."<sup>34</sup> After being discussed in four sessions with such respected and well known members of the synod as William Arndt, professor at the St. Louis seminary, and Walter A. Maier, speaker for the Lutheran Hour, speaking eloquently in favor of the resolution, it was adopted.<sup>35</sup> Whether or not the resolution was adopted unanimously became an issue after the convention. The resolution itself became commonly designated "The St. Louis

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 233. The color of the convention and the eloquency of the speakers in favor of the resolution were reported to the writer in interviews with several men who were in attendance at the convention, especially Thomas Coates and E. J. Friedrich.

Union Articles of 1938."<sup>36</sup> The designation has a pejorative connotation in the use of the word "union" and evidently had its inception in a publication opposed to fellowship.<sup>37</sup>

The resolution of 1938 proved to be subject to two interpretations. Those favoring closer cooperation with other Lutherans, and in this case especially with the American Lutheran Church, interpreted the resolution to say that only a few minor difficulties remained to be ironed out before the president of the Missouri Synod could officially declare fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. They looked forward to the declaration from President John W. Behnken. Those opposed to closer cooperation with other Lutherans on any less a platform than complete agreement with the Brief Statement and complete agreement in practice, understood the resolution to rule out any action on the part of the Missouri Synod with

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<sup>36</sup>See the Confessional Lutheran (January thru December, 1940), where each issue contains a notice in bold type: "Acceptance of the St. Louis Union Articles of 1938 Must Be Rescinded." The January issue had the word "Article," singular instead of plural. This was corrected in the later issues.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

which members of the Synodical Conference disagreed. They did not expect a declaration of fellowship.

The American Lutheran magazine was associated with the thinking of Missouri Synod men in the East, being published by The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau whose offices were located in New York City. However, the position it advocated in church fellowship was no longer isolated in the East. The advocates of closer Lutheran cooperation and fellowship from other areas of the country also found a voice in its pages. The editor of the magazine resided in Minneapolis, and some contributors resided in St. Louis as well as Chicago. Subscribers to the magazine lived in all sections of the United States. The issue of the magazine published after the 1938 convention of the Missouri Synod contains expressions of joy and optimism in the hope that fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church would soon become reality. One writer reflected on the convention's action:

The loyal members of our Missouri Synod who are also friends of true Lutheran union were cheered by the conservative report of our committee in presenting the matter of possible closer affiliation with the American Lutheran Church. . . . In walking among the delegates before and after sessions, we were impressed by the impatience of the laymen who were anxious to cast their ballot in favor of the resolution as it

was finally adopted. . . . Again we can thank God that this question, which a year ago threatened to bring about certain divided opinions, has on the contrary brought a new spirit of unequalled solidarity in our Church as expressed by the unlooked for unanimous vote adopting the resolution of the committee word for word as presented to the convention.<sup>38</sup>

The editor of the magazine, Paul Lindemann, a Missouri Synod clergyman, also expressed his joy over the movement toward cooperation but knew a divided Missouri Synod existed over the question of church fellowship and added a warning.<sup>39</sup>

The AMERICAN LUTHERAN hails with sincere joy and deep gratitude to God the great news that the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, . . . has unanimously adopted the report of the Committee on Lutheran Union regarding the progress of its deliberations with a similar committee from the American Lutheran Church looking towards the elimination of doctrinal differences and eventual

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<sup>38</sup>Adolf F. Meyer, "Convention Impressions," The American Lutheran, XXI (July, 1938), 6.

<sup>39</sup>Letter, Paul Lindemann to Theodore Graebner, November 8, 1936 [mailed on The American Lutheran stationery], Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 112. Lindemann wrote: "The hidebound type of men who have entrenched themselves behind a high wall of traditionalism is very numerous right here in the state of Minnesota. The situation has been troubling me for a long while, since it is beginning to cause a rift in our church. . . . I have become so depressed by the legalistic and uncharitable attitude of the men regarding adiaphora that I have begun to stay away from these meetings [pastoral conferences]."



fellowship and union of the two great Lutheran church groups.

While we confidently look forward to an eventual complete union between the two large church organizations, we are well aware of certain hazards that might easily spell disaster and nullify all the progress that has been made. We may be certain that the devil is opposed to any movement which may bring health and strength to the Church of Christ and that he will make serious attempts to frustrate the plans that look toward a more unified campaign of the forces of light against the powers of darkness. He may call into his services the premature and ill-advised actions of thoughtless enthusiasts on both sides, or he may utilize the fears and prejudices of those who have come to accept strife and division as the normal status of the Church and regard all pacific moves with suspicion.<sup>40</sup>

Another writer, O. A. Geisemann, taking note of differences of opinion existing between East and West in the Missouri Synod, believed: "Men in the east and in the far northwest seem all to be of the same mind concerning the matter."<sup>41</sup> He thought 1938 would be "a Red Letter year in the history of Lutheranism in our country."<sup>42</sup> But he would soon find his analysis of the spirit of the Missouri Synod was completely wrong. He wrote:

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<sup>40</sup>[Paul Lindemann], "Progress Towards Lutheran Union," The American Lutheran, XXI (September, 1938), 5.

<sup>41</sup>O. A. Geiseman, "While It is Day," The American Lutheran, XXI (October, 1938), 8.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

The point is that in rejoicing over resolutions passed at the St. Louis convention and over the spirit of love and progressiveness manifested at the convention we are, in the final analysis, rejoicing over the fact that this is now the prevailing spirit throughout Synod. That this is the spirit, and with every passing day coming to be the spirit in ever increasing measure, we confidently believe. Our church has passed, we believe, both the Scylla, and the Charybdis of dead traditionalism and hopeless liberalism and is entering the second century of its existence with a growing appreciation of the meaning of love and the renewed determination to be guided not by the principle: "Thus said the fathers," but by the principle: "Thus saith the Lord."<sup>43</sup>

The optimism expressed in the final issue of The American Lutheran magazine for 1938 proved to be premature.

Both clergy and laity seem to have taken new hope regarding the future of the Church and are anxiously looking forward to the day when the proposed unity between these two great organizations will become an established fact. Some of us are optimistic enough to believe that a great step forward has been taken towards the realization of the dream of a united Lutheranism which will carry on the work of the Lord without the dissipation of its energies and with a force of unified testimony. The prayers of earnest Lutherans will include the plea that nothing will be permitted to disturb or frustrate the progress that has been made and that those who have been entrusted with the positions of leadership will aggressively work towards bringing the present negotiations to a successful and God-pleasing culmination.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>44</sup>"Can the Dream Become Reality?" The American Lutheran, XXI (December, 1938), 6.

The first volley against the fellowship proposal, fired early in 1939, came from a rather unexpected source. From London, England, The Crucible, edited by Reverend W. M. Oesch, and claiming to be "a Lutheran journal published by a circle of lovers of the truth,"<sup>45</sup> was mailed to all the pastors of the Missouri Synod.<sup>46</sup> Although the journal expressed the opinion held by many in the Missouri Synod and probably even of the president of the Missouri Synod, it was not warmly received by the synodical officials because it was circularized "without the previous knowledge of Synod's officials."<sup>47</sup> The editor of The Crucible intended to "yield the editorial pen to an abler writer in the U.S. as soon as the organisation is sufficiently complete."<sup>48</sup> The journal itself was destined to make its appearance intermittently "as long as there is need; as long as God prospers with articles meeting the

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<sup>45</sup>The Crucible appeared in three issues of Vol. I: no. 1, January, February, 1939; no. 2, March, April, 1939; no. 3, May, July, 1939. It was published by W. M. Oesch and printed by The Leighton Ptg. Co., London, England. The quotation is found on page 2 of each of the three issues.

<sup>46</sup>John W. Behnken, This I Recall (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1964), p. 187.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>The Crucible, I, 2.

need; as long as God prospers with funds to print the articles."<sup>49</sup>

The editor, Reverend William M. Oesch, had received a call to the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Saxony, Germany, after he graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and at that time became a naturalized citizen of Germany. In 1935 he accepted the call to serve two congregations in London, congregations affiliated with the Missouri Synod. During the summer of 1939, Oesch made a trip to Germany to discuss the Missouri Synod's position on fellowship with members of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church. He was not allowed to return to London, being a German citizen, because of the invasion of Poland which was undertaken by the German Army on September 1, 1939. Thus the publication of The Crucible came to an abrupt halt after the publication of only three issues.<sup>50</sup>

The editor of The Crucible listed six reasons for its publication and distribution to pastors of the Missouri Synod:

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Behnken, This I Recall, p. 188.

- (a) the grave intersynodical situation;
- (b) the waning of doctrinal control;
- (c) the advances of an externalistic, legalistic, enthusiastic Zeitgeist among us;
- (d) the Calvinistic and Romanistic views of the nature of the Church (as though it were essentially visible and a sector of society) and of the functions of the Church (as though it were one of its functions to assist society)--views which threaten present-day Lutheranism not only from without, but also especially from within;
- (e) the propaganda for the Lutheran World Convention and the sympathy even for the great World Conferences under Anglican lead;
- (f) the great positive need of a fearless Lutheranism of truly oecumenical world-wide perspective. It must be the fiercest foe of false Lutheranism and blaze the way also on those mooted questions of the relation of the external Kingdom to this world.<sup>51</sup>

In the first article of The Crucible, Oesch asks, "Quo Vadis, Ecclesia?" and immediately indicates the reason for the title:

Plainly our Church is at the parting of ways. This holds true in a general sense. We are put to a decisive test of our whole Christianity and our faithfulness as inheritors of the priceless treasures of the Reformation. But in particular the intersynodical discussions carried on for years have reached a stage where all is at stake, where to be or not to be is the question.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>The Crucible, I, 2.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

According to Oesch the Missouri Synod was at the parting of the ways over the question of church fellowship because inherent in that question was the synod's confessional position and its faithfulness to its heritage. In the magazine's first article Oesch explores the manner in which the Brief Statement has "been approved of by the A.L.C."<sup>53</sup> He wants to know if the American Lutheran Church will sever relations with the Augustana Synod since it "is a matter of common knowledge" that the "Augustana Synod harbours in its midst notorious Modernists and Liberalists who deny the fundamental articles of faith."<sup>54</sup> He does not believe that the Augustana Synod can accept the Brief Statement "without changing its constituency" or else being guilty of "one more act of hypocrisy."<sup>55</sup> For Oesch the formula for union, or even cooperation, was complete agreement in doctrine and practice. He held to the old Synodical Conference formula. If complete agreement could not be reached then isolation must be the accepted way of church life.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

What would satisfy Oesch and the other Synodical Conference men who were concerned with preserving the truth? How could one who did not see eye to eye with the Missouri Synod or the Synodical Conference in the past, especially in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, ever gain acceptance? There was only one way. The slate had to be wiped clean by confession of past sins and with the espoused determination to correct the errant ways of the past. It evidently was impossible to concede that change had occurred and to take the situation as it existed then and there in the year 1938 and following. Oesch sets down the principle, an echo of the thinking which had produced the Brief Statement:

Only if the solemn theses of agreement signed by our body and another formerly divergent Lutheran body are in themselves adequate, covering the whole past disagreement (status controversiae) and admitting of no loopholes, only if such theses are meant to regulate doctrine in both bodies, only if all contrary teaching is disavowed and will be suppressed, only if all bodies worshipping together maintain doctrinal discipline (Lehrzucht), only if unionism, the greatest foe of Christendom, is thus really and effectively excluded, is such a contemplated union God-pleasing and not a consummate trick of Satan to destroy the true visible church from the face of the earth.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

As expressed by Oesch, so for many in the Missouri Synod, unionism was the greatest foe because it worked internally to chip away the solid doctrinal position considered to be based solely on the Word of God. That is why doctrinal control was essential. The Crucible advocated this position during its brief life span.

The vapors produced in The Crucible condensed into the founding of the Confessional Lutheran. This monthly publication continued the program already established by The Crucible. It was the publication of The Confessional Lutheran Publicity Bureau, fashioned after the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau and, in general, taking the opposite position from its publication, The American Lutheran. The editor for the Confessional Lutheran was the Reverend Paul H. Burgdorf of Red Lake Falls, Minnesota, while the Reverend Arthur E. Beck of Foley, Minnesota, was the business manager.<sup>57</sup> Included on the masthead of the Confessional Lutheran was its self-proclaimed aim, "Published in the interest of Ecumenical Lutheranism," and its motto:

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

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<sup>57</sup>Confessional Lutheran, I (January, 1940), 1.



ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.<sup>58</sup>

Immediately beneath the masthead were the following words:

The Confessional Lutheran is a venture of faith. While the intention is to publish the periodical monthly, it will regularly go to press only so long as a necessary support warrants this.<sup>59</sup>

Evidently the necessary support warranted the publication of the periodical because from January of 1940 through the end of the 1960's it made its regular appearance. By the time the combined issue for October and November, 1940, appeared the periodical was on solid enough financial ground that the reference to a "venture of faith" was discontinued. This gives evidence of the immediate success the periodical achieved with many members of the Missouri Synod and in so doing emphasized the fact that two major factions existed in the Missouri Synod, factions differing on the doctrine and practice of church fellowship. The most emotional issue of the day for the Missouri Synod was that of church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church and the Confessional Lutheran lost little

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid. The motto is I Corinthians 1:10.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

time in coming directly to the point. The first major article, continuing for three issues, was entitled "Lutheran Union? A Case of Sanity and Charity Plus."<sup>60</sup> The article made the point that sanity called for complete doctrinal agreement before church fellowship could be declared and that charity demanded faithfulness in correcting the erring Lutherans.

With the appearance of the Confessional Lutheran the stage was set for open polarization over the doctrine and practice of fellowship in the Missouri Synod. The Confessional Lutheran became the vehicle for expression and propaganda for the Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod which opposed fellowship with other Lutherans if they could not honestly and heartily accept the Brief Statement. The American Lutheran was already established as the voice of the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod which advocated fellowship with other Lutherans on the basis of the classic Lutheran Confessions, allowing freedom of doctrinal expression in those areas where the Confessions are silent. The Lutheran Witness (and Der Lutheraner) was to express the official position of the

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid. (January, February and March, 1940).

Missouri Synod. However, there was some suspicion that The Lutheran Witness was not under the control of the officials of the synod and was becoming oriented more and more toward the position of The American Lutheran.

The action taken by the 1941 convention of the Missouri Synod suggests that the reactionary propaganda of the Confessional Lutheran exercised more influence on members of the synod than did either The American Lutheran or The Lutheran Witness. The report of the president to the convention did not mention any attempts at Lutheran union, unity or cooperation. It is conspicuous in its absence. President Behnken thanked God for His "boundless grace and mercy" in preserving "our Church"<sup>61</sup> during the triennium, took note of synodical officials who had died, listed committee appointments, took note of the candidate situation, mentioned the work of the "Call of the Cross Committee,"<sup>62</sup> the Army and Navy Commission, foreign missions, the size of the synod, professorships, and the

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<sup>61</sup>Proceedings, 1941, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 12. "Special emphasis was placed upon personal evangelism and sacrificial giving in a series of meetings which were conducted and which . . . proved to be very successful and beneficial." The emphasis was called, "Call of the Cross."

"excellent financial status"<sup>63</sup> of the synod. And, although the 1938 convention left the door open for the president to declare fellowship, he did not so much as mention it in his official report to the convention at Ft. Wayne in 1941.

The attitude of Dr. Behnken suggests a bias against Lutheran union. His bias is only partially veiled behind the following words from his address to the convention in 1941 entitled "With What Attitude of Heart Shall We Face the Work Which Christ Has Entrusted to Us?" and based on Psalm 51:7-15:

While, by God's boundless grace, we still have true orthodoxy, must we not confess that many look upon this as something self-evident and are not truly appreciative of this undeserved blessing? Are we in danger of a dying and decadent orthodoxy? Do we use orthodoxy and love it and guard it as we should? Does it manifest itself as a real power of God in our life and activity? Like all blessings, genuine orthodoxy needs to be used to be appreciated and retained. Is there any justification for the claim that a person may detect rumblings of traitorous liberalism on the one hand or tyrannical legalism on the other within our ranks? Is it possible that in our Church, so abundantly blessed of the Lord, indifference to doctrine should rear its head? Certainly every one of us has reason to examine himself.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.

If there was any justification or not, the very mention of claims of "traitorous liberalism" and "tyrannical legalism" within the Missouri Synod indicates that the factions were becoming vocal enough and polarized enough to demand mention from the president of the Missouri Synod. He aligns himself with those who are determined to retain the emphasis on reine Lehre as understood by the Missouri Synod fathers.

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' entrance into World War II on December 7, 1941, much of the Missouri Synod's energy was directed toward serving the men and women in the Armed Forces. But the concern for Lutheran union and unity was not abated completely by the global conflict. Theodore Graebner, whose The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays<sup>65</sup> had appeared in print in 1935 and had reflected the spirit of Missouri Synod triumphalism, was one who was beginning to moderate his views. He presented a paper in 1937 at a "Round Table"<sup>66</sup> meeting in Chicago

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<sup>65</sup>See above, pp. 164-166.

<sup>66</sup>These meetings usually involved from eight to twelve of the leading pastors and professors of the Missouri Synod, the president and vice-presidents, and Lawrence B. Meyer. They were evidently organized by

which paper concluded with the following sentences concerning the demand for adherence to standards in the Missouri Synod:

The more of these yokes we hang upon the brethren, the more we shall produce a reaction of liberalism and radicalism. I am as much against the 105% Missourian as I am against the 95% Missourian. There must be utter freedom of expression and action, (all governed by the principle of love,) [sic] wherever the Word of God has not spoken the decisive word.<sup>67</sup>

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Lawrence B. Meyer, the Director of Public Relations of the Missouri Synod, with the approval of President John Behnken. Perhaps twelve or fifteen of these meetings were held. The evidence that is available reflects a growing difference between the synodical officials and some pastors and professors. The full story of the Round Table meetings cannot be told until the John W. Behnken MSS are opened for study. The above information has been gleaned from the Theodore Graebner MSS, box 118, and the Lawrence B. Meyer MSS, Box 76, Concordia Historical Institute, and from a private interview with E. J. Frederich.

<sup>67</sup>Theodore Graebner, "When Principles Usurp the Place of Doctrine," St. Louis, 1937, p. 8 (typescript). Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 118. This paper antedates the appearance of A Statement by eight years and contains most of the basic objections raised by that document. Because of the limited number of individuals involved in the Round Table meeting, not many know that the erstwhile champion of a strict stand against unionistic practices was coming to the realization that the Missouri Synod's general attitude toward church fellowship went a step beyond the Scripture. Much of this paper is incorporated into Graebner's chapters of Toward Lutheran Union. See below, p. 191.

In May, 1939, Graebner wrote to his brother:

It is evident that there are unwholesome influences at work in our Minnesota District so far as the church union matter is concerned. . . . The morbid attitude of our Norwegian brethren is infiltrating in some minds of our own church. . . . Until now we have not been a sect. If the principles of church unity proposed by our Norwegians prevail, we shall be just that.<sup>68</sup>

In another letter of the same year Graebner predicted:

"Things are heading for a break in the Synodical Conference, due not to the Union Resolutions of 1938, but to doctrinal hardening of the arteries in the theologians of Wisconsin."<sup>69</sup>

Dr. Michael Reu of the Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, an institution of the American Lutheran Church, and Graebner, who earlier had taken a hard-line stand against church fellowship without complete agreement in doctrine and practice, were in touch by letter

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<sup>68</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Martin Graebner, May 26, 1939, Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 119.

<sup>69</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Martin Graebner, July 21, 1939, Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 119.

at least five or six times a year after 1937.<sup>70</sup> In 1942, Graebner, who had also felt the sting of denunciation from the printed pages of the Confessional Lutheran, gave the following pledge and encouragement to Reu, after Reu had been denounced as a pseudo-Lutheran in the pages of the Confessional Lutheran:

Whatever can be done through the pages of the Lutheran Witness [sic] to bring our churches closer together during 1943 will certainly be done. You mention Rev. Burgdorf the editor of The Confessional Lutheran [sic]. Possibly you over-estimate the importance of his effort. I do hope that you will not be prompted to reply to his attacks in public. The methods of some of the adherents of the Wisconsin-Norwegian Synod criticism have been so odious, so far removed from what we are accustomed to call decent polemics, that I have personally disavowed Quartalschrift [sic] and Lutheran Sentinel [sic] at the meeting of the Lutheran Editors Association, and where I have had opportunity otherwise. I do not believe that a respectable body like the Missouri Synod will be largely influenced by that kind of polemics. It may be of interest to you to know that during the past year Burgdorf's paper has been mentioned once in our many discussions of the Lutheran Witness [sic] editorial staff. It would be a pity if you were to feel any effects of these attacks in the joy which you have in your work and which you must preserve in

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<sup>70</sup>This conclusion is drawn from materials found in the Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 106.



order to labor effectively in the calling into which the Lord has placed you, and in the cause of Lutheran union.<sup>71</sup>

Theodore Graebner's concern for Lutheran union found expression in book form. In the spring of 1943 the book, Toward Lutheran Union,<sup>72</sup> written by Graebner in collaboration with Paul E. Kretzmann, also a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was published and a gift copy sent to those men serving as chaplains in the Armed Forces. The tone of this work was much more moderate than that of Graebner's earlier book concerning Lutheran union.<sup>73</sup> Reviews of the book by other Lutherans reflect an appreciation for its publication.

There is encouragement in the admission of exceptions, such as justification for the practice of prayer in joint Lutheran gatherings; the intimation that participation in community activities of a religious or quasi-religious nature may, under certain circumstances, and properly safe-guarded, be permitted;

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<sup>71</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Dr. M. Reu, December 22, 1942, Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 106.

<sup>72</sup>St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943.

<sup>73</sup>The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays. See above, p. 164.

and concessions in the administration of Communion to Lutheran military personnel.<sup>74</sup>

If you are at all interested in Lutheran union (and what Lutheran isn't)? [sic] You must read the newest book on the subject. It is entitled, Toward Lutheran Union. . . . It is a different book, not polemical, not a catalog of the faults and weaknesses of other Lutheran church bodies that must be removed before Missouri can shake hands with them, but an objective study of Scripture principles and their application to the union movements of today.<sup>75</sup>

Shortly after its appearance Dr. John W. Behnken, president of the Missouri Synod wrote favorably to Graebner:

First of all let me thank you as well as Dr. P. E. Kretzmann for your work and service rendered in preparing the manuscript of "Towards Lutheran Union." [sic] I have read through it hurriedly, but have not had time to study it carefully. I am hoping that it will serve all of us in our church as an incentive to look a little deeper into the principles which underlie the question of Lutheran Union [sic] and will help us to understand all the better the policies and procedures to be followed. May God bless the book on its mission.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Paul H. Krauss, "Review of Toward Lutheran Union by Theodore Graebner and Paul E. Kretzmann," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XVII (January, 1944), 107.

<sup>75</sup>Paul H. Buehring, "Toward Lutheran Union," Lutheran Standard (August 21, 1943), p. 2.

<sup>76</sup>Letter, J. W. Behnken to Prof. Theodore Graebner, July 6, 1943, Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 106.

Some Missouri Synod pastors wrote to Graebner also voicing their favorable response.<sup>77</sup> However, judging by the action that was taken at the Missouri Synod Convention in 1944, the response of a professor from the Texas District reflects the opinion of the majority of the clergymen in the Missouri Synod:

Just finished reading your book Toward Lutheran Union. [sic] While I and many of the brethren in Texas cannot agree with some of your statements about altar and prayer fellowship because, to mention only one reason, we fear that they will help to open the flood gates for unionistic practices in our midst, I must confess that I learned many things from your publication.<sup>78</sup>

The fear that the "flood gates for unionistic practices" would be opened if a more moderate position was assumed on church fellowship could have been predicted in a church body whose orientation was toward triumphalism. Also, as could have been predicted, the Confessional Lutheran quoted from Toward Lutheran Union to demonstrate how far the Missouri Synod had departed from the position

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<sup>77</sup>Several such letters are to be found in the Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 106.

<sup>78</sup>Letter, Prof. G. Viehweg to Theodore Graebner, August 13, 1943, Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, box 106.

of the fathers. It furnished a bonanza of material for that journal to continue its favorite pastime of quoting Theodore Graebner against Theodore Graebner. By the time the Missouri Synod Convention of 1944 was convened, the Confessional Lutheran had succeeded in spreading the elements of fear of the "flood gates" being opened to many a Missouri Synod mind. How much the fears and anxiety of the war years compounded this ecclesiastical fear cannot be determined but one may safely conclude that they did little to alleviate it.

The wartime convention of 1944 was at first postponed at the request of the Office of Defense Transportation.<sup>79</sup> However as the war effort progressed in favor of the Allies, especially in Europe, and as the transportation situation eased somewhat in the United States, the Missouri Synod was enabled to proceed with its plans to convene from June 21 to June 30, 1944, in the city of Saginaw, Michigan.<sup>80</sup> While attempting to balance his presidential address between a position against both separatism and unionism, President Behnken came down most

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<sup>79</sup>Proceedings, 1944, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

heavily in his warnings against unionism.<sup>81</sup> His choice of words and metaphor leave little doubt in the reader's mind that he is against consummating church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church under conditions as they existed. For example:

Under no condition let us exchange our definite convictions for wavering uncertainties. . . . Never shall the opiate of compromise stupefy or deaden our allegiance to the principles of God's Word. As God grants grace, we shall by no means sell our confessional birthright for a pottage of unionistic lentils. . . . As God grants us grace, let us keep the waters clean from the pollution of unionism and the stagnation of separatism.<sup>82</sup>

In his "President's Report" Dr. Behnken does not mention the possibility of church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.<sup>83</sup> The theme throughout the report is "The abnormal day in which we live."<sup>84</sup> That abnormal day had once again forced the Missouri Synod into certain wartime associations and cooperation with the other Lutheran bodies. In meeting with representatives

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-10.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-18.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

of the National Lutheran Council to establish the areas and extent of cooperation, Dr. Behnken reports, in a defensive, almost fearful, tone: "Your President ever emphasized that such co-operation in externals does not imply fellowship and that Lutheran fellowship must necessarily be based on true Lutheran unity."<sup>85</sup> The motive behind Behnken's statement probably was the same ecclesiastical fear expressed by the professor from Texas. Someone might get the idea that the Missouri Synod was about to open the "flood gates for unionistic practices." The spirit of triumphalism simply could not tolerate the possibility of being watered down and cooled off.

Dr. Behnken's remarks pointed the direction the Missouri Synod Convention of 1944 would take and Dr. Paul E. Kretzmann's doctrinal presentation, "The Doctrine of Scripture, with Particular Reference to Present-Day Implications,"<sup>86</sup> nailed down a repristinationist hard-line

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

approach to Lutheran union and unity.<sup>87</sup> Dr. Kretzmann also served as chairman of Floor Committee 3, appointed by President Behnken to handle "Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters."<sup>88</sup> The floor committee, which appears to be heavily weighed in favor of the Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod, set forth its guiding principles

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<sup>87</sup>After the publication of Toward Lutheran Union, many clergymen in the Missouri Synod voiced objections to the principles of church and prayer fellowship advocated therein. The introduction to the book contains the following notice: "While the separate chapters are individual contributions of the collaborators, each writer fully stands for what the other has written. In other words, it would be fruitless to search in one chapter for a modification of what has been written in another or for a presentation of some conflicting view. The authors made every effort to make Scripture the basis of all arguments presented in this book." (p. ix). While this may be taken as an indication that P. E. Kretzmann, co-author of the book, was cautiously moving toward a modified position on church fellowship, in the wake of the objections raised against the book, he reconsidered his position. He overreacted to the objections and his position, instead of continuing to moderate, became hardened in the tradition of the Mid-Western element. In a letter to the editor of the Confessional Lutheran, VII (July, 1946), 87, he wrote: "Since your periodical was one of those that printed a negative review of the book Toward Lutheran Union, . . . the undersigned hereby declares that he disavows all parts of the book except the doctrinal sections (chapters I, V, VI, and VIII), which he believes to be Scripturally sound. While he holds that the other parts of the book may be tenable in exceptional cases, circumstances have shown that these sections are regarded by many brethren as being on the same level with those presenting the doctrinal principles."

<sup>88</sup>Proceedings, 1944, pp. 33-34.

in its report to the convention which the convention in turn adopted. The four principles once again reflect the triumphalistic spirit which produced the Real Lexikon and the Brief Statement.

. . . Scripture on the one hand encourages every endeavor to recognize and promote a unity actually existing . . . , but just as definitely warns against every kind of false union. . . . As to the truth of any of its statements, Scripture makes no distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental, more important or less important truths. The organic foundation must remain inviolate, its authority and inviolability unimpaired and unassailable, Is. 34:16.

. . . . .  
 . . . we must squarely face the issue that no matter how acceptable the confessional stand of a church body may be, it must be accompanied by supervision of teaching and by doctrinal discipline . . . .  
 . . . the autonomous character of the Christian congregation does not absolve it from synodical allegiance.

. . . . .  
 . . . the insistence upon one doctrinal declaration or confessional affirmation is in keeping with the usage of the Church through the centuries, as the history of the Christian Confessions show . . . .<sup>89</sup>

Dr. Behnken was reported to have dealt ruthlessly from the chair with all who favored closer cooperation among Lutherans in the United States, and especially with those who favored joining the National Lutheran

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 248-249.



Council.<sup>90</sup> As a result, those who had interpreted the action of the Missouri Synod Convention of 1938 to signal an impending declaration of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church were completely disheartened by the tone of the 1944 convention, labeling it "completely negative."<sup>91</sup> The disheartened members of the Missouri Synod were largely the Eastern element (now designated according to outlook rather than geographical area) which found a voice in The American Lutheran and leadership from its editorial committee. In smaller gatherings after the convention the Eastern element decided that legalism was now rampant in the Missouri Synod and something simply had to be done to correct the situation.

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<sup>90</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich and O. P. Kretzmann.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPIRIT OF TRIUMPHALISM IS SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED: THE "A STATEMENT"

The Saginaw Convention of 1944 was the event that sparked the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod into a more determined course of action. However that convention must be viewed as the culmination of a trend toward legalism which had existed in the Missouri Synod for many years. While the one major item of concern shared by all members of the Eastern element in the Missouri Synod was a desire for closer church relations with other Lutheran bodies in the United States, it was not the only item of concern for the individuals of the Eastern spirit. Most of them had been touched personally by the harsh spirit of legalism either directly or indirectly. Some were annoyed by the legalism displayed by the Missouri Synod officials in expelling O. H. Pannkoke from the clergy roster of the synod. More objected to the harshness displayed by synodical officials in dealing with Dr. Adolph Brux.

The record of many of these occurrences are not to be found in the official documents of the Missouri Synod. They are recorded in the memories of those who experienced the harshness of legalism. Some of these events have been related directly to the writer by those involved. Although there is danger in accepting such evidence, especially in details, there is no reason to doubt the actual occurrence of the events. We relate only several of these events.

E. J. Friedrich, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was serving at a convention of the Western District of the Missouri Synod in the 1930's as chairman of the Constitutions Committee. A new and struggling congregation within the geographical confines of the Western District, following the prescribed procedure, submitted its constitution for adoption and subsequent acceptance as a member of the Missouri Synod.<sup>1</sup> The constitution was in order but the word "English" had been included in the

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<sup>1</sup>"Membership in Synod is held and may be acquired by congregations, ministers of the Gospel, and teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who confess and accept the confessional basis of the Missouri Synod . . . ." Handbook of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1966 Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 16.

name of the congregation. The president of the Western District<sup>2</sup> met with the Constitutions Committee to voice his disapproval to the word "English" in the name of the congregation. The chairman of the committee protested. He pointed out that there was no Scriptural reason for not allowing the word "English" to stand in the name of the congregation. When the district president reacted strongly because he was being opposed, the chairman of the committee assumed a firm stand in favor of the congregation. The district president, instead of allowing the matter to be decided by the convention, went directly to the pastor of the congregation and informed him that if the word "English" was included in the name of the congregation, he would see to it that there would be no financial aid in the form of subsidy from the district. The pastor of the congregation, thinking of the financial good of the congregation he served, reluctantly acquiesced to the demand of the district president and the word "English"

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<sup>2</sup>Richard Kretzschmar was president of the Western District of the Missouri Synod from 1921 until 1939. August R. Suelflow, The Heart of Missouri (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1954), pp. 93, 214.

was removed from the name of the congregation.<sup>3</sup> Although his office did not give him jurisdiction, the district president was able to force his will upon the congregation by employing the threat to withhold subsidy. It worked.

The characteristic of the Missouri Synod Geist which gave voluntary submission to the elected officials had evolved, as this instance illustrates, to the point that some officials were assuming de facto episcopal authority in place of the persuasive authority granted them in the Constitution and By-Laws of the Missouri Synod. This incipient episcopatism was at work already in the Board of Foreign Missions' dealings with Dr. Adolph Brux. It was growing and continued to grow through the 1930's and early 1940's.

The second incident occurred when Paul Lindemann, the editor of The American Lutheran and pastor of a Missouri Synod congregation in St. Paul, Minnesota, died in December, 1938. Paul Lindemann's son, Herbert F. Lindemann, and his mother made the funeral arrangements. O. P. Kretzmann, Executive Secretary for the International

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with E. J. Friedrich, who served as chairman of the Constitutions Committee.

Walther League<sup>4</sup> and member of the editorial committee of The American Lutheran, accepted the invitation to preach the funeral sermon. At first Mrs. Lindemann and her son decided to dispense with any special addresses after the funeral service proper, but as a number of dignitaries from the Missouri Synod began to arrive they decided to permit short addresses by Dr. Behnken, president of the Missouri Synod, and Martin Walker, vice-president of the English District of the Missouri Synod, the district to which Paul Lindemann had belonged. All was well until Dr. Michael Reu, professor at the seminary of the American Lutheran Church in Iowa and personal friend of Paul Lindemann, arrived for the funeral. Because of Reu's friendship for his father and because of Reu's stature as a scholar, Herbert Lindemann, in consultation with his mother, decided to ask also Dr. Reu to make a short address after the service. When this became known to Dr. Behnken, he protested to Herbert Lindemann that to speak at the same service with Dr. Reu would constitute unionism and would set back the cause for Lutheran unity.

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<sup>4</sup>The International Walther League was an organization for youth and young adults in the Missouri Synod. It took its name from C. F. W. Walther, first president of the Missouri Synod.

On the morning of the funeral about ten prominent clergymen of the Missouri Synod, including Dr. Behnken, gathered in the living room of the home of the deceased and discussed, debated, and finally argued over the prospects of Dr. Reu speaking at the funeral. After the space of about two hours, Herbert Lindemann and his mother decided that the dispute had gone far enough. They announced that if Dr. Reu did not speak then no one would offer a special address after the service. Dr. Behnken would not capitulate and the funeral service ended without anyone making a special address.<sup>5</sup>

Although one could have, in Missouri Synod fashion, considered the funeral service over after the liturgical service was complete and could have then considered the special addresses at the conclusion as nonessential for a confessional witness, Dr. Behnken did not want to give an outward appearance to anyone that unionism might be

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<sup>5</sup>The details concerning the funeral of Paul Lindemann were related to the writer by Herbert Lindemann in a private interview and are used here with his permission. Another prominent clergyman of the Missouri Synod, present for the funeral, recounted the same details but asked that his remarks be "off the record." Since the son of Paul Lindemann was most directly involved, we consider his permission to relate the event reason enough for including it here.

involved in his speaking at the same funeral with Dr. Reu. The fear of giving even an outward appearance of oneness without complete agreement in doctrine and practice had progressed to such an extent by 1938.

The legalism connected with the funeral service for Paul Lindemann made a deep and lasting wound in the hearts and minds of those who had been involved in the incident. Since Lindemann was a leader of the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod, that element did not soon forget this rather harsh and loveless application of a strict, hard-line, stand on church fellowship.

A third incident illustrating the trend toward legalism in the Missouri Synod occurred in 1945 and involved Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer, professor of homiletics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In November, 1944, the mayor of St. Louis called for representatives of the various church bodies in that city to meet with him and to help plan a community celebration of V-E Day. The Missouri Synod representative on the committee formed by the mayor made it clear that his church body "could not be represented in a service of worship or of prayer, but



that they could participate in a civic gathering."<sup>6</sup> Consequently the celebration, it was decided, would emphasize the civic nature of the occasion. Dr. Caemmerer was chosen by the Missouri Synod Pastoral Conference of St. Louis to give one of several five-minute addresses and to offer the benediction at the conclusion of the celebration. "The V-E Day proclamation asked the people of Saint Louis to go to their own churches for worship in the course of the day."<sup>7</sup> In his address Dr. Caemmerer stressed the necessity of a vitally concerned citizenship for the good of the country. For the benediction he read extracts from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.<sup>8</sup>

Although Dr. Caemmerer's appearance at the celebration had been approved by the St. Louis Pastoral Conference, when news of the event reached certain areas of the Missouri Synod negative reaction was swift to come. Without cautious investigation into the nature of the

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<sup>6</sup>Theodore Graebner, Prayer Fellowship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>The account of the V-E Day celebration and Dr. Caemmerer's part in it is related in Ibid., pp. 28-30. Dr. Caemmerer also described the event to the writer in a personal interview.

V-E Day celebration, a group of ministers in the Missouri Synod sent a letter to the president of the synod and copies to the president of the Western District, the Board of Control, the Electoral College, and the president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, which charged Dr. Caemmerer with "violation of God's Word and the Synod's constitution."<sup>9</sup> The letter also called for the synodical officials to act "promptly and fearlessly to take the necessary God-pleasing remedial action."<sup>10</sup> It warned that if the officials did not ask for Dr. Caemmerer's resignation because of what they considered unionism, then the result would be "the disruption and speedy dissolution of our beloved and much-blessed Synod."<sup>11</sup> To the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod this demonstration of legalism and lovelessness was the last straw. They believed that something had to be done to stop the progress of legalism and lovelessness and to lead the Missouri Synod to a more evangelical practice.

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<sup>9</sup>Theodore Graebner, "For a Penitent Jubilee" (paper read before the New York Pastoral Conference [Missouri Synod] in St. Luke's Church, New York, May 21, 1946: mimeographed December 10, 1946), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

Beginning in the late 1920's and continuing through the 1930's and into the decade of the 1940's small groups of Missouri Synod pastors of the Eastern spirit had been meeting to discuss the trends in the Missouri Synod. However, in general, they were speaking only to others who agreed with them. They were not making their concerns public and as a result they were not making a meaningful impact on the Missouri Synod.

The Eastern element of the Missouri Synod found its strongest leaders in the men who were associated with The American Lutheran magazine. By unofficial consensus they turned to three members of the editorial board of that magazine, E. J. Friedrich, O. A. Geiseman, and O. P. Kretzmann, with the request to make arrangements for a meeting of those of the Eastern spirit.<sup>12</sup> The three met

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<sup>12</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich and O. P. Kretzmann.

Edward Julius Friedrich graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1912. He served parishes in St. Charles, Missouri, Waynesboro, Virginia, and Cleveland, Ohio, after which he became a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He left the seminary to become superintendent and chaplain of the Lutheran Sanatorium in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. He was president of the Colorado District of the Missouri Synod from 1942 to 1949.

Otto A. F. Geiseman graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1915. After serving parishes at Wenona, Illinois, and Pekin, Illinois, he became pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest, Illinois, where he served

in a Chicago hotel in April of 1945. Just prior to the meeting in Chicago, E. J. Friedrich, president of the Colorado District of the Missouri Synod, attended a meeting in St. Louis of the district presidents of the Missouri Synod where he took the opportunity to discuss the proposed meeting of the Eastern element with Dr. William Arndt and Dr. W. G. Polack of the Concordia Seminary faculty and with several other interested men, before taking the train to Chicago.

The early part of the meeting of the three men was given to deciding upon a date and place for the proposed meeting of the larger group. Since The American Lutheran editorial board was scheduled to meet in Chicago on Labor Day, September 3, and the day following, and since the men of that board would also be invited to the proposed

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from 1922 to 1962. He earned the S.T.D. from Chicago Lutheran Seminary, Maywood, Illinois, in 1937. He served on the Missouri Synod's Board of Directors from 1941 to 1944, and was the author of several books.

Otto Paul Kretzmann graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1923. He was a professor at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, from 1924 to 1934; Executive Secretary for the International Walther League from 1934 to 1940; and president of Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana, from 1940 to 1970. After 1945 he was awarded five honorary degrees from various colleges and universities.

meeting, with an eye toward finances, it was decided that the meeting would be held on Thursday and Friday, September 6 and 7, 1945, at the Stevens Hotel in Chicago.<sup>13</sup> Next the three decided on the general themes for four papers to be presented at the meeting and on whom they would ask to present the papers. The result was as follows: "The Application of the Law of Love in the Practical Life of the Church" to be presented by Dr. William Arndt; "Doctrines and Life, and Their Application to Synodical Attitudes" to be presented by Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer; "Organization and Church" to be presented by Dr. O. P. Kretzmann; "Protest and Appeal" to be presented by Dr. O. A. Geiseman.<sup>14</sup> The rest of the evening, up until about one o'clock in the morning, was spent in determining whom to invite to the meeting.

Whether or not to invite Dr. Behnken to the meeting was one item discussed by Friedrich, Geiseman, and Kretzmann. They decided not to invite him, reasoning as follows. If he were invited and declined the invitation,

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<sup>13</sup>Interview with E. J. Friedrich.

<sup>14</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors (Assembled on Sept. 6 and 7, 1945. Room 12, Hotel Stevens. Chicago.)," A. W. Brustat, Secretary. (Mimeographed.)

then the Eastern element would feel slighted. If he accepted the invitation and attended the meeting, then he might place himself in a bad light with the Mid-Western element of the synod. It was not the intention of the men to place Dr. Behnken in a difficult position. They determined that after the meeting Friedrich would write him a letter and explain why he was not invited and enclose a copy of the papers which would be presented. At this time no one knew that "A Statement" would be forthcoming from the meeting.<sup>15</sup>

A difference of opinion developed between Kretzmann and Geiseman over whether or not to invite Theodore Graebner to the meeting. Kretzmann thought that Graebner would be an asset to the group. Geiseman thought that he might cause too much disharmony because of his past hard-line position on unionism. Since the two of them could not agree on an invitation to Graebner they agreed to let Friedrich decide whether or not to invite him, since Friedrich knew him better than either of them. Friedrich's office was next to Graebner's office at the seminary in St. Louis. He decided to invite Graebner, which

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<sup>15</sup>Personal interview with E. J. Friedrich.

proved to be a fortunate decision. Graebner became a stalwart defender of the "A Statement" after it had been printed and circulated in the Missouri Synod.<sup>16</sup>

Friedrich was to be responsible for composing a letter of invitation and mailing it to the men who had been selected to attend the meeting. He duplicated the letter of invitation and mailed out forty-nine copies.<sup>17</sup> Friedrich later reported:

All of them [the letters of invitation] were answered. Not one letter voiced misgivings. One letter was "lukewarm," but the rest indicated approval and interest and most of them even were enthusiastic.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. E. J. Friedrich reported the following to the writer in a private interview: ". . . four who were invited did not accept. There were two who wanted to come and could not. That was [O. H.] Theiss and [H. F.] Wind. They were with us but they could not be at the meeting because of other appointments. But there were four who declined. Two of them wrote very nice letters. One was Arnold [H.] Grumm [of Fargo, N.D.], later on a vice-president of Synod. . . . The other was Paul [M.] Freiburger [of Billings, Montana], . . . [later] president of the Montana District. . . . then there were two George Schmidt's. One was George Schmidt in Alabama [sic, New Orleans, Louisiana] in Negro work. He wrote me a really hot letter, as if I was really trying to wreck the Missouri Synod. . . . the other George Schmidt in Seattle, who later on became one of our best supporters, wrote me a shock letter. He thought, too, that we were trying to drop

The letter of invitation set forth the reasons for calling a meeting to consider the trends in the Missouri Synod. These same words were later included in the covering letter sent out together with the "A Statement" after the meeting in September.

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Behnken. . . . [E. B.] Glabe was not invited to the meeting, but he signed the statement anyway."

The writer is inclined to accept the information received in the private interview as the correct account of reaction to the invitations extended. However, preference in the body of this dissertation will be given to written minutes of the various meetings where they are available. If the E. J. Friedrich file is eventually located intact, with copies of the letters of invitation included, the full and correct account can be established. E. J. Friedrich, who is now blind, believed the file to be in the possession of O. P. Kretzmann at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. However in a personal interview, the writer was informed that Kretzmann had no knowledge of the file's whereabouts. The writer was granted permission to make a search for the file. The search included the basement of the music building at Valparaiso University, later destroyed by fire. The file was not there. The writer has come to the conclusion that only by accident will someone stumble upon the file if it is not yet destroyed. A full, if not complete, account of events can, however, be established from materials from the files of O. P. Kretzmann and Thomas Coates, and from various materials found at the Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, in MSS collections, especially the Theodore Graebner MSS. More light will be shed upon the subject when the John W. Behnken MSS collections are opened for use at Concordia Historical Institute.



In recent years, especially since the Saginaw Convention, a strange and pernicious spirit, utterly at variance with the fundamental concepts of the Gospel and the genius of the Lutheran Church, has lifted its ugly head in more than one area of our beloved Synod. This spirit has its origin in a wrong approach to the Holy Scriptures and in a tragic misconception of the very essence of the Gospel and the nature, functions and mission of the Church. It is characterized by barren, negative attitudes, unevangelical techniques in dealing with the problems of the individual and the Church, unsympathetic legalistic practices, a self-complacent and separatistic narrowness, and an utter disregard for the fundamental law of Christian love. One need not be a prophet to forecast what the results will be if this unevangelical and intolerant spirit is left unrestrained and to its own devices. Spiritual life will be blighted. The organism of the Church will be paralyzed. Ecclesiastical persecution will occur with increasing frequency. The onward march of the Gospel will be obstructed and one open door after another will be closed to us.

During the past year this alarming phenomenon in our synodical life has been the topic of many discussions. In every case the conviction prevailed that it is our sacred obligation to do everything within our power to preserve our precious evangelical Lutheran heritage. But invariably the question arose, What can be done?

Several groups in different parts of the country have arrived at the same answer: We must, to begin with, arrange a meeting of kindred minds to study the situation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Letter, The Committee to [clergymen of the Missouri Synod], September 20, 1945. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates file. E. J. Friedrich was the author of the letter which has come to be designated the "covering letter."

Those of the Eastern spirit who received the letter of invitation understood the intent of the words of the invitation. But when those of the Mid-Western spirit received word of the proposed meeting through someone who was shown a copy of the invitation, the construction they placed upon the intent of the meeting was quite different. They believed a group of revolutionaries was meeting to plan the defeat of Dr. Behnken at the Missouri Synod Convention scheduled for 1947.<sup>20</sup> This word spread rapidly because such a maneuver was an affront to the Missouri Synod Geist which held elected officials in high regard and gave them de facto episcopal authority.

Dr. Behnken himself related to E. J. Friedrich that, before the meeting was ever held, he was rushing through Union Station in Chicago to catch a train. He was stopped by Martin Piehler, Stewardship Secretary for the Northern Illinois District of the Missouri Synod and the Synod's General Transportation Secretary, who told him that a meeting of a revolutionary group in the synod

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<sup>20</sup>See n. 18. This was the interpretation that George Schmidt of New Orleans, Louisiana, placed upon the proposed meeting.

was going to be held in Chicago after Labor Day.<sup>21</sup> This is important to note. Although he was not invited to attend, Dr. Behnken knew of the meeting before it was held, and it is safe to assume that he heard the rumors being circulated by the Mid-Western element, rumors which passed along the information that the group was going to attempt a coup to unseat Behnken. Under the circumstances it would have been extremely difficult for Dr. Behnken not to have been prejudiced against the meeting and the men involved.

The extent to which the rumors permeated the Missouri Synod before the meeting was held cannot be accurately determined. However, it must have been common knowledge in the key cities of Missouri Synod Lutheranism, at least in the Mid-West. For example, when E. J. Friedrich arrived for the meeting in Chicago, he found waiting for him a letter from his father, Julius A. Friedrich, a retired Missouri Synod clergyman living in St. Louis, Missouri. The letter contained a sharp rebuke because the father had heard that his son was "engineering a meeting

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<sup>21</sup>Interview with E. J. Friedrich.

to dump Dr. Behnken out of the presidency."<sup>22</sup> Such was not the intent of the meeting but it had been so interpreted by many of those of the Mid-Western spirit.

Because of the expense involved, the meeting could not have been held without financial assistance. O. P. Kretzmann was to seek assistance from several Missouri Synod laymen who had indicated an interest in closer relationship with other Lutheran bodies in the United States. He was successful in soliciting their financial support. W. C. Dickmeyer, E. J. Gallmeyer and Richard H. Waltke, all prominent laymen in the Missouri Synod, and one or two others, contributed enough to adequately finance the meeting.<sup>23</sup>

Dickmeyer was chairman of the Board of Trustees for Valparaiso University and resided in Fort Wayne, Indiana. E. J. Gallmeyer was a member of the Board of Directors of the Missouri Synod and also resided in Fort Wayne. Richard H. Waltke, who resided in St. Louis, was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Missouri Synod's Trust Funds and also a member of the Board of Control for

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Interview with O. P. Kretzmann.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Besides being men of some means they held responsible positions in the organizational structure of the Missouri Synod, or, as with Dickmeyer, Valparaiso University. O. P. Kretzmann reported: "The financial arrangements for this meeting were handled by interested laymen. Traveling expenses above 400 miles, plus meals and lodging, will be paid."<sup>24</sup>

The conference, looked forward to with hope by those of the Eastern element involved, and looked upon with suspicion by the Mid-Western element, convened at 9:15 a.m. on September 6, 1945.<sup>25</sup> Forty-two clergymen and one layman were present. The minutes of the conference show that the following were present:

C. A. Behnke  
 170 Crawford St., Rochester 7, N.Y.  
 Bernard H. Hemmeter  
 3848 N. Tripp Ave., Chicago 41, Ill.  
 Paul F. Miller  
 225 E. Lewis St., Ft. Wayne, 2, Ind.  
 W. E. Bauer  
 601 Indiana Ave., Valparaiso [sic], Ind.  
 L. H. Deffner  
 909 S. Market, Wichita 11, Kas. [sic]  
 Fred H. Lindemann  
 209 Wallace Ave., Buffalo 16, N.Y.

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<sup>24</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

F. W. Loose  
1716 Reid Ave., Lorain, Ohio

Thomas Coates  
875 No. Dearborn St., Chicago 10, Ill.

Aug. Bernthal  
340 S. First St., Saginaw, Mich.

H. R. [sic, B.] Hemmeter  
19 N. Harrison, Pittsbury [sic, Pittsburgh] 2, Pa.

O. A. Sauer  
1827 W. Grace St., Richmond, Va.

C. A. Gieseler  
33 W. 3rd Ave., Denver 9, Col.

Theo. H. Schwedel [sic, Schroedel]  
3045 Chicago Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

J. Frederic Wenchel  
3031 Sedgwick St. Apt. 301, Wash., D.C.

H. W. Bartels  
13001 Cedar Road, Cleveland Hgts., Ohio

Oswald Hoffmann  
214 Midland Ave., Tuckahoe, N.Y.

Edmund W. Weber  
1501 Kearny St., Washington 17, D.C.

Werner Kuntz  
10704 Lincoln Dr., Hntgton Wds., Mich.

Herbert Lindemann  
623 Iglehart Ave., St. Paul 4, Minn.

Richard R. Caemmerer  
61 Ridgemoor, Clayton 5, Mo.

Lawrence Acker  
538 So. 31 St., Omaha Nebr.

Theodore Graebner  
801 DeMun Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Arthur Brunn  
45 Hale Ave., Brklyn, N.Y.

O. P. Kretzmann  
158 Greenwich, Valparaiso, Ind.

Arthur R. Hanser  
Seaford, L.I., N.Y.

Erwin Kurth  
921 Oakdale Dr., Ft. Wayne, Ind.

Geo. Kuechle  
4525 Behrwald Ave., Cleveland 9, Ohio

W. G. Polack  
801 DeMun Ave., St. Louis 5, Mo.

Wm. Hillmer  
507 Broadway Bldg., Portland 5, Ore.

C. M. Amling  
 1818 9th Ave., Spokane 9, Wash.

Wm. F. Bruening  
 2934 Upton St., Washington, D.C.

O. A. Geiseman  
 7300 W. Division, River Forest, Ill.

Adolf F. Meyer  
 351 E. 242nd St., Yonkers, N.Y.

Karl Kretzmann  
 801 DeMun Ave., St. Louis 5, Mo.

W. Arndt  
 801 DeMun Ave., St. Louis 5, Mo.

Aug. F. Bobzin  
 45-60 168th St., Flushing, N.Y.

H. H. Kumnick  
 Valparaiso U., Valparaiso, Ind.

A. W. Brustat  
 231 Wellington Road, Mineola, N.Y.

E. J. Friedrich  
 Wheat Ridge, Colo.

H. H. Engelbrecht  
 116 East 8th Ave., Gary, Ind.

W. C. Dickmeyer [layman]  
 4018 So. Harrison, Ft. Wayne, Ind.

A. R. Kretzmann  
 1501 W. Melrose St., Chicago 13, Ill.

Paul Bretscher  
 6242 Alamo Ave., St. Louis 5, Mo.<sup>26</sup>

In the opening address E. J. Friedrich said, "this meeting is not called primarily for a discussion of Lutheran Union, but for the unhampered spread of the Gospel in

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10. The names are listed exactly as they appear in the minutes. They were not in alphabetical order nor were all the names given in full. Corrections have been noted where it was necessary. For the full names of the signers see Appendix.

Christian love."<sup>27</sup> Dr. H. B. Hemmeter, former president of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, offered a prayer after the address. August F. Bernthal, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Saginaw, Michigan, was elected chairman of the conference, and August W. Brustat, pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Mineola, New York, was elected secretary. Four essays were then read and copies were distributed to those present.<sup>28</sup>

The first essay, presented by William Arndt, professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was entitled "The Application of the Law of Love in the Practical Life of the Church."<sup>29</sup> Arndt wrote: "The law of love, it is admitted on all sides, is the greatest of all laws."<sup>30</sup> He viewed the relation of the law of love to the church as follows:

The church should, and desires to, be guided by principles that God Himself has laid down. It is the household of the heavenly Father. His will are its laws. The state is guided by reason and common sense,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Five pages. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



the church by God's revelation. What He says about the law of love must be one of its great directives.<sup>31</sup>

Arndt made application of the law of love in the life of the church under five divisions, each of only one paragraph except the last. In the first four divisions he skirted the burning contemporary issues, discussing such things as "the husband is to be the head of the family," "the congregation members . . . should support and maintain their pastor," a Christian's choice in belonging to a labor union, the proper location of new mission congregations, the concern of the congregation for the "poverty-stricken people or other sufferers," and "the treatment of those Christians who fall into wrongdoing."<sup>32</sup> In his fifth division Arndt asked: "What of those who fall into doctrinal errors?" He held to the accepted Missouri Synod exegesis of Romans 16:17, "Avoid them that cause divisions and offences," yet desired to moderate the practical application the exegesis provoked.<sup>33</sup> He wrote:

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-3.

<sup>33</sup>The accepted exegesis, briefly stated, was that anyone who disagreed in any doctrine of Scripture could not be considered a brother in faith and should be avoided by those who adhered to true doctrine. In practice it

But let us see to it that in these rare cases, too, the law of Christian love is not violated, that it rather becomes very plain that we love the person in question and would like to keep him in our fellowship but that desire [sic, dire] necessity combined with the express command of the Lord compels us to take the action contemplated.<sup>34</sup>

Concerning church bodies not in full doctrinal agreement with the Missouri Synod, Arndt wrote:

The fact that a Christian denomination holds to some errors does not make it an un-Christian body, provided the errors are not faith-destroying and are not held in willful defiance of the Scriptures. . . . The existence of an error in a Christian denomination will not per se have to keep us from having fraternal relations with it, provided the denomination earnestly strives for the truth, seeks to cultivate loyalty to it, is desirous of learning the way of God more perfectly, and gladly bows to the holy Scriptures.<sup>35</sup>

Arndt, who in the 1930's had opposed the position of Dr. Adolph Brux on prayer fellowship, had by 1945 come to accept the Brux position.<sup>36</sup>

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meant that any church body disagreeing with the Missouri Synod was to be avoided.

<sup>34</sup>Arndt, "Application of the Law of Love," p. 3.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>36</sup>Arndt was secretary for the Board of Foreign Missions while the Brux case was under consideration. In a private letter to Brux, Arndt went so far as to accuse Brux of heresy. The charge was not pressed to an ultimate conclusion, but neither did Arndt ever apologize to Brux for

But when we are dealing with an erring denomination and we try to establish peaceful fraternal relations, are we permitted to open such a meeting with prayer? Why not? . . . The stern legalist who wants to see the opposing party surrender will say, "No prayer, first sign on the dotted line." The evangelically-minded Christian will say that there is nothing in the Word of God forbidding such a prayer, and since joint prayer is not only a grand means of obtaining divine aid, but likewise is a sign that one party recognizes the other as Christian, the prayer should be engaged in.<sup>37</sup>

Since most of those present for the meeting had experienced legalistic and loveless attacks from other members of the Missouri Synod, the following words by Arndt called on them to exercise love and not to respond in kind.

. . . in our dealings with our own brethren who are super-zealous, extreme in their conservatism, too narrow in their outlook, failing to apply the law of Christian love where they should. While I cannot endorse the course they follow, I love them and would like to treat them will [sic, with] all the love and consideration which obedience to the truth permits. We can manifest that love by abstaining from name-calling and be endeavoring in a loving, kind, gentle way to win these people to a more correct conception of the way God would have us Christians travel.<sup>38</sup>

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his actions. Yet by 1945 Arndt's view expressed in the quotation immediately following in the text, had come to coincide with that advocated by Brux in the 1920's. See Brux, Re-Appeal, pp. 37-68.

<sup>37</sup>Arndt, "Application of the Law of Love," p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

Finally, Arndt comes to the relationship of the Missouri Synod with other Lutheran bodies. Although he approached the solution from the standpoint of leading the others to the Missouri Synod position, he called for it to be accomplished in a spirit of love. It was his belief that:

A disdainful, "better-than-thou" attitude, a course of isolation which seeks to deepen rather than to remove the gulf separating the bodies, cannot be according to the will of Christ and the law of love.<sup>39</sup>

The second essay presented at the meeting was a short paper by Richard R. Caemmerer, designed, evidently, to evoke discussion. From the highlights of the discussion recorded in the minutes of the meeting one can only assume that the discussion of Caemmerer's paper was brief. The essay was entitled "Doctrines and Life and Their Application to Synodical Attitudes."<sup>40</sup>

Caemmerer writes:

Christian doctrine and the teaching of Christian doctrine is designed by Our Lord to be a dynamic making a change in man from death to life, from

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Two pages. (Mimeographed.)

darkness to light. . . . Hence we must combat the assumption that Christian doctrine is a static body of information with influence only on the intelligence; the assumption that a chief purpose of Christian doctrine is to describe individuals as technically and intellectually false, in contrast to those intellectually and technically correct, in their teaching . . . .<sup>41</sup>

Because, according to Caemmerer, "Christian doctrine and life are not two separate areas of thought or experience,"<sup>42</sup> it was urged upon the group to combat:

The assumption that motives for correct Christian behavior are fear of judgment or the desire to conform to tradition or the sensation of "conscience" rather than the living presence of the Spirit of God in the heart of the Christian . . . .

. . . . .  
The assumption that love to the fellow-Christian is allowably manifested only to those with whom we are in Synodical fellowship, the relations to those Christians beyond that fellowship being necessarily "invisible;" . . . .<sup>43</sup>

The third paper presented to the meeting was the most important one. Written and presented by O. P. Kretzmann and entitled "Organization and Church,"<sup>44</sup> the short

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>44</sup>Two pages. (Mimeographed.)

paper probed the heart of the difficulties in the Missouri Synod. The synod had developed a hazy vision concerning the relation between the una sancta and the ecclesia repraesentativa (the synod) and Kretzmann briefly and cogently exposed that bad vision. He believed that there was no fundamental disagreement between the men of the Eastern spirit and the men of the Mid-Western spirit. The difference lay in varying emphases. He wrote:

The basic problem in many of our difficulties of thought and life is a difference in attitude brought about by varying emphases rather than a divergence of conviction concerning fundamental truths. . . . This fact should persuade us to brotherly tolerance when no denial of divine truth is involved. It should be noted, however, that an exclusive emphasis may become schismatic.

. . . . .  
 In late years there has been a marked shift of emphasis from the Scriptural and historically Lutheran position. The ecclesia repraesentativa, (the synod), has moved into the center of thought and life to such an extent that the very purposes for which it was organized are endangered. The original emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and congregational freedom and responsibility has been supplanted by a demand for a rigid organizational loyalty which must result either in a dead uniformity rooted in fear or in a reaction to the opposite and equally undesirable extreme of irresponsibility and revolt.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

The Missouri Synod made practical application of the doctrine of the una sancta by using it, to put it crassly, as a dump heap. If a Christian who did not agree with the Missouri Synod in every point of doctrine could not be persuaded to amend his sinful ways, then such an one was conveniently relegated to the realm of the una sancta. There was no need to continue discussions with him or even to treat him as a brother in Christ since the una sancta, in Missouri Synod understanding, is invisible. If one chose to do so, he could make practical application of the doctrine of the una sancta by receiving all who accept the Lordship of Christ as brothers in faith. But the prevailing attitude in the Missouri Synod, the Mid-Western attitude, chose to use the doctrine as authorization for isolation to strengthen its spirit of synodical triumphalism. This was, as Kretzmann correctly observed, the result of an exclusivist emphasis which had become schismatic.

Kretzmann concludes his paper by calling on the Missouri Synod to avoid the following:

- a) The reduction of the doctrine of the una sancta to a mere theory, without effective results for our faith and life.
- b) The identification of any synodical organization with the Lutheran Church.

- c) The tendency to commit responsibilities which belong to the individual parish to synodical officials and committees.
- d) The idea that our organization must be preserved at all costs.<sup>46</sup>

If the minutes of the meeting are an accurate reflection of the discussion evoked by the various papers, then Kretzmann's paper was given more time than the others. It was discussed and then rediscussed.<sup>47</sup> The recorded highlights of the discussion indicate that the men present brought up many points concerning doctrinal emphasis to the "exclusion of sanctity of life," "the sovereignty of the local congregation," being able to call a non-Missouri Synod Christian "a brother," pulpit and altar fellowship, and selective fellowship.<sup>48</sup> Selective fellowship was a touchy issue in the Missouri Synod.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>49</sup>The term "selective fellowship" as used in the Missouri Synod meant that the local congregation had the right to choose or select for itself those congregations with which to declare church fellowship. This meant that a Missouri Synod congregation on the basis of its own judgment could select for fellowship a congregation not a member of the Missouri Synod or of the Synodical



In the discussion concerning selective fellowship, O. A. Sauer said: "There is nothing wrong with the doctrine of selective fellowship but we [the Missouri Synod] don't recommend it. What shall we do?"<sup>50</sup> F. W. Loose and Theodore Graebner agreed that the local congregation was the "final authority in this matter of fellowship."<sup>51</sup> It was also suggested that: "Synodical affiliation is no argument against fellowship with non-synodical congregations in agreement with us."<sup>52</sup> Selective fellowship was the business of the local congregation. Herbert Lindemann put it this way: "If an ALC [American Lutheran Church] Church [sic] and we are at one in St. Paul, Minn., we can't help what preachers in our church a thousand miles away think about it."<sup>53</sup>

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Conference. An agreement for fellowship could be reached by local congregations of the various Lutheran synods in spite of the fact that the general church bodies to which they belonged had not officially declared fellowship with one another. The Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod firmly opposed selective fellowship, whereas the Eastern element favored it.

<sup>50</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 2.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

Kretzmann's paper together with the discussion it precipitated clearly indicate that the Eastern element was calling for a shift of emphasis from the triumphalism of the Missouri Synod to the triumphalism of the una sancta, which was at least Biblical. Such a shift would require the Missouri Synod to accept the position of living and working as only one Christian group among many others. This was a call for radical readjustment in Missouri Synod thought.

The fourth and longest paper presented at the meeting was written by O. A. Geiseman and entitled "Protest and Appeal."<sup>54</sup> Geiseman set forth his protest under nine divisions, building his arguments almost exclusively on what he considered improper interpretations of Romans 16:17-18 and I Thessalonians 5:22.<sup>55</sup> He evidently intended to present his paper as one which could be signed by the other men in attendance and offered to the

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<sup>54</sup>Nine pages. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>55</sup>"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Romans 16:17-18, KJV. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." I Thessalonians 5:22 KJV.

Missouri Synod as a position paper.<sup>56</sup> It is fortunate for them that the group prepared a separate document as a position paper since Geiseman did not get to the heart of the matter on the doctrine of the Church as did O. P. Kretzmann. He did, however, have some very important observations and comments to make.

Geiseman wrote that the "principle Sola Scriptura has been our safeguard thus far against the encroachments of human authority and man-made traditions."<sup>57</sup> But he complained that a "new spirit" had found its way into the Missouri Synod over a course of thirty or forty years.<sup>58</sup> Of that new spirit he wrote:

It lays claim to a special degree of orthodoxy and to a special soundness in practice. It is characterized by legalistic severity and by a peculiar mixture of sectarian and Roman tendencies. . . . Practically it recognizes no Christians outside our own Synod since it holds on the basis of Rom. 16:17,18 that all who are not in absolute and complete accord with us in every point of doctrine and in all matters of theological judgment "serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly . . . ."59

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<sup>56</sup>Geisemann, "Protest and Appeal," pp. 8-9.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

Geiseman called for a revised interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 and of I Thessalonians 5:22 to combat the spirit of legalism and lovelessness in the Missouri Synod.

This spirit draws its sustenance from a misinterpretation and a misapplication of Rom. 16:17 and similar passages. It further so magnifies and emphasizes these then, to the neglect of many other passages of Holy Writ which enjoin a positive approach to the task and duties of the church. This is a typical sectarian method of procedure. Thus sects are born. Isolate a given Bible passage, interpret and apply it without reference to other Bible passages and soon you are off on a tangent which carries you outside the periphery of Holy Writ.

This spirit whereof we speak is not only negative in its approach to the work of the Church, but it also neglects the principle of Christian love. First it applies Rom. 16:17 to all Christians who are not in complete doctrinal accord with us and then it raises the hue and cry of "unionism" and forbidden prayer fellowship. . . . This spirit seems to count it a special mark of theological acumen to "discover" hidden errors maliciously concealed in doctrinal statements by theologians of other Lutheran bodies.

This spirit further thrives on a misinterpretation of I Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from every appearance of evil." This opens the door wide for anyone who suspects the motives of another to accuse him of whatsoever he may please. Only he who does nothing can then hope to feel safe that his orthodoxy, soundness of practice or godliness of life will not be called into question.<sup>60</sup>

In the first paper presented to the meeting Arndt had retained the accepted Missouri Synod exegesis of

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

Romans 16:17-18. Geiseman now maintained that the accepted exegesis was incorrect. This laid the ground for a dispute which almost disrupted the meeting. Although the dispute is not recorded in the minutes of the meeting, those present at the meeting and interviewed by the writer all gave the same account of what happened. As the dispute over the proper interpretation continued and it appeared to Geiseman that Arndt might carry the group in favor of the accepted exegesis, Geiseman arose and announced that if the group favored Arndt's position, he would simply walk out of the meeting. O. P. Kretzmann and E. J. Friedrich prevailed upon Geiseman to remain and the meeting continued in somewhat of a charged atmosphere. In the final analysis Geiseman's position on the interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 was adopted by the group and Arndt came to agree with it.<sup>61</sup>

At the afternoon session of the conference on September 6, Friedrich said that the majority had expressed a hope that some definite action would come from the deliberations. He suggested that a committee be

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<sup>61</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich, O. P. Kretzmann, Richard R. Caemmerer, Thomas Coates, and A. R. Kretzmann. See Thesis Five of the "A Statement."

elected to bring definite recommendations to the conference on Friday. Such a committee was elected. It included the four essayists, William Arndt, Richard R. Caemmerer, O. P. Kretzmann, and O. A. Geiseman, plus E. J. Friedrich, O. A. Sauer, C. A. Behnke, H. W. Bartels, and F. W. Loose. Arthur Brunn, second vice-president of the Missouri Synod, was nominated to serve on the committee but declined to serve.<sup>62</sup> From hindsight one can see in Brunn's reluctance to serve on the committee a portent of his future actions.

The committee met after the evening session of September 6 had adjourned at 9:20 p.m.<sup>63</sup> It was the decision of the committee to present a statement for adoption by the conference. The statement was to include the important points made in the papers and in the discussions. It was to be positive in its approach but also to include specific protests against the prevailing attitudes in the Missouri Synod. By the process of discussion the full committee filtered out the major points to be made in

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<sup>62</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 2.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

the statement.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to note that the committee did not include selective fellowship as one of the points. Perhaps it was because of the firm stand of the Mid-Western element against this touchy issue that it was deemed expedient to omit this one point in order for the others to be considered on their own merit.

After the committee had completed the filtering process, O. P. Kretzmann was given the task of arranging the document in concise form for presentation to the conference on Friday.<sup>65</sup> Kretzmann was probably chosen for the task for two reasons. First, he had come to grips with the basic problem in the Missouri Synod in his paper on "Church and Organization," and, second, his secretary was available to take care of the work involved in making copies of the document.

Kretzmann continued the work of refining the wording of the document until the early hours of September 7. Before breakfast that morning his secretary had completed a typescript of the short document. The committee met

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<sup>64</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich and O. P. Kretzmann.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

over breakfast and made some changes in wording, but left the document essentially intact.<sup>66</sup> The document entitled simply "A Statement" was presented for the committee by E. J. Friedrich to the conference at about 10:30 a.m. while August F. Bernthal presided.<sup>67</sup> Friedrich made two requests before presenting "A Statement":

1. Don't wrangle about words in the statement, unless they are wrong.
2. Do voice any disagreement regarding the statement now, because we want this printed.<sup>68</sup>

The "A Statement" was, after some discussion, unani-  
mously adopted.<sup>69</sup> It was composed of twelve positive theses, the first nine of which were accompanied also by a negative statement beginning with the words: "We therefore deplore."<sup>70</sup> A review of the papers presented at the conference and the discussion recorded in the minutes reveal that the "A Statement" is an accurate compend of the various concerns voiced at the meeting. It is not the

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Convergence of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 8.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>"A Statement," pp. 1-3



expression of just one individual. It belonged to the group.<sup>71</sup> Exhibit 1 is the "A Statement" in its printed form. It was printed in Chicago under the supervision of A. R. Kretzmann.<sup>72</sup> Exhibit 2 is the last page of the "A Statement" listing the forty-four signers. The common title for the "A Statement" in the Missouri Synod came to be "The Statement of the Forty-four."

Theses one through three of the "A Statement" were in essence asking for the Missouri Synod to reexamine one of the chief characteristics of its Geist, its reverence for its founding fathers. Although the "evangelical heritage of historic Lutheranism" (Thesis One) was respected, such respect was not to give final authority to any man, fathers of the Missouri Synod included, over the "all-sufficiency of Holy Writ" (Thesis Two). Respect for the fathers was one thing, accepting their teachings as final authority was quite another. Nor were resolutions adopted by the synod or points of exegesis hallowed by "ecclesiastical traditions," including Missouri Synod traditions,

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<sup>71</sup>E. J. Friedrich used this argument when pressure was applied to him by Dr. John W. Behnken to refrain from mailing the document.

<sup>72</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 9.

✠ In Nomine Jesu ✠

A STATEMENT

We, the undersigned, as individuals, members of Synod, conscious of our responsibilities and duties before the Lord of the Church, herewith subscribe to the following statement:

ONE

WE affirm our unwavering 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 manmade 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 to 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 conviction, 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 only 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.

✠ Salvi Deo Gloria ✠

In Witness Whereof, we, the undersigned, affix our signatures this seventh day of September in the year of our Lord 1915, at Chicago, Illinois.



ACKER, LAWRENCE	FRIEDRICH, E. J.	KURTH, ERWIN
AMLING, C. M.	GEISEMAN, O. A.	KUMNICK, H. H.
ARNDT, W.	GIESELER, C. A.	LINDEMANN, FRED H.
BARTELS, H.	GLABE, E. B.	LINDEMANN, HERBERT
BAUER, W. E.	GRAEBNER, THEO.	LOOSE, F. W.
BEHNKE, C. A.	HANSER, ARTHUR R.	MEYER, ADOLF F.
BERNTHAL, AUG. F.	HEMMETER, BERNARD H.	MILLER, PAUL F.
BOBZIN, AUG. F.	HEMMETER, H. B.	POLACK, W. G.
BRETSCHER, PAUL	HILLMER, WM. H.	SAUER, O. A.
BRUENING, WM. F.	HOFFMANN, OSWALD	SCHROEDEL, THEO. H.
BRUSTAT, A. W.	KRETZMANN, A. R.	THEISS, O. H.
CAEMMERER, RICHARD R.	KRETZMANN, KARL	WEBER, EDMUND W.
COATES, THOMAS	KRETZMANN, O. P.	WENCHEL, J. FREDERIC
DEFFNER, L. H.	KUECHLE, GEO.	WIND, H. F.
ENGELBRECHT, H. H.	KUNTZ, WERNER	



Exhibit 2.--The back page of the "A Statement" with the signers listed.

to erect "man-made walls and barriers" (Thesis Three) to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Thesis Four cited the loveless and legalistic attitude which had developed in the Missouri Synod due mainly to its great emphasis on reine Lehre, the second chief characteristic of the Missouri Synod Geist. Consequently, the first four theses of the "A Statement" struck at the very Geist of the Missouri Synod, a Geist developed and nourished over a period of almost a century.

Theses five through eleven strike at the spirit of triumphalism in the Missouri Synod. Romans 16:17 (Thesis Five) had been employed, at least since the hostilities produced by the Predestinarian Controversy of the late nineteenth century, to isolate the Missouri Synod from bodies it considered contaminated with false doctrine and so to produce a pure strain destined for conquest and ultimate victory. Thesis Five also gives preference to exegesis over dogmatics, striking again at a necessary ingredient for triumphalism, a definite and fixed doctrinal system.

Thesis Six gives "the central importance" to the "una sancta and the local congregation." It can well be taken as a summary of the complete "A Statement." At the heart of the difficulties and division between the Eastern

and Mid-Western elements in the Missouri Synod lay an exclusive emphasis on two aspects of the una sancta, pureness of doctrine in the visible church and the Spirit-given fellowship of the invisible Church. Organizational loyalty expressed by reverence for the fathers and demand for pure doctrine had evolved into Missouri Synod triumphalism. To overcome the legalism and lovelessness in the Missouri Synod it would be necessary to understand the doctrine of the una sancta in bright new light. The una sancta is composed of all who have a living faith in Christ, not of those who simply grasp with the mind "a set of intellectual propositions" (Thesis Seven). Members of the una sancta, as distinct from the synodical organization, "may pray together to the Triune God in the name of Jesus Christ" (Thesis Eight). "Unionism" is not involved unless there is an "unmistakable denial of Scriptural truth" (Thesis Nine). If the doctrine of the una sancta is properly understood then the "plea of offense" will not become "a cover for the irresponsible expression of prejudices" (Thesis Ten), nor will fellowship with other Lutheran bodies be denied because of the lack of "complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church" (Thesis Eleven).

With Thesis Twelve the "A Statement" calls upon members of the Missouri Synod to accept the document as coming from individuals who are genuinely concerned with and for that synod.

In the sense that the "A Statement" called for a radical change in the Geist of the Missouri Synod it was revolutionary. In the sense that it called for a reduction in the number of required doctrinal standards it was calling for a reformation. In the sense that it called for a new understanding of the una sancta it was diametrically opposed to Missouri Synod triumphalism. Yet the signers of the statement were so close to the scene, and still part of it, that they did not even vaguely envision the furor it would produce in the Missouri Synod.<sup>73</sup> The story of the reaction to the "A Statement" remains for the next chapter. Let us now turn to the events connected with the printing and circularization of the "A Statement."

Of the forty-three men present at the conference all except two allowed their name to be placed at the end of "A Statement" in its final printed form. W. C. Dickmeyer,

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<sup>73</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich, O. P. Kretzmann, Thomas Coates, Bernard Hemmeter, Richard R. Caemmerer, A. R. Kretzmann.

the only layman at the meeting, evidently thought it better if only the clergy signed the document. He was one of the men who financed the meeting. Arthur Brunn's name does not appear on the printed document. He was the only clergyman present who failed to stand with the group.

Brunn, the second vice-president of the Missouri Synod, had added his signature to the document at the conclusion of the conference on September 7. Perhaps when he returned home he heard more of the rumors that labeled the conference a revolutionary gathering the aim of which was to unseat Dr. Behnken. At any rate, several days after the meeting, Brunn sent a telegram to Friedrich informing him that he would allow his name to stand with the other signers if a covering letter was sent along with the "A Statement" explaining the intent of the document. Friedrich informed Brunn that such a covering letter was going to be sent along with the "A Statement." The type had been set for printing the statement but the document had not yet been printed when Friedrich received another telegram from Brunn, who by this time had met with Dr. Behnken and the other vice-presidents, instructing him to withdraw his name from the statement. Friedrich was able to notify

A. R. Kretzmann in time to have Brunn's name removed from the document. Accordingly, Brunn's instructions were carried out.<sup>74</sup>

Since the leaders of the conference considered Brunn to be well ahead of the rest on the question of fellowship with other Lutherans, the most probable explanation for Brunn's action is that he, as a vice-president of the synod, felt duty bound to remain loyal to Dr. Behnken.<sup>75</sup> He must have become convinced that Behnken's concern for the unity of the Missouri Synod was valid.

The names of forty-one men who attended the conference in Chicago appear on the "A Statement." Three other clergymen who were not at the conference signed the statement before it was printed. Henry F. Wind and O. H. Theiss had been invited to the meeting but could not attend because of previous engagements. Both added their signatures after September 7 and before the statement was printed. E. B. Glabe had not been invited to the

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<sup>74</sup>Interview with E. J. Friedrich.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.



conference but was fully behind the group. He, too, signed the document before it was printed.<sup>76</sup>

Forty-two men signed the "A Statement" at the conclusion of the conference. One withdrew his name before it was printed and three added their names. The simple arithmetic indicates that forty-four men allowed their signatures to appear on the statement in final form, "The Statement of the Forty-four." Sometimes the conference held in Chicago is referred to as the meeting of the forty-four. This terminology is incorrect, however, since there were forty-three, not forty-four, in attendance at that meeting.

Just before the close of the conference the following resolutions and suggested procedures for the future were adopted:

1. A vote of thanks be given the laymen who made this meeting possible.
2. Chairman Bernthal and Dr. Friedrich were likewise given a vote of thanks.
3. A continuation committee of 5 men were [sic] approved to arrange the time, the place, and the program for the next meeting. The committee consists of Drs. Friedrich, Kretzman [sic] (O. P.), Geiseman, and Pastors [Bernard H.] Hemmeter and A. R. Kretzman [sic].

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

4. A motion was made and carried that our statement be sent to every pastor in synod immediately containing the signatures of all present at the meeting. (Pastor A. R. Kretzman [sic] to print and distribute same).
5. The continuation committee is to work out all further details and is empowered to act.<sup>77</sup>

Friedrich was elected chairman of the Continuation Committee even though he was the only member of the committee living outside the Chicago area. This probably indicates that the men involved considered Friedrich to be their leader, a man who would stand firm and unflinching against personal attack and official pressure. He did not fail them.

On September 17, 1945, Friedrich addressed a letter to Dr. Behnken, officially informing him of the conference.<sup>78</sup> He indicated that the ten-day delay in writing to report the meeting was necessitated by a delay in his

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<sup>77</sup>"Minutes of the Informal Conference of Missouri Synod Pastors," p. 9.

<sup>78</sup>"Correspondence Between President J. W. Behnken and E. J. Friedrich, Chairman of the Continuation Committee in Regard to the Publication of the Chicago Statement," compiled by E. J. Friedrich, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, October 9, 1945, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Each signer of the "A Statement" received a copy of this eight-page document. In April of 1946 Dr. Behnken incorporated this document in a printed letter sent to members of the Missouri Synod.

receiving a revised copy of the "A Statement." Friedrich gave Behnken a resumé of the meeting, promised him a copy of each of the four papers that had been presented, and also sent a typewritten copy of the "A Statement." He informed Behnken that a "resolution was . . . passed instructing the Continuation Committee to have this Statement printed and to send it to all of . . . the Synod over the signatures of those who were present."<sup>79</sup> Friedrich also informed Behnken that "an explanatory letter" would accompany the "A Statement" in the mailing.<sup>80</sup> However, Behnken was not sent a copy of the explanatory or covering letter in advance.<sup>81</sup>

Friedrich's letter to Behnken was sent special delivery and was placed into Behnken's hands while the Board of Directors of the synod was in session in St. Louis. Behnken opened the letter and read it and the "A Statement" to the board and then added a comment to the effect that the statement was the result of the attacks on Richard R.

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<sup>79</sup>"Correspondence Between Behnken and Friedrich," p. 1.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Letter, John W. Behnken to Dear Brother and Co-Worker, Oak Park, Illinois, April 30, 1946, p. 9. (Printed.) Thomas Coates File.

Caemmerer and others. Behnken handed the statement to Paul W. Schulz, longtime member of the Board of Directors and pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Decatur, Indiana, who, on his own, took the "A Statement" to one of the secretaries employed by the synod and requested her to make a copy of the statement and to make sure that she spelled correctly all the names of the signers.<sup>82</sup> It was evidently through Schulz that the contents of the statement were known to individuals in Indiana and in the Chicago area at least two weeks before the statement was mailed to all the pastors of the Missouri Synod. The rumors concerning the intent of the conference had generated suspicion of the men and the meeting. This suspicion was now reinforced by a number of negative interpretations of the statement itself due partly to its premature availability to certain individuals. This is mentioned here because it helps explain the almost instantaneous initial negative reaction to the "A Statement" from some clergymen in the Missouri Synod, especially from Indiana and northern Illinois.

On September 19, Behnken telephoned Friedrich from St. Louis requesting that the circularization of the "A

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<sup>82</sup>Interview with E. J. Friedrich. The secretary who typed the statement related the event to Friedrich.

Statement" be postponed until he returned from Europe.<sup>83</sup> Friedrich contacted the other members of the Continuation Committee and informed them of Behnken's request. It was their "unanimous opinion . . . that it is impossible to accede to your [Behnken's] request."<sup>84</sup> Friedrich informed Behnken of the committee's decision on September 22. On September 26, Behnken addressed a reply to Friedrich to which Friedrich gave answer on October 1. The committee was determined to circulate the "A Statement." Behnken was determined to prevent its circulation if at all possible. On October 2, the following telegram was received by Friedrich:

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<sup>83</sup>Behnken and Lawrence Meyer of the Missouri Synod together with three representatives of the National Lutheran Council, P. O. Bersell, president of the Augustana Lutheran Church, Ralph Long, executive secretary of the National Lutheran Council, and Franklin Clark Fry, president of the United Lutheran Church, planned to depart early in October, 1945, to establish contact with Lutheran church leaders, especially in Germany, in order to determine what help may be needed to reestablish regular church activity there. Behnken, This I Recall, p. 88.

<sup>84</sup>"Correspondence Between Behnken and Friedrich," p. 3.

IN THE INTEREST OF SYNODS WELFARE ITS PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENTS MEETING IN CHICAGO OCTOBER 2ND PROTEST AGAINST THE SENDING OUT OF A CHICAGO STATEMENT AT THIS TIME AND REQUEST THAT THE ENTIRE SITUATION UNDERLYING THE STATEMENT BE DISCUSSED WITH THEM

J W BEHNKEN CHAIRMAN                      ARTHUR BRUNN    SECY<sup>85</sup>

Within one-half of an hour after receiving the telegram, Friedrich had been in conversation with O. A. Geiseman by telephone. Although all members of the Continuation Committee could not be reached, the decision was made firm again: ". . . we did not have the right to invalidate the resolution passed by the . . . men who were present in Chicago."<sup>86</sup>

It was Friedrich's understanding that the "A Statement" along with the covering letter which he composed would be printed in Chicago and mailed from there.<sup>87</sup> However, on October 8, he received several cartons containing some 5,000 addressed and stamped envelopes in which the covering letter and the "A Statement" had been placed ready for mailing to all the clergymen of the Missouri Synod.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>87</sup>Interview with E. J. Friedrich.

<sup>88</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to Members of the Continuation Committee, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, October 13, 1945. O. P. Kretzmann File.

It was evidently the intention of the other members of the Continuation Committee that the envelopes be postmarked at Wheat Ridge, Colorado, instead of Chicago, with the hopes that even such a small device would help the statement receive a more unbiased reading. The name of Chicago had become associated with the rumors concerning a group of Missouri Synod revolutionaries. In the Missouri Synod the name Wheat Ridge was associated with its sanitarium located there and the healing work it accomplished.<sup>89</sup>

On October 9, Friedrich placed the envelopes containing the covering letter and the "A Statement" into the mail.<sup>90</sup> Little did he, or the other signers, expect the extensive reaction which the mailing would bring. That story follows.

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<sup>89</sup>Wheat Ridge Sanitarium was established for the treatment of those suffering from tuberculosis. E. J. Friedrich served as superintendent and chaplain of the sanitarium from 1940 until 1958. See Lyle L. Schaefer, Faith to Move Mountains: A History of the Colorado District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod from the earliest mission work 1872-1968 (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 121-127.

<sup>90</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to Members of the Continuation Committee, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, October 13, 1945.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SPIRIT OF TRIUMPHALISM IS SHATTERED: THE REACTIONS TO THE "A STATEMENT"

Reaction to the "A Statement" and the accompanying letter set in almost immediately after the mailing reached the clergymen of the Missouri Synod. The intensity of the reaction grew until the 1950 convention of the Missouri Synod. The reaction originated from various sources within the Missouri Synod, from individuals, from pastoral conferences, from district and synodical officials, from synodical institutions, and from the synodical convention. We turn our attention first to the early reaction from individuals.

The accompanying letter for the "A Statement" contained the information that the signers did not consider the "A Statement" the last word on the issues raised:

Naturally, we do not regard this Statement as a finished product or as the last word on the subjects under discussion. . . . In view of this, we urgently request you, dear Brother, to study this Statement



carefully and objectively and to evaluate it by the criterion of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Correspondence was to be addressed to the chairman of the Continuation Committee, E. J. Friedrich, Wheat Ridge, Colorado.<sup>2</sup> A mimeographed letter to the signers of the "A Statement" appears to be the first communication received, a communication expressing a favorable reaction to the contents of the "A Statement."

Received my copy of the Statement and its accompanying letter today. Bless the hearts of you men, not only for putting up the Statement, but for mailing it out at this time despite the Praesidium's objection. Synod certainly needs such "straight talk" after years of pussyfooting. . . .<sup>3</sup>

In this first letter, J. H. Gockel pinpointed a basic prerequisite for the Missouri Synod if it would settle its differences concerning the doctrine and practice of church fellowship. Later events prove him to have been a prophet.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter, The Committee to Dear Friend and Brother, September 20, 1945, p. 2. (Mimeographed.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Letter, J. H. Gockel to Brother Friedrich (COPY-- to the signers of the Statement of September 6-7, 1945.), October 10, 1945, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File.

. . . We cannot hope to establish doctrinal unity either in our own midst or between us and other bodies until we agree on what may be given doctrinal status. We must first reestablish the basic principle of 'Sola Scriptura.' [sic] What do we mean by Scripture as the sole source and norm of doctrine?<sup>4</sup>

In good Missouri Synod fashion, Gockel also includes several quotations from early Missouri Synod conventions and some words from a Missouri Synod father.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest negative reaction was aimed mainly at the accompanying letter. In general the accompanying letter was attacked more vigorously than the "A Statement." Under the date October 12, 1945, A. T. Kretzmann set down his objections in a mimeographed letter which he sent to all signers of the "A Statement." At the top of the letter sent to Friedrich, handwritten in ink, were the following words:

Dear Brother: Since all signers of "A Statement" have also agreed to the contents of the letter sent out by the committee in the name of the entire group, this copy of my letter is being sent to you also. May your Christian love for the soul's welfare of these men whose alleged Christ-less spirit you condemn also move

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

you to do what Paul did Gal. 2,14 [sic] and thus remove this offense against Christian love.<sup>6</sup>

Although Kretzmann wrote a two-paged, single-spaced letter he could have concluded it after the first paragraph.

There he articulates the argument that became a standard for those in the Missouri Synod who were offended by the "A Statement" and especially by the accompanying letter.

Received your communication and statement yesterday. I read the letter first, and was distinctly shocked to find that you and forty other brethren in Synod could have been so unbrotherly as to claim that "in more than one area of our beloved Synod" there is being manifested "a pernicious spirit utterly at variance with the fundamental concepts of the Gospel," a spirit which, as you say originates "in tragic misconception of the very essence of the Gospel," and yet in a loveless and unbrotherly manner have failed to reveal the identity of the men who supposedly have shown this anti-Christian spirit and have failed to give proof so that these men might defend themselves. To my knowledge there has never been a time in the history of our Synod when men of such high standing in Synod have so utterly disregarded the law of Christian love in dealing with offenses allegedly committed by brethren in the faith.<sup>7</sup>

A. T. Kretzmann's response to the accompanying letter is an indication that the Missouri Synod's spirit

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<sup>6</sup>Letter, A. T. Kretzmann to Pres. E. J. Friedrich, D.D., October 12, 1945, Crete, Illinois, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

of triumphalism had spawned a legalistic procedure in the life of the church. If one was going to speak of a pernicious spirit or trends in certain areas of the church then one was required to name names and produce proof as in a court of law. The Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod had become hardened against self-examination and simply could not examine a trend in its midst without making of it a belabored effort at a judicial process. This appears to be a defense mechanism. If one reads between the lines of the negative replies to the statement and letter, one senses that, more often than not, the man writing the reply believes the charges of legalism and lovelessness to be leveled at him personally. This could reflect a bad conscience among the Mid-Western element. Yet the negative critics excused any harshness and legalism with an appeal to the love of the Scriptures and the love of truth over and above all things. For example, M. F. Kretzmann, longtime secretary of the Missouri Synod and pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Kendallville, Indiana, wrote:

. . . I should like to make my position clear. I should consider it a denial of the truth and a lack of love toward you and the other signers of this

statement if I did not make clear my position in this matter. This means more to me than anything else in the world.<sup>8</sup>

Some Missouri Synod clergymen went so far as to interpret the statement and the letter as an indication that the signers had fallen from the true faith.

I plead with you to repent, to withdraw from your unscriptural position, and to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. True, we may not attract into our communion all who still bear the name Lutheran, we may miss opportunities for doing "big" things, but we shall have the approval of our Lord and Head.<sup>9</sup>

At the least, those of the Mid-Western spirit expected that the signers of the "A Statement" should be disciplined for their unfaithfulness to time-honored Missouri Synod positions as they understood them. Because the educational institutions of the Missouri Synod, especially the seminary at St. Louis, played a key role in perpetuating the spirit of triumphalism in the Missouri Synod, those professors who had signed the statement

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<sup>8</sup>Letter, M. F. Kretzmann to Dr. E. J. Friedrich, October 15, 1945, Kendallville, Indiana, p. 2. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 48.

<sup>9</sup>Letter, Martin W. Strasen to the 44 Signers of "A Statement," November 2, 1945, Milwaukee 4, Wisconsin, pp. 3-4. (Ditto Copy.) Thomas Coates File, number 43.

became special targets for those clamoring for discipline to be exercised by the president of the synod. Ernest T. Lams, D.D., president of the Northern Illinois District of the Missouri Synod, wrote to Theodore Graebner on October 11, 1945:

This morning I received a copy of "A Statement" which you also signed. The statement obviously drives a wedge between the orthodox and the Liberals in our Synod. I am unutterably shocked and I deplore more than words can express that you have allied yourself with the Liberals. This horrible statement has been spread before the entire Synod and the signers must now take the inevitable consequences. Where is evangelical procedure? Where is the royal law of love? Where is the "love of God, love of the Word, love of the brethren, love of souls"? [sic] The signers have de facto [sic] severed their fellowship with Synod. You may soon expect a almighty reaction in Synod. What a tragic manifesto!<sup>10</sup>

The Northern Illinois District, which included the Chicago area, proved to be the area of most violent reaction in the Missouri Synod. With the district president strongly opposed to the "A Statement," and with the pre-meeting rumors running high in the Chicago area, the prospect for intense reaction was great. On the eleventh day after the "A Statement" and the accompanying letter

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<sup>10</sup>Letter, Ernest T. Lams, D.D., to Theodore Graebner, October 11, 1945, Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 118.

had been placed into the mail the Central Regional Conference of the Northern Illinois District,<sup>11</sup> on October 20, directed letters to the professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who had signed the statement, demanding that they resign. The letters contained the resolution adopted by the conference. The applicable portion of the resolution states:

WHEREAS, the said "Statement" is at variance with, and subversive of the Scriptural position of our Synod; and

WHEREAS, the said individuals have by such action caused us to lose confidence in them as men who meet the Scriptural requirements of a teacher in the church, . . . ; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That we hereby demand that Drs. Arndt, Bretscher, Caemmerer, Graebner, and Polack resign from the faculty of Concordia Seminary; and be it furthermore

RESOLVED, That in the event the aforementioned professors refuse to resign we hereby call upon the responsible officials of Synod to remove them forthwith from office.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>The central Regional Conference was composed of Missouri Synod clergymen of Chicago and its immediate suburbs. Such conferences usually convened several times a year for study, worship, and fellowship. At one time the conferences served as an important means for perpetuating the Missouri Synod Geist and the spirit of triumphalism. In this case the conference became an agent for disruption and polarization.

<sup>12</sup>A copy of the resolution is found in the Thomas Coates File, number 32.

Theodore Graebner responded to the demand for his resignation as follows:

It was unnecessary. I have never in writing or in personal contacts shown a disposition which called for public humiliation. On the contrary, I have in public and in private admitted not only fallibility in general but also faults in particular. . . . It was altogether unnecessary to place upon me such a dishonor as a demand for my resignation in my sixty-ninth year.<sup>13</sup>

The Missouri Synod clergymen of the Mid-Western spirit in the Chicago area reacted in another way also. Since Graebner was an editor of The Lutheran Witness and W. G. Polack and Richard R. Caemmerer were associate editors, and since the three men were signers of the "A Statement," an effort was made to ban The Lutheran Witness from the Northern Illinois District.

I was in Chicago last week and consulted with Rev. Piehler about the situation in Northern Illinois. It is affecting our subscription list and there is a move to ban the Lutheran Witness [sic] from the District so far as conferences are able to do it. A state of pure fanaticism, . . . has certainly taken hold of the clergy. The Chicago Statement has brought on an outburst which will culminate in a pastoral conference

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<sup>13</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Dear friends [sic] of the Central Regional Conference, Northern Illinois District, November 1, 1945, St. Louis, Missouri. (Mimeographed.) Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 118.



meeting next Wednesday. Northern Illinois is almost the only spot on the map showing this reaction, another exception being a small conference in Iowa.<sup>14</sup>

Graebner's admission that the subscription list of The Lutheran Witness had been affected by the opposition of the Mid-Western element demonstrates the effect that element's appeal to the Missouri Synod Geist and the spirit of triumphalism still carried at least in the Northern Illinois District. The reaction from Iowa referred to by Graebner was from the Southern Pastoral Conference, Iowa District East. Clinton, Iowa was within the bounds of the Southern Pastoral Conference. It was also the residence of the editor of the Confessional Lutheran. His influence in the conference was great. On October 17 that conference adopted a resolution condemning the "A Statement," and especially the part which William Arndt and Theodore Graebner had in its adoption and dissemination. It directed the following to the "venerable President of Synod and to the signatories of 'A Statement'":

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<sup>14</sup>Letter, Theodore Graebner to Mr. [O. A.] Dorn [General Manager of Concordia Publishing House], November 5, 1945. Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 114.

We respectfully request that our venerable President lose no time in acting upon these matters, which present a most formidable threat to our Synod and we petition that our venerable President immediately submit these issues to the College of Presidents [the synodical president and vice-presidents together with the district presidents] for counsel and prompt action.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, Behnken's action would have to await his return from Europe. This request, along with others, gave him justification for immediate action upon his return.

The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Local Pastoral Conference also condemned the "A Statement" and the men who signed it. They directed their resolution to the "Signatories of the Chicago 'Statement' Dated September 7, 1945" and sent copies to the "Praesidium of Synod." In part the resolution stated:

Your letter of September 20 last, and the Statement is in our hands. In two special meetings, we have prayerfully studied and restudied the text of your letter and of the Statement. We find neither your letter nor your Statement in agreement with the Word of God. . . .

. . . . .  
 We want you to know that we send you these lines in Christian, brotherly love.

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<sup>15</sup>"Resolution Regarding 'A Statement' Adopted by Southern Pastoral Conference, Iowa District East, in Session at Williamsburg, Iowa, October 17, 1945."  
 (Printed.) Thomas Coates File, number 39.

It is our hope and prayer that the Holy Spirit may lead you to know and to acknowledge your error and to remove the offense which you have given, by retracting your unproven accusations and submitting to the clear command and authority of God's holy Word; and that you so inform all those brethren to whom you have sent your letter and Statement.<sup>16</sup>

More important than the negative reaction by individual clergymen and pastoral conferences was the condemnation of the "A Statement" and the accompanying letter by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. The seminary in Springfield was one of two seminaries owned and operated by the Missouri Synod. Over the years it had acquired the designation of practical seminary as distinct from the theoretical seminary in St. Louis. Although there were probably some disagreements between the two faculties before the "A Statement" appeared, they must have been minor in comparison with the strained relations between the two seminaries which developed in the wake of the controversy over the statement. From this point forward the Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod would, in general, make the distinction between the "liberal"

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<sup>16</sup>Letter, Pittsburgh Local Pastoral Conference to Signatories of the Chicago "Statement" Dated September 7, 1945, December 4, 1945. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 38.

seminary and the "conservative" seminary instead of between theoretical and practical.<sup>17</sup> Springfield faculty members became open in their criticism of the so-called liberals of the St. Louis faculty.

Since the accompanying letter invited response, the Springfield faculty directed a letter to E. J. Friedrich, stating, however, that the statement and letter "would probably have received plenty of comment even without the invitation."<sup>18</sup> They took exception to the accompanying letter because it condemned certain "unnamed opponents in Synod who are supposed to be unloyal to that somewhat vague heritage [historic Lutheranism]."<sup>19</sup> They also complained that the statement and letter accused "many in Synod of false doctrine and practice in the matter of church and prayer fellowship, although these

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<sup>17</sup>This distinction was generally made by many of the clergy of the Missouri Synod although it did not find its way into print in any official statement. The Springfield faculty and students held to the liberal-conservative distinction as late as 1958. The writer knows this to be true from firsthand experience having graduated from the Springfield seminary in 1958.

<sup>18</sup>Letter, F. [S.] Wenger, Secretary for the faculty, to E. J. Friedrich, D.D., October 26, 1945, p. 1. (Carbon Copy.) Thomas Coates File, number 33.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

brethren adhere to the Scriptural teaching and practice of Synod in this matter."<sup>20</sup> They voiced their disagreement with the various theses of the "A Statement" as follows:

Under point six you do definitely approve of selective fellowship which ignores the brethren in your own Synod. Furthermore you do say plainly that you stand up for prayer fellowship in spite of doctrinal disagreement. Moreover, one of the chief texts which forbid all unionism, including prayer fellowship, with heterodox teachers (not all heterodox Christians), Rom. 16, 17.18 [sic], you presume to eliminate as applicable to all heterodox teachers. You have also spoken quite plainly in point eleven, a point to which we very emphatically say damnamus. We cannot understand how Missouri-Lutheran theologians can lend a hand in getting rid of Scripture proof that is a sedes [sic], countenancing selective fellowship, agreeing to fellowship before "there is agreement among them (the A.L.C. and us) in doctrine and all its articles," and opening the door to genuine unionism. Under point nine "every contact" is of course an overstatement, just like "all Christians" under point five.<sup>21</sup>

The Springfield faculty considered Romans 16:17-18 a sedes doctrina for church fellowship and prayer fellowship. This reveals a negative approach to the doctrine of fellowship in that the passage was used to limit

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

fellowship by the same men. The narrow limitations established by the accepted Missouri Synod exegesis of Romans 16:17-18 was receiving an exclusive emphasis to the denigration of the Biblical teaching of the una sancta. The Springfield faculty believed that a grave and unbearable situation would arise if the doctrine of the una sancta found practical expression in selective fellowship. The Springfield faculty and others were correct in interpreting Thesis Six of the "A Statement" as leading logically to selective fellowship although the signers of the statement repeatedly disavowed this. In so doing the signers were attempting to escape some very difficult practical complications. Yet, as has been demonstrated above, selective fellowship was indeed discussed at the conference in Chicago and should have been one of the valid expressions and intentions of the forty-four.

Although mentioning others, the final paragraph of the Springfield faculty's letter was directed mainly against the signers of the "A Statement" from the St. Louis faculty.

It has been a real shock to us that such a loveless, unmotivated, and widely-disseminated attack should be made on brethren in Synod by men in prominent positions, presidents of districts, leaders of

youth, or of the L.L.L., a university president, and, worst of all, five members of a theological faculty in our Synod. Such an attack cannot but bias many young and inexperienced pastors to whom it has been mailed and abet the spirit of impatience among our laity because the desired peace between synods calling themselves Lutheran cannot be established by simple contract, or by compromise, like a secular business transaction. The "Statement" leaves the impression that it is veiled propaganda for a liberal and loose Lutheranism. What a pity that leaders in our church are strengthening the laity and the young in our Synod in this trend instead of restraining them from following the ruinous inclination of their old Adam! Why dampen the fervor of those who are conscientious in examining the spirits whether they be of God, when we all know that our old man is only too prone to shirk the God-given duty to fight for the truth and too willing to make peace at all costs? You are pouring water on the wrong fire. We are certainly not with you in this unhappy undertaking, brethren.<sup>22</sup>

The concern of the Springfield faculty that the "A Statement" would "bias many young and inexperienced pastors" and laymen in the desire for "peace between synods calling themselves Lutheran" was the natural expression of an unarticulated fear that the Missouri Synod was in danger of losing its spirit of triumphalism. That is the "fire" in danger of being extinguished. The statement left with them the impression that it was "veiled propaganda for a liberal and loose Lutheranism" because

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

it ran counter to the chief characteristics of the Missouri Synod Geist, extreme respect for the fathers and a decided stress on reine Lehre. Whether one agrees with the reaction of the Springfield faculty or not, it was most certainly the logical, almost classical, reaction of the Mid-Western element in keeping with its historical development in the context of the Missouri Synod.

Dr. Behnken returned to the United States from his trip to Europe "a few days after Thanksgiving" in 1945.<sup>23</sup> The Continuation Committee through its chairman, E. J. Friedrich, contacted him soon after his return and requested a meeting with him.<sup>24</sup> The meeting was held in Chicago on December 10, 1945.<sup>25</sup> The first vice-president of the Missouri Synod, Herman Harms, was also in attendance.<sup>26</sup> The Continuation Committee considered this

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<sup>23</sup>Behnken, This I Recall, p. 106.

<sup>24</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to All Who Wrote to the Undersigned Regarding the Chicago Statement, February 8, 1946. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.



meeting to be "very satisfactory,"<sup>27</sup> but because the discussions did not cover the complete "A Statement," Dr. Behnken requested another meeting to be held on January 11, 1946.<sup>28</sup> At the meeting, little time was devoted to the discussion of the "A Statement." Dr. Behnken was more concerned with the possibility of an actual division in the Missouri Synod. Friedrich reported:

Dr. Behnken shifted the emphasis to the question, "What can be done at the present time to prevent a split in Synod?" Our impression is that his attitude was the result of correspondence coming to him almost exclusively from "the other side."<sup>29</sup>

However, the meeting produced an agreement between Dr. Behnken and the Continuation Committee to arrange a more inclusive gathering to include the praesidium, the district presidents of the Missouri Synod and the signers of the "A Statement." It was agreed that such a larger meeting would "not . . . be in the form of a judicial procedure

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<sup>27</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to All Signers of the Chicago Statement, January 5, 1946, p. 2. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 10.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of the Chicago Statement, January 23, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 11.

against the signers . . . , but for the purpose of providing an opportunity for a frank and brotherly discussion . . . ."<sup>30</sup> It was the hope of the Continuation Committee that the issues raised by the "A Statement" could be discussed freely and frankly at the larger meeting. The College of Presidents approved the calling of a special meeting for February 14 and 15 to ventilate the whole problem and resolved that "the expenses of every person attending . . . be paid by Synod."<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Behnken's report of the meetings of December and January to the clergy of the Missouri Synod makes him appear in a glorious light as defender of the Missouri Synod faith.

As soon as I had returned from Europe, Dr. E. J. Friedrich wired me requesting that I meet with the Continuation Committee. Vice-President Harms and I had an all-day meeting with these brethren on December 10. At this meeting we voiced our disagreement with some of the points in A Statement as well as with the accompanying letter and insisted that these be corrected or withdrawn. As to the deplorations the brethren assured us again and again that no individual nor any specific group was meant, but that

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<sup>30</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to All Who Wrote to the Undersigned Regarding the Chicago Statement, February 8, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>31</sup>Letter, Friedrich to Signers, January 23, 1946, p. 1.

they referred merely to trends. We insisted that trends certainly do not exist unless they can be based either on words or actions of individuals or groups. No conclusions were reached. Another meeting was arranged for January 11. At this meeting, attended also by Vice-Presidents Harms and Grueber, we emphasized that things cannot continue as at present, that the situation which has resulted from the sending of A Statement is alarming, and that something must be done to remove the confusion and disturbance in order to retain true unity in Synod. We made a number of proposals. After some discussion of these proposals the group agreed that I call a meeting of the Praesidium, the District Presidents, and the signers of A Statement.<sup>32</sup>

But the Continuation Committee stood firmly by the "A Statement." It appears that at this juncture Behnken's displeasure over the "A Statement" was beginning to give way to desperation. With the centennial convention of the Missouri Synod about a year and a half away he could evidently picture himself presiding over the disruption of a once proud and triumphalistic church body. This desperation of Behnken's did more than anything else to achieve a hearing for the "A Statement" in the Missouri Synod.

At the January 11 meeting the discussions led to a "gentleman's agreement" that all "propaganda for or against the Statement" be discouraged "in anticipation

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<sup>32</sup>Letter, John W. Behnken to Dear Brother and Co-Worker, April 30, 1946, Oak Park, Illinois, pp. 9-10. (Printed.) Thomas Coates File, number 23.

of the proposed meeting" set for February 14 and 15 in St. Louis.<sup>33</sup> This agreement appears to have been observed by both the officials of the Missouri Synod and the signers of the "A Statement." Friedrich advised the signers that the Continuation Committee planned to "set up a letter to our correspondents answering all criticisms and objections to the Statement."<sup>34</sup> But in keeping with the agreement those plans were dropped. In the interim, however, letters in response to the "A Statement" and the accompanying letter, both positive and negative, continued to be received by Behnken and Friedrich.

The Continuation Committee selected and assigned men from the forty-four signers to prepare brief papers "to clarify and defend" the theses of the "A Statement."<sup>35</sup> The papers would be presented at the meeting on February 14 and 15. The committee also considered it essential that the signers all be present for a meeting to be held immediately prior to the full meeting with

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<sup>33</sup>Letter, Friedrich to Signers, January 23, 1946,  
p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Letter, Friedrich to Signers, January 5, 1946,  
p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>Letter, Friedrich to Signers, January 23, 1946,  
p. 2.

the College of Presidents in order "to discuss from their own angle the problems on the agenda for the following two days."<sup>36</sup> Friedrich notified the signers that such a meeting would be held on February 13, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the Claridge Hotel in St. Louis. The signers would have to pay the expenses for hotel quarters and meals on the thirteenth. Friedrich suggested that the men "get several . . . laymen to lend a helping hand" with the expenses.<sup>37</sup>

At the meeting of the signers on February 13, Friedrich made the following introductory remarks:

I am happy because the Lord has blessed our statement. We wanted discussion. We got it. Perhaps no document has received more attention in the recent history of the Lutheran Church in America. In general, the reaction is satisfactory. There is some bitter criticism of course but in the interest of the statement [sic]. The more our "opponents" write the more we are justified. . . . Hundreds of pastors who say nothing now are really on our side. The outlook is encouraging. Tomorrow's meeting is vitally important but we must be optimistic. Perhaps the future of the church is

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to All Signers of the Chicago Statement, January 31, 1946. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 13.

to be determined by the outcome. We are interested not in gaining our points but that the truth win.<sup>38</sup>

The papers to be presented to the College of Presidents were then read and thoroughly discussed. One paper was revised by direction of the group.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the papers to be presented, the signers decided to stress the following propositions consistently:

1. Constant emphasis upon the full meaning of Sola Scriptura.

2. Differences in exegetical interpretation which are not contrary to the analogy of faith are not divisive of church fellowship.

3. Disagreement in judgment regarding the existence or non-existence of a certain trend or tendency within the church is not divisive of church fellowship.

4. To point out what is felt to be a wrong or dangerous tendency in the church is not a personal accusation and can not be regarded as a violation of the Eighth Commandment.

5. Constant emphasis upon the universal priesthood, upon the right of private judgment, and upon the clarity of Scripture by drawing more upon the members of the church and avoiding the suspicion of a growing clericalism.

6. Insistence upon the necessity of guarding always against lovelessness as a natural tendency of the human heart and of sinful pride, and insistence upon the vital importance of love in the

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<sup>38</sup>"Meetings of the 44 Signers Held at St. Louis, February 13-15, 1946," p. 1. (Mimeographed minutes by A. W. Brustat, Secretary.)

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.

relations among the brethren in the ministry for the maintenance of the fellowship of the church.

7. The necessity of maintaining the moral principle of self-criticism also in the work and organization of the church.

8. Consistent reference to the original objectives in issuing the Chicago STATEMENT--

- a. To submit the propositions of the Chicago STATEMENT to the clergy of our church for study and discussion.
- b. Not to request or to seek any resolutions of Synod on any of the propositions submitted.<sup>40</sup>

The signers were well prepared for the type of meeting they expected on February 14 and 15. They were prepared to amplify their statement and to stress the underlying propositions. But as sometimes happens, the meeting did not go as expected.

Dr. Behnken opened the meeting of the praesidium, the district presidents, and the signers of the statement on February 14 at 10:00 a.m. by reading Ephesians 4:1-6 and by offering a prayer asking "God's blessing upon our Church and this meeting."<sup>41</sup> He then outlined the procedure for the meeting after which the ten essays

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>"Meeting of the Praesidium, the District Presidents, and the Signers of the Statement, February 14-15, 1946 in Holy Cross Hall, St. Louis, Missouri," p. 1. (Mimeographed minutes of the meeting, Otto Hoyer, Secretary and A. W. Brustat, Assistant Secretary.)

amplifying and clarifying the "A Statement" were read.<sup>42</sup> The morning and afternoon sessions of the meeting were taken up by the reading of the essays with very little discussion recorded in the minutes of the meeting. However, the evening session of the meeting was quite another story.

The praesidium met briefly between the afternoon and evening sessions. Just what transpired at that meeting is not recorded but it would appear from the conduct of members of the praesidium at the evening session they had determined to discredit the signers before the district presidents. Instead of seeking clarification they became judgmental. The signers responded to the tactic with increasing irritation and intemperate remarks. They made the mistake of moving away from their well established

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<sup>42</sup>Although there were twelve theses in the "A Statement" only ten essays were in final form to be read at the meeting. The Second Thesis was discussed by Frederic J. Wenchel and later put into written form. The Twelfth Thesis was discussed by E. J. Friedrich and also later his remarks were set down in a short essay. The essays read at the meeting together with the thesis covered are as follows: I, Theodore Graebner; III, Karl Kretzmann; IV, Paul Bretscher; V, Oswald Hoffmann; VI, Theodore H. Schroedel; VII, Herman Bartels; VIII, August F. Bernthal; IX, W. G. Polack, X, George Kuechle; XI, F. W. Loose. Ibid., p. 2. These essays were later gathered into book form.



plan of action. The meeting became bellicose. Some of the belligerent exchanges went as follows.

Theodore Graebner complained, "We are being degraded by submission to a legal Synodical system."<sup>43</sup>

F. A. Hertwig, third vice-president of the Missouri Synod, responded: "Don't have a persecution complex."<sup>44</sup>

Graebner countered:

This is strange music. I've stood for more from Missouri Synod legalism than I have from the masons [sic], the Romanists and the Christian Scientists whom I have vigorously opposed. We want to change things--we don't want this legalism to prevail.<sup>45</sup>

A motion to limit each speaker to three minutes failed.<sup>46</sup> Dr. Behnken proposed adjournment. His proposal failed.<sup>47</sup> The heated exchanges continued.

F. W. Loose contended:

There are two trends here. Which are we following tonight? a) only information to clarify, or b) is the purpose some judicial procedure as to whether the Statement should have been made or not? I will not stand for the second possibility. We are here to clarify what we have said.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

August F. Bernthal agreed with Loose and added: "What is the purpose and spirit of this meeting? Let's agree on it."<sup>49</sup>

Hertwig evidently wanted to continue the judgmental line of questioning. He made another accusing remark: "You have put Synod's machinery in reverse. Why doesn't thesis No. 2 run true to thesis No. 1?"<sup>50</sup>

Graebner immediately took up the argument:

Has any group the right to express its dissatisfaction without the consent of the Synodical president? Yes, they do have that right or else we follow a legalistic procedure or we have popery full blown!<sup>51</sup>

The evening session was finally adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Dr. Friedrich announced a special meeting of the signers immediately after adjournment.<sup>52</sup>

At the special meeting of the signers the results of the day's proceedings were assayed. Friedrich offered his assessment of the larger meeting and urged moderation:

Our discussions have frankly not been very fruitful. Let us not argue with one another regarding definitions. Avoid it. Do not get heated in the

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

discussions. Let us follow the principle laid down in the statement.<sup>53</sup>

O. P. Kretzmann was concerned about the impression to be left with the district presidents.

Our problem is to weld our group into what we want to do. Tonight we found that the opposition lies almost wholly in the Praesidium. There were negative backgrounds behind all of their questions. . . . Remember that we want the District Presidents to fairly represent us in the field.<sup>54</sup>

A. R. Kretzmann believed the praesidium had two objectives in mind: "1. To discredit the Continuation Committee 2. To display the fact that we are not agreed."<sup>55</sup>

The signers decided to have Friedrich present several resolutions at the beginning of the sessions on February 15, and to avoid becoming bogged down in heated exchanges with the praesidium.<sup>56</sup> The Continuation Committee formulated the resolutions which were adopted by

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<sup>53</sup>"Meetings of the 44 Signers Held at St. Louis, February 13-15, 1946," p. 13.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

the signers at a special brief meeting of their group at 9:00 a.m. on February 15.<sup>57</sup>

After the opening devotions by Vice-President Grueber, Friedrich secured the floor on a question of privilege and made the following statement:

Up to last night we have not been making much progress because we have felt that there are here two factions or groups contending against each other, each wanting to win the battle. But that is not it. Only one thing counts--Truth and Love. We must make an effort to understand each other. The signers are working in the interests of Synod and the Praesidium. There is nothing in the Statement directed against the Praesidium. All are brethren in Synod though they may disagree. President Behnken has spoken of a rift or a schism in Synod, but we cannot see that. Maybe there is a rift or schism pending but we want to assist in preventing such a calamity. We want to live up to the Statement and deal as we do in our congregations when controversies arise. We suggest the following resolution:

1. Be it resolved that in order to prepare Synod for its centennial and the tremendous opportunities of the post-war world, we urge our pastors and congregations to re-study the following problems:
  - a. Sola Scriptura [sic] and legalism
  - b. Unionism and separatism
  - c. Questions involving the law of love
  - d. Romans 16 verses 17 and 18
  - e. Prayer Fellowship
  - f. What is divisive of fellowship
2. That the President of Synod appoint ten men to represent opinions differing or contrary from the theses of the Statement. The signers shall also appoint ten men to meet with the ten appointed by the

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

President. This group to report their finding to the President of Synod.

3. That the essays read at this conference be sent to the Praesidium and the College of Presidents. By gentlemen's agreement we agree not to send this material out generally until one month has elapsed after Synod's officials have received them.<sup>58</sup>

Although some parliamentary maneuvering followed, the resolutions presented by Friedrich were adopted with only minor changes in the wording.<sup>59</sup> Dr. Behnken was requested to encourage the members of the Missouri Synod to study the topics listed in point one. The signers would be responsible for supplying copies of the essays to the praesidium and to the district presidents, including the five presidents who could not be present for the meeting.<sup>60</sup>

Before the meeting was concluded on February 15, the praesidium fired one parting shot at the signers. Vice-President Grueber asked what should be done about the large number of official and unofficial protests and communications Dr. Behnken had received from members of the Missouri Synod. He then read the list of those protesting

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<sup>58</sup>"Meeting of the Praesidium, the District Presidents, and the Signers of the Statement," pp. 4-5.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

against the "A Statement."<sup>61</sup> This was done evidently to impress the district presidents with the extent of the negative reaction to the statement.

F. W. Loose responded to Grueber's presentation of the list of protesters by saying:

We could present hundreds of communications of commendation regarding the Statement. If I had known that a list like Dr. Grueber's would be presented, I would have prepared one too.<sup>62</sup>

The signers responded to Grueber's maneuver by making an effort to secure other signatures for their "A Statement." A postcard was prepared and distributed which gave Missouri Synod members the opportunity to add their name in agreement with the following:

In the sincere conviction that the theses of the "Statement" issued in Chicago in September 1945 speak the truth in love and uphold the true Scriptural view of the Church and its mission in the world, I request that my name be added to the list of signers.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Postcard in possession of the writer. The cards were probably printed in Chicago under the direction of A. R. Kretzmann.

Subsequently 214 clergymen of the Missouri Synod subscribed formally to the "A Statement."<sup>64</sup> This number together with the original signers comprised approximately six percent of the total number of ordained ministers in the Missouri Synod.<sup>65</sup> However, the number of clergymen influenced toward the position of the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod by the "A Statement" was much larger. All of those who responded favorably by letter or word of mouth would at least have tripled the six percent figure.<sup>66</sup> Some men who attempted to remain neutral in the controversy over the "A Statement" were moved to allying themselves with the signers when they observed how harsh and loveless some of the Mid-Western element became in their attacks on the signers.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Document, Concordia Historical Institute, number PJW 711.

<sup>65</sup>Statistical Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States for the Year 1945 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), p. 184.

<sup>66</sup>Statistical proof for this statement is unavailable. In this the writer accepts the estimate of E. J. Friedrich given in a private interview.

<sup>67</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich, O. P. Kretzmann, and Thomas Coates.

The resolutions suggested by the signers and adopted at the meeting of the praesidium, district presidents, and signers were implemented. The signers had agreed to supply copies of the essays to the praesidium and the district presidents. A. R. Kretzmann and A. W. Brustat were given the responsibility for mimeographing and then printing the essays. Later, A. R. Kretzmann assumed full responsibility for this project.<sup>68</sup> The mimeographed copies were to be sent to the praesidium and the district presidents, followed, after at least a month, by a general distribution of the printed copies to members of the Missouri Synod.<sup>69</sup> A. R. Kretzmann gathered the essays and had enough copies mimeographed to supply the needs of the praesidium and the district presidents.<sup>70</sup> Before proceeding with the printing of the essays he requested direction from the Continuation Committee. The committee resolved to have the essays "printed in book form, after careful editing, at an

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>70</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of the Chicago Statement, April 26, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 22.



approximate cost of \$1095 for 5000, and to sell them at \$1.00 postage prepaid."<sup>71</sup> Besides the essays the book was to contain "a copy of 'A Statement' with the signatures of the original signers; a verbatim copy of the Witness [sic, The Lutheran Witness] report on the meeting of the District Presidents; also, a prefatory statement giving the historical background."<sup>72</sup> O. P. Kretzmann and O. H. Theiss were appointed to serve as the editorial committee.<sup>73</sup>

The title chosen for the book of essays was Speaking the Truth in Love: Essays related to A Statement, Chicago Nineteen forty-five. The publisher is listed as "The Willow Press, 1632 North Halsted Street, Chicago 14, Illinois." However there was no "Willow Press." The name was adopted solely for the publication of the book. The book was printed by the Columbia Printing Company of the Chicago address. A. R. Kretzmann invented the name,

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<sup>71</sup>"Minutes of the Meeting of the Continuation Committee, March 30, 1946." (Carbon Copy.) Thomas Coates File, number 19.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. The report from The Lutheran Witness does not appear in the book. It was evidently the decision of the editorial committee to omit it in favor of including Schwan's "Propositions on Unevangelical Practice."

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

"Willow Press," to shield the printing company from any adverse reaction. He at first chose the name Halsted Press for the name of the street address of the printers but then discovered that there was already a Halsted Press in Chicago. The name of the street one block from the printers was Willow Street, so he chose that for the name.<sup>74</sup> Theodore Graebner remarked to A. R. Kretzmann that it was a good name because the willow was used to make switches for tanning young boys to straighten them out.<sup>75</sup>

The publication of Speaking the Truth in Love was delayed because of a strike in Chicago and because one chapter required portions to be typeset in Greek. It was finally made available to members of the Missouri Synod in the early part of April, 1946. Theodore Graebner made note of the availability of the book in The Lutheran Witness under the section "New Publications." After noting that it could be ordered from the publisher for one dollar, he wrote:

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<sup>74</sup>Interview with A. R. Kretzmann.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

This volume contains 12 essays submitted on behalf of the 44 signers of the Chicago Statement to a meeting of Missouri Synod District Presidents at Saint Louis, Feb. 14. These essays contain the authentic interpretation of the theses which make up the Statement. In contents they are partly historical, partly exegetical, while all partake more or less of the nature of an admonition.<sup>76</sup>

Dr. Behnken complained to E. J. Friedrich about the notice appearing in The Lutheran Witness:

I am very much disappointed that this was done. I remember that we had the gentleman's agreement that thirty days after the mimeographed copies had been mailed to all who were present at the St. Louis meeting that they might be mailed to such as request it. However, there was to be no propaganda made. Now one of our Synodical periodicals, the Lutheran Witness [sic], brings such a notice. It simply is not ethical nor fair. I am taking for granted that this was done without knowledge and consent of the Continuation Committee.<sup>77</sup>

The appearance of the notice in The Lutheran Witness together with Behnken's reaction indicated that Theodore Graebner and the other signers on the editorial staff had control of that synodical publication. It is true that Graebner was publicizing and offering for sale a book to which he had contributed an essay. He used a synodical

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<sup>76</sup>The Lutheran Witness, LXV (April 23, 1946), 149.

<sup>77</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Continuation Committee, May 2, 1946, p. 2. O. P. Kretzmann File.

periodical for that purpose. Perhaps this was unethical. But Behnken's real concern was that the signers were making propaganda for their position. He, in attitude a member of the Mid-Western element, wished to contain the spread of the Eastern attitude as expressed in the "A Statement." It could be argued that Behnken himself was unethical because, while desiring to stop the propaganda in favor of the "A Statement," he made no move to stop the propaganda against the statement. Friedrich did not fail to note this inconsistency on the part of Behnken.

He wrote to the Continuation Committee:

I think we shall have to set the good doctor right in regard to the gentleman's agreement. What does he really think we are? Since before Christmas we have been quiet and have conformed to every request he made. In the meantime all sorts of things are being printed and mimeographed by those who are opposed to the Statement and the Praesidium is marching in the van of the opposition. Didn't Dr. Behnken himself say at St. Louis that we would have to explain to our pastors what the Statement really means? Now that we are trying to do that, he opposes our action.<sup>78</sup>

The sale of Speaking the Truth in Love continued.

In September, 1946, A. R. Kretzmann reported to the signers that approximately two thousand copies of the book were in

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

circulation. He noted further: "About one thousand are such as have been sold at the full rate. The rest of them are copies that have been forwarded to libraries, for review, to the Signers, etc."<sup>79</sup> Copies continued to be sold by the signers to those who requested them until January 6, 1947, at which time an agreement was reached with the praesidium of the Missouri Synod and the sale of the book was discontinued.<sup>80</sup>

The authors of the various chapters of Speaking the Truth in Love are not noted in the book. They were the same men who presented essays at the meeting of February 14 and 15.<sup>81</sup> In order to retain an accurate accounting of the authorship of the various chapters of Speaking the Truth in Love the chapters and authors are here listed: Foreword, O. P. Kretzmann with approval of the Continuation

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<sup>79</sup>Letter, Adalbart R. Kretzmann to Dear Friend and Co-Signer, September 27, 1946. (Mimeographed.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

<sup>80</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of "A Statement," January 16, 1947, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) A. R. Kretzmann told the writer in a private interview that he is still in the possession of hundreds of copies of Speaking the Truth in Love, but in keeping with the agreement not to sell the book after January 6, 1947, he has refused requests from various bookstores to purchase them.

<sup>81</sup>See above, p. 278, n. 42.

Committee; Chapter I, Theodore Graebner; Chapter II, Fred-eric J. Wenchel; Chapter III, Karl Kretzmann; Chapter IV, Paul M. Bretscher; Chapter V, Oswald C. J. Hoffmann; Chap-ter VI, Theodore H. Schroedel; Chapter VII, Herman W. Bartels; Chapter VIII, August F. Bernthal; Chapter IX, W. G. Polack; Chapter X, George J. Kuechle; Chapter XI, Frederick W. Loose; Chapter XII, E. J. Friedrich; Appendix, furnished in translation by Karl Kretzmann.<sup>82</sup>

By resolution of the meeting of February 14 and 15 Dr. Behnken was requested "to encourage our pastors and congregations to study"<sup>83</sup> the six specific issues which had been raised by the "A Statement."<sup>84</sup> Dr. Behnken took steps to implement this resolution. He decided that if the study was to be profitable there should be made avail-able to all pastors and congregations of the Missouri Synod

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<sup>82</sup>The authorship is corroborated by E. J. Friedrich and Thomas Coates, both of whom recorded the names of the authors of the various chapters in their personal copies of Speaking the Truth in Love at the time they received them in April, 1946. E. J. Friedrich received the first copy off the press.

<sup>83</sup>"Meeting of the Praesidium, the District Presi-dents, and the Signers of the Statement," p. 5.

<sup>84</sup>See above, p. 282.

"some sound Scriptural guidelines."<sup>85</sup> He requested the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to develop the guidelines.<sup>86</sup> This was a strange move on the part of Dr. Behnken since the seminary faculty had been placed under a blanket of suspicion by the Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod who believed that the seminary was harboring the five signers of the "A Statement" in its midst. The St. Louis faculty invited the Springfield faculty to take part in preparing the guidelines.<sup>87</sup> This was probably a wise move on their part because, since the beginning of the controversy over the "A Statement," the Springfield faculty was looked upon by the Mid-Western element as the defenders of the Missouri Synod faith. However, this step, more than anything else, helped to make the guidelines ineffective. The faculties could not come to an early agreement concerning the points involved.<sup>88</sup> That

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<sup>85</sup>Letter, John W. Behnken to Dear Brother and Co-Worker, April 30, 1946, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>During the writer's student years at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, W. W. F. Albrecht told his classes in dogmatics on more than one occasion of the difficulties involved in attempting to reach agreement on the guidelines. His opinion was that the St. Louis faculty

is why by the time of the Missouri Synod Convention of 1950, four years after Behnken had informed the clergy of the Missouri Synod that he hoped to forward the guidelines "in the course of the next few weeks,"<sup>89</sup> only four of them had been completed, and all but one of these made their appearance after 1947.<sup>90</sup> Even after the guidelines were made available there was no guarantee that the pastors and congregations would make a faithful study of the issues. As a result the guidelines had little effect in settling the controversy in the Missouri Synod.

The other resolution approved at the meeting of February 14 and 15 requested Dr. Behnken to appoint ten men from various areas of the Missouri Synod to meet "with a like number of men from those who signed 'A Statement' to the end that by divine grace unity of doctrine and

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was simply too liberal and was departing from the teachings of Franz Pieper as set forth in the Brief Statement. See also: Letter, G. Christian Barth [president, Concordia Seminary, Springfield] to Professor L. J. Sieck, D.D. [president, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis], December 4, 1946. (Mimeographed.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

<sup>89</sup>Letter, John W. Behnken to Dear Brother and Co-Worker, April 30, 1946, p. 12.

<sup>90</sup>Proceedings, 1950, p. 13.



practice be promoted . . . ."91 Dr. Behnken appointed his ten plus three alternates. They were: Harold W. Romoser, chairman, A. T. Kretzmann, secretary, Theodore Laetsch, G. Christian Barth, G. Viehweg, J. F. Boerger, Paul Bente, G. H. Steffen, W. H. McLaughlin, and C. A. Hardt. The alternates were W. H. Bewie, W. F. Rolf, and Ernest F. Brand.<sup>92</sup> The Continuation Committee elected its ten plus three alternates. They were: E. J. Friedrich, chairman, W. G. Polack, O. A. Geiseman, O. P. Kretzmann, Oswald C. J. Hoffmann, Bernard H. Hemmeter, F. W. Loose, Theodore Graebner, Herman W. Bartels, and George J. Kuechle. The alternates were Theodore H. Schroedel, August F. Bernthal, and A. R. Kretzmann.<sup>93</sup>

Because of the composition of the group, ten from the president's side and ten from the signers' side, the meetings that were held were called "meetings of the Ten and Ten." Dr. Behnken was eager for the meetings of the

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<sup>91</sup>"Meeting of the Praesidium, the District Presidents, and the Signers of the Statement," p. 5.

<sup>92</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of "A Statement," August 23, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 21.

<sup>93</sup>"Minutes of the Meeting of the Continuation Committee, March 30, 1946."

Ten and Ten to begin. He suggested that the first meeting be held from June 13 to 21, 1946. The signers could not come together for a meeting at that date but finally agreed to meet August 13-16. Dr. Behnken preferred that the meetings be held at Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, so that his ten might have "access to a theological library so that they may check quotations from commentaries and synodical publications."<sup>94</sup> The signers preferred that the meetings be held at a hotel in Chicago. In this the signers had their way. The first meeting was scheduled for the Morrison Hotel in Chicago.<sup>95</sup>

Behnken and Friedrich met to decide on the procedure to be followed at the meetings of the Ten and Ten. Behnken "was very insistent that a complete stenographic record should be made of all the discussions during the four days of . . . meeting."<sup>96</sup> Friedrich objected to this because he believed it would give the impression that the

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<sup>94</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of the Chicago Statement, May 31, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 24.

<sup>95</sup>[Minutes of the] "Meeting of the Ten and Ten," August 13-16, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

<sup>96</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of the Chicago Statement, May 31, 1946, p. 1.

signers' ten were on trial and would create "a very unhealthy atmosphere and put the men under tension."<sup>97</sup> This issue was resolved by an agreement to elect a secretary from each ten to collaborate on producing minutes acceptable to both sides. Behnken wanted the meeting to proceed along formal lines with his ten drawing up resolutions with regard to the "A Statement," presenting the resolutions, seconding them, and then limiting all discussion to the resolution in question. Friedrich told Dr. Behnken that he refused to go along with such a procedure.<sup>98</sup> Friedrich and the signers' ten thought the meeting should proceed along informal lines with free flowing discussion of the issues involved. Friedrich reported to the signers:

Before we terminated our discussions on the proposed meeting of the Ten and Ten, I impressed upon Dr. Behnken that the entire set-up of this meeting as he had planned it was altogether different from what I had expected. We were looking forward to an informal meeting with our brethren who differed with us in regard to certain points contained in the Statement, and we hoped that it would be possible for us to engage with them in an informal, frank and brotherly discussion in the light of the Holy Scriptures. . . . I pleaded with him to do everything within his power

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

to make this the kind of meeting which the larger group envisioned when we met in St. Louis.<sup>99</sup>

The details concerning the procedure of the meeting are not unimportant. They reflect the formal, legalistic tendency characteristic of the Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod. This was one of the things the signers were protesting against. As plans for the proposed meeting were being completed it should have become apparent that when the Ten and Ten met it would be a showdown between the Mid-Western element and the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod. The signers were not oblivious to this fact. At a meeting of the signers' ten held just prior to the meeting of the Ten and Ten, one item discussed was that of opening the meeting of the Ten and Ten with prayer. The signers decided that if any of the president's ten refused to pray with them, that person should be disqualified.<sup>100</sup> Although the signers' ten agreed to do everything possible to make the meeting fraternal, they set as their objective the task of convincing the other

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>100</sup>"Minutes of the Statement 'Ten,'" August 12, 1946, p. 4. (Carbon Copy.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

ten that they were "Orthodox Lutherans."<sup>101</sup> This indicates that they were expecting a hassle. They were not disappointed in this respect but they were surprised by the physical arrangements when they arrived for the meeting at the Morrison Hotel on August 13.

When the signers' ten entered the meeting room they found the president's ten sitting on one side of a long table with their three alternates sitting further back against the wall. In front of each of the ten was a stack of documents. At one end of the table sat W. H. Meyer, president of the Kansas District of the Missouri Synod and chairman for the meetings of the Ten and Ten. The signers came with no documents and with the thought that they would intermingle with the other ten. But immediately they received the impression that they were on trial. When the meeting adjourned for lunch the president's ten got up and walked out of the room and had the noon meal together. They did not so much as want to eat with the signers.<sup>102</sup>

After the meeting was opened with a Scripture reading and prayer by Dr. Behnken, who was present for this

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>102</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich and O. P. Kretzmann.

first meeting,<sup>103</sup> the signers' ten were given "nineteen mimeographed sheets presenting thirteen formal Declarations, each of which was introduced by a number of whereases."<sup>104</sup> The first declaration contained a summary condemnation of the accompanying letter.<sup>105</sup> The declaration was presented by the secretary of the president's ten, moved, and seconded. The discussion which followed made absolutely no progress.<sup>106</sup> On the third day of the meeting, declaration number two was taken up by the Ten and Ten. This declaration condemned the interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 offered in the "A Statement." Once again no headway could be made.<sup>107</sup> When on August 16 the meeting reached its conclusion absolutely nothing of a positive nature had been accomplished. The Mid-Western element refused to yield in any of the matters brought

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<sup>103</sup>"Meeting of the Ten and Ten," August 13-16, 1946, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to the Signers of "A Statement," August 23, 1946, p. 1. (Mimeographed.) Thomas Coates File, number 21.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>107</sup>"Meeting of the Ten and Ten," August 13-16, 1946, p. 2.

before the Ten and Ten. The Eastern element refused to go back to a position which they considered to be unevangelical.

A second meeting of the Ten and Ten was scheduled for September 23-26 in Chicago.<sup>108</sup> It was agreed that at that meeting the discussion of the declarations concerning the accompanying letter and the "A Statement" be set aside in favor of freer discussion of the topic Sola Scriptura.<sup>109</sup> The second meeting of the Ten and Ten did produce one positive result. The participants agreed on an outline concerning the principle Sola Scriptura. Paul Bente made a presentation on the topic for the president's ten and O. A. Geiseman made a presentation on the same topic for the signers' ten. After combining the two presentations and making certain changes the twenty men adopted a statement on the principle of Sola Scriptura.<sup>110</sup> Dr. Behnken mailed this document to pastors, teachers, and congregations of the Missouri Synod.

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>"Minutes of the Meeting of the Ten and Ten," September 23-26, 1946, pp. 1-4. (Mimeographed.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

Perhaps this one positive step gave hope that the next meeting of the Ten and Ten would accomplish more. But this was not the case.

The third and final meeting of the Ten and Ten was held in Chicago, November 12-15, 1946. The entire four-day meeting was devoted to a discussion of the proper interpretation of Romans 16:17-18. Absolutely no agreement could be reached. At the conclusion of the meeting it must have become evident to all concerned that another meeting would be fruitless. No date for a future meeting was set.<sup>111</sup>

At Dr. Behnken's invitation the Continuation Committee and the praesidium of the Missouri Synod came together for a meeting on December 4, 1946. Discussions centered on the Scriptural principles involved in the controversy, and the welfare of the Missouri Synod should the controversy continue.<sup>112</sup> This led to another meeting on December 13, attended by the Continuation Committee, Dr. Behnken, Vice-President Grueber, Lawrence Meyer,

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<sup>111</sup>"Minutes of the Meeting of the Ten and Ten," November 12-15, 1946, pp. 1-5. (Mimeographed.) O. P. Kretzmann File.

<sup>112</sup>Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of "A Statement," January 16, 1947, p. 1. (Mimeographed.)



Dr. Behnken's right-hand man and the Director of Publicity for the Missouri Synod, and the members of the St. Louis faculty who had signed the "A Statement."<sup>113</sup> These two meetings culminated in a third meeting held at Fort Wayne, Indiana, on January 6, 1947. The same personnel attended this meeting as had attended the December 13 meeting with the exception that the full praesidium was present for this meeting.<sup>114</sup> With the centennial convention of the Missouri Synod less than six months away Dr. Behnken was fearful that the synod, instead of celebrating a triumphant 100 years, would be torn apart. He simply demanded that the signers retract the "A Statement." This they refused to do. Then, in collaboration with Lawrence Meyer, Dr. Behnken presented a document which he hoped would serve as a basis for an agreement between the praesidium and the signers.<sup>115</sup>

The document presented by Dr. Behnken was thoroughly discussed and several revisions were made. Since E. J. Friedrich thought that the document was formal

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid. and interview with E. J. Friedrich.

double-talk, he was against it. He continued in opposition until the very end of the discussions. After all the others had agreed to accept the document in hopes that some measure of unity might be restored for the centennial celebration, Friedrich also agreed to accept the document.<sup>116</sup> The wording of the document was as follows:

An earnest evaluation of the discussions involved in "A Statement" has demonstrated that we are agreed on many of its assertions, even though agreement has not been reached on some of the specific questions raised. The discussions have also shown that interpretations of some of the expressions in the accompanying letter and in the deplorations have been made which were not intended by the Signers. The language is not always clear to everyone. Nothing has developed, however, which is divisive of church-fellowship.

The longer discussions of this nature are drawn out, especially if the basis of the discussions is not understood by all participants in the same sense, the greater looms the danger of misunderstanding and the injection of personalities, temperament, personal experience, and emotion where calm objective judgment should prevail.

It has, therefore, been agreed in a meeting of the Praesidium and the representatives of the Signers that in the interest of peace and harmony in our midst and for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God at large "A Statement" and the accompanying letter be withdrawn as a basis of discussion so that the issues involved may be studied objectively on the basis of theses prepared under the auspices of the President of Synod.

The withdrawal of "A Statement" as a basis of discussion shall not be interpreted as a retraction nor

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., and Letter, E. J. Friedrich to The Signers of "A Statement," January 16, 1947, p. 1.

shall it mean that the issues involved shall now be glossed over or ignored. They shall become the topic of special study and prayerful consideration which will lead us, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, to an ever more consecrated adherence to the Word and will of God.<sup>117</sup>

The representatives of the signers also agreed to the following:

- 1) The Signers will no longer exist or function as a group;
- 2) the Continuation Committee will be disbanded;
- 3) the Statement as such will no longer be promoted by us;
- 4) nothing will be done to push the sale of "Speaking the Truth in Love".<sup>118</sup>

The representatives of the signers were not willing to make all the concessions without some guarantee of protection. They made it very clear to the praesidium:

If any individual or group among the Signers of the Statement is attacked on account of evangelical practice, we expect the officers of Synod to come to the defense of the brother or the brethren under attack. If this is not done, the Signers of the Statement will feel in conscience bound to reunite and to take action. Let it be said, however, that we do not believe that this will be necessary.<sup>119</sup>

The "A Statement" and the accompanying letter were withdrawn as a basis for discussion but neither

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

were retracted by the signers. That, of course, did not resolve any of the issues raised by the "A Statement." The statement called for a radical change in the Missouri Synod Geist as it had developed over the course of almost 100 years. It also called for assessing and adjusting a basic trait of Missouri Synod Lutheranism--the spirit of triumphalism. But, as the agreement indicates, neither the Mid-Western element nor the Eastern element of the Missouri Synod was yet equipped to deal with the basic issues to the extent of bringing them to a meaningful conclusion. The agreement did, however, serve as a device for the synodical officials, especially the president, to maintain an artificial unity and to utilize the spirit of triumphalism at the centennial convention of the Missouri Synod. We will turn to the centennial convention below, but first let us consider the type of individual reaction by those opposed to the "A Statement" which continued through 1946 and into 1947.

Because he was so well known throughout the Missouri Synod, Theodore Graebner became the recipient of many letters from the opponents of the "A Statement." Many who wrote were his former students. One wrote as follows:

I am of the opinion that in some things you have changed your position. . . . let us take Romans 16 as an example. I am enclosing a copy of your class notes which I took down rather faithfully. I notice that in these notes on verses 17 and 18 you speak up for the very thing which today is denied in Thesis 5 [of the "A Statement"].

. . . . .  
 It would seem to me that we would all approach the problem better if it were admitted that we believe Romans 16 (for instance) had in the past been misinterpreted.<sup>120</sup>

Not a few of the letters directed to Graebner and other signers suggest that the signers leave the Missouri Synod. For example, a pastor from Minnesota wrote to Graebner:

In my personal opinion the attitude of some toward the signers of THE STATEMENT has become absurd. False prophets in the church ought to be dealt with at once, not in three or six months or longer. The signers should have been told at once: Either recant or get out.<sup>121</sup>

After the agreement between the signers and the praesidium had been announced, some opponents attacked

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<sup>120</sup>Letter, William G. Kennell [pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pensacola, Florida] to Theodore Graebner, July 7, 1946. Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 114.

<sup>121</sup>Letter, Martin G. Kirsch [pastor at Mt. Lake, Minnesota] to Theodore Graebner, July 19, 1946. Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 114.

the agreement vigorously. Some among the Mid-Western element were not willing to accept it. They believed that the signers should either retract the "A Statement" and the accompanying letter or be placed under church discipline.

An example of this reaction follows:

"A Statement" cannot be withdrawn as a basis of discussion. Love of the truth of God's Word compels all of God's servants to speak against such pernicious errors as found in the "Statement." If Christian pastors would not speak against "A Statement" they would be as dumb dogs unable to bark. All true pastors will continue to speak against the "Statement" until it is retracted in toto.<sup>122</sup>

E. W. A. Koehler, professor of religion and German at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois, protested strongly against the agreement. His protest was placed in printed form and circulated "at the request of a number of men from seven districts"<sup>123</sup> of the Missouri Synod. The following is his concluding paragraph:

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<sup>122</sup>Letter, M. H. Gils [or Eils] to The Lutheran Witness, Professor Theodore Graebner, February 22, 1947. Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MES, box 114. The letter is written on stationary from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, probably by a student but it has the ring of a more experienced hand like that of W. W. F. Albrecht.

<sup>123</sup>E. W. A. Koehler, "An Agreement" (n.p., February 14, 1947), p. 4.

As long as the "Statement" stands, it will continue to be a barrier between the Signers and the rest of us. And its iniquitous leaven will work and continue to work; it will pass from professors to students from preachers to hearers. Also this leaven must be purged out. If the "Statement" is not retracted by the Signers, it should be rejected by Synod.<sup>124</sup>

In spite of the agreement reached between the signers and the praesidium, the outspoken attacks on the signers, the "A Statement," and the accompanying letter continued. Numerous illustrations of this fact could here be offered.<sup>125</sup> Exhibit 3 is the final citation that shall be offered to demonstrate this point. This thirteen-verse satirical rhyme was mimeographed and circulated widely in the Mid-West among Missouri Synod pastors.<sup>126</sup> The author of the rhyme is unknown.

From the foregoing one can understand why emotions were running high as the centennial convention of the Missouri Synod convened at Chicago, Illinois, July 20-29, 1947.

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>See especially Theodore Graebner MSS, Concordia Historical Institute, boxes 114, 118, 119, 120; Thomas Coates File; O. P. Kretzmann File; and interview with E. J. Friedrich.

<sup>126</sup>This notation was made at the top of a mimeographed copy of the rhyme sent to the signers by A. R. K. [A. R. Kretzmann].

THE FORTY AND FOUR

1.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The loyal Forty and Four.  
I love my dear Church,  
But see from my perch  
Tendencies which I deplore.

2.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The learned Forty and Four.  
The trends you don't see  
Are all clear to me.  
Such evils are nearly a score.

3.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The leading Forty and Four.  
You'll make no mistake  
If my hand you'll take,  
And with me "affirm" and "deplore."

4.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The mighty Forty and Four.  
Now do as I say! -  
There's the devil to pay  
When Synod at last I take o'er.

5.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The jubilant Forty and Four.  
I went to St. Louis  
And met with the "goy"  
And occupied boldly the floor.

6.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The innocent Forty and Four.  
When tried as a sinner,  
I came out the winner,  
I fear Synod's "big boys" no more.

7.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The confident Forty and Four.  
When ten of our signers  
Meet ten of the whiners,  
There can be no doubt of the score.

8.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The pace-setting Forty and Four,  
Our Union Committee?  
Too slow. What a pity!  
A pain in the neck, and a bore!

9.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The fortunate Forty and Four.  
A strategic position  
Is mine for my mission,  
And none of it do I ignore.

10.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The versatile Forty and Four.  
In speech and in writing  
I do my own fighting  
In conference, classroom, and  
store.

11.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The eminent Forty and Four.  
I have the D.D.'s  
And all the degrees, -  
My whisper will sound like a roar.

12.

I am the Forty and Four,  
The insistent Forty and Four.  
I hate isolation,  
I want liberation,  
And make propaganda galore.

End of Chicago Convention  
in 1947

I am the Forty and Four,  
The penitent Forty and Four.  
My deportant was rank,  
My procedure, it stank,  
Please don't hold it against me  
no more.

Exhibit 3.--Thirteen-verse satirical  
rhyme against the signers of "A Statement."



In his triennial report, Dr. Behnken devoted one paragraph to the controversy which had arisen over the "A Statement" and the accompanying letter. He reported:

The past triennium brought with it some internal difficulties. Among others there were those which resulted from the issuance of "A Statement." At the beginning the Praesidium attempted to prevent misunderstandings and disagreement. Many meetings were held. A special committee was appointed, which held a number of meetings. Last January the Praesidium reached an agreement with representatives of the signers of "A Statement," that the issues involved should be studied carefully by conferences on the basis of theses sent out under the auspices of the Praesidium. . . . It is our fervent prayer and earnest hope that the careful, prayerful, and fraternal discussions of these issues and others, which will be presented in due time, will under God remove all confusion and preserve genuine peace and harmony within our Synod.<sup>127</sup>

The internal difficulties to which Behnken referred are reflected in the memorials printed in the Proceedings of the 1947 convention. These memorials were submitted to the convention by individual members of the synod, by conferences, or by congregations. Ten memorials called for the convention to declare officially that its principles for Lutheran unity and union were those set forth in the Brief Statement.<sup>128</sup> Most of these memorials and several

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<sup>127</sup>Proceedings, 1947, pp. 15-16.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., pp. 501-511.

others desired that Romans 16:17-18 be applied, as the Brief Statement applies it, to limit fellowship to those who attain complete agreement in doctrine and practice. One memorial put it this way: "We reject and condemn the teaching that 'this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America.'"<sup>129</sup> Two memorials called for a strict position against prayer fellowship without complete agreement in doctrine and practice.<sup>130</sup> Sandwiched among these memorials was one that advocated selective fellowship.<sup>131</sup> All of these memorials were considered to have been answered when the convention adopted a resolution declaring that the Brief Statement correctly expressed its doctrinal position.<sup>132</sup> The Brief Statement was also incorporated into the official Proceedings of the convention.<sup>133</sup> The Mid-Western element of the Missouri Synod was delighted with this action. However, since no official action was taken against

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p. 514. The quotation is from the deploration of Thesis V of the "A Statement."

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., pp. 516-518.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., pp. 518-519.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 476.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., pp. 476-492.

the "A Statement" or the signers, the Mid-Western element was bitterly disappointed.

Only one memorial printed in the Proceedings is directed specifically against the "A Statement" and the agreement reached between the praesidium and the representatives of the signers. It was submitted by the appointees who had served as the president's ten. Seventeen congregations, three pastoral conferences and one pastor submitted similar memorials which were not printed in the Proceedings, however.<sup>134</sup>

Since, according to accepted practice in the Missouri Synod, all memorials submitted to a convention were considered by a floor committee which, in turn, was to formulate and present appropriate resolutions to the convention for its action, the "A Statement," the accompanying letter, and the agreement between the signers and the praesidium were guaranteed some type of hearing.

Floor Committee 3: Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters was responsible for considering all memorials pertaining to fellowship and doctrine, including the resolution of the president's ten. Committee 3 held open hearings on

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., pp. 520-522.

the memorials at the same time the convention was in progress. Such was the general interest in the matters before this committee that when its open hearings were announced, a large number of delegates would leave the floor of the convention for the hearings. The issues raised by the "A Statement" were hotly debated and disciplinary proposals against the signers of the statement were given consideration. Harold W. Romoser, who served as chairman of the president's ten, attempted to give added credence to the memorial submitted by his group by claiming that they were representatives of the president of the Missouri Synod. E. J. Friedrich challenged the claim and countered by reminding the committee that the ten were appointees and not representatives of Dr. Behnken. The debate grew so hot over this issue that the chairman of Committee 3, Professor A. H. Schwermann, president of Concordia College, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, finally called Dr. Behnken from the chair of the convention to settle the issue. Behnken affirmed Friedrich's position. In so doing he took the wind from the sails of the ten he himself had appointed and from that day they lost confidence in

Behnken's leadership. Some of them became Behnken's outspoken critics.<sup>135</sup>

The convention adopted the following resolution, which in effect allowed the issues raised by "A Statement" and the accompanying letter to stand unresolved:

WHEREAS, "A Statement" as such no longer is a basis for discussion according to the "Agreement" reported by the President; and  
 WHEREAS, The issues raised by "A Statement" and by memorials referring to "A Statement" are being submitted for study to pastors and congregations on the basis of materials supplied by direction of the President; and  
 WHEREAS, The subject matter is such as to call for time and patience, so that all pastors and laymen may have an opportunity to study the same in a quiet, earnest, and prayerful manner (a course which the Church should always follow); and  
 WHEREAS, It is imperative that we continue on the foundation of God's Word, and God's Word alone; therefore be it  
 RESOLVED, That the President continue to submit to pastors and congregations material for the Scriptural study of the questions at issue.<sup>136</sup>

At the conclusion of its centennial convention the Missouri Synod was internally divided. It was not willing to confess this publically in any official way. However,

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<sup>135</sup>Interviews with E. J. Friedrich, O. P. Kretzmann, and Thomas Coates. At least two of the president's ten finally withdrew from the Missouri Synod. They were Harold W. Romoser and W. H. McLaughlin.

<sup>136</sup>Proceedings, 1947, p. 523.

the triennium, 1947-1950, brought on a barrage of pamphlets still making war against the "A Statement" and the signers. Many of the pamphlets took up the battle to force the acceptance of one official exegesis for Romans 16:17-18. Most of them were in essence calling for the Missouri Synod to restore its spirit of triumphalism which had been shattered at the 1947 convention when, although the Brief Statement was reaffirmed as its doctrinal position, those who had raised issues in conflict with it were not disciplined. The Mid-Western element of the synod seethed under this condition.

Although the personal attacks on the signers became fewer and fewer, those attacks which did occur became more vehement. They were in the following vein:

I deem it best for you that you retire to your farm and not continue to lead weak brethren to follow you--union and union is sacrificing Mo's old Scriptural stand.

There was a time that I fairly idolized you for your sound stand for everything scriptural, both in doctrine and in practice as well. That has changed. You and company have gone out to reform the Church of the Reformation, placed yourself with your comparatively puny knowledge over SCRIPTURES, Luther, etc.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Letter, O. F. P. Weinbach [pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Maryland] to Theodore Graebner, April 29, 1950. Concordia Historical Institute, Theodore Graebner MSS, box 114.

The Missouri Synod met in convention in June, 1950, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Almost five years had passed since the "A Statement" had made its appearance, and the Mid-Western element was prepared to make its most concerted attack on the "A Statement" and the signers. Sixteen memorials before the convention were directed specifically against the "A Statement" and the signers.<sup>138</sup> Nine of the memorials were submitted by pastors or congregations located in the vicinity of Chicago. The 1950 convention, as had the 1947 convention, accepted the agreement which had been reached by the signers and the praesidium as valid and as having removed the "A Statement" as a basis for discussion.<sup>139</sup> Under these circumstances the Mid-Western element could make no progress in its attempt to force the signers to retract the "A Statement" or be placed under church discipline.

The Mid-Western element suffered another defeat at the 1950 convention. Six memorials had been submitted requesting an investigation of the St. Louis seminary

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<sup>138</sup>Proceedings, 1950, pp. 599-618.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 658.

faculty.<sup>140</sup> The convention declined even to consider the memorials.<sup>141</sup>

But the Mid-Western element also won two victories at the 1950 convention. When Arthur Brunn died in 1949, he was replaced in the praesidium of the Missouri Synod by E. J. Friedrich. Friedrich was appointed fourth vice-president by Behnken in keeping with a regulation of the synod which directed the president to make the appointment on the basis of the man who had received the highest number of votes among the unsuccessful candidates for the office at the preceding convention.<sup>142</sup> It must have been an unhappy chore for Behnken to name Friedrich to the position, but he did not make any attempt to circumvent synodical regulations in the matter. The Mid-Western element responded to Friedrich's appointment with three memorials protesting the appointment.<sup>143</sup> As a result of these memorials and a personal attack on Friedrich from the floor

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp. 634-641.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., pp. 658-659.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp. 618-622.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 660-663.



of the convention,<sup>144</sup> he was not elected to the vice-presidency for a full three-year term although he was elected to the Board of Directors.<sup>145</sup>

The second victory for the Mid-Western element was that the convention once again went on record as accepting the interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 as employed in the Brief Statement.<sup>146</sup>

Since neither the Eastern nor the Mid-Western elements gained a complete victory at the 1947 and the 1950 conventions one may conclude that the Missouri Synod had a third element. This third element could be drawn either one way or the other, either to the side of the Mid-Western element or to the side of the Eastern element.

At the 1947 convention the Brief Statement was reaffirmed as the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod, a point in favor of the Mid-Western element. At the same convention no action was taken against the "A Statement" or the signers, a point in favor of the Eastern element.

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<sup>144</sup>Ibid., pp. 660-663.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., pp. 655-658.

The 1950 convention refused to take official action against the "A Statement" and the signers, a point in favor of the Eastern element. It also did not elect E. J. Friedrich to a vice-presidency, a point in favor of the Mid-Western element.

Neither the Mid-Western element nor the Eastern element could achieve its goals without convincing a number of the third element to join its cause on certain issues. The future course of the Missouri Synod will depend upon the persuasive influence exerted on the third element by either the Mid-Western element or the Eastern element until one or the other achieves a permanent majority. The synod can no longer honestly picture itself as a united body moving forward in triumphalistic conquest, although it does attempt to hold on to that ideal inherited from days gone by. If the Missouri Synod is to be completely honest with itself it can no longer demand complete agreement in doctrine and practice as the sine qua non for church fellowship. Internally the synod does not have that complete agreement. The "A Statement" and the controversy it precipitated brings this fact sharply into focus.

The spirit of triumphalism in the Missouri Synod was shattered by the reaction to "A Statement." Since that time some members of the Missouri Synod have attempted to piece together the shattered spirit. Others have attempted to sweep the shattered pieces completely out the church door. But a shattered spirit cannot be pieced together and made to appear as the original, nor can all the pieces of the shattered spirit be swept out the church door when the pieces refuse to fall to the floor. With the spirit of triumphalism it is untrue that half a spirit is better than none. The spirit of triumphalism is either complete or it is nothing. There is no middle ground. The Missouri Synod, an organization which fed upon the spirit of triumphalism for almost 100 years, needs to recognize this.

Since 1950 the Missouri Synod has been a church body groping for a new spirit. Groping for a new spirit has produced turmoil. Nothing short of finding a new spirit in the wider context of the una sancta will bring peace out of turmoil for the Missouri Synod.

## APPENDIX

TABLE 1

BIRTH DATA AND AGE OF SIGNERS OF "A STATEMENT" ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1945<sup>a</sup>

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Lawrence Acker	5-22-92	Seymour, Ind.	53	U
Clarence Martin Amling	1-18-99	Maywood, Ill.	46	U
William F. Arndt	12- 1-80	Mayville, Wis.	64	T
Herman W. Bartels	3-16-77	St. Louis, Mo.	68	P
Walter E. Bauer	7-22-97	Chicago, Ill.	48	N
Charles A. Behnke	9-21-91	Chicago, Ill.	53	U
August F. Bernthal	6-18-82	Scotland, S.D.	63	P
August F. Bobzin	11-17-93	Niles Center, Ill.	51	N
Paul M. Bretscher	11-11-93	Wausau, Wis.	51	P
William F. Bruening	12- 1-05	Jackson, Mo.	39	U
August W. Brustat	8- 3-05	Naugatuck, Conn.	40	P
Richard Rudolph Caemmerer	7-29-04	Denver, Colo.	41	N
Thomas B. Coates	10- 1-10	Oakland, Cal.	34	N
Louis H. Deffner	1-28-93	Carrollton, Mo.	52	N
Harold H. Engelbrecht	9- 7-97	Kendallville, Ind.	48	T
Edward Julius Friedrich	5-19-89	Chattanooga, Tenn.	56	P
Otto A. F. Geiseman	8- 8-93	Sioux City, Iowa	52	T
Carl Albert Gieseler	6- 7-88	Racine, Wis.	57	U
E. Buckley Glabe	1-26-99	Chicago, Ill.	46	N
Theodore Conrad Graebner	11-23-76	Watertown, Wis.	68	Pf.
Arthur R. Hanser	6-21-80	St. Louis, Mo.	65	P
Bernard H. Hemmeter	5- 9-95	Baltimore, Md.	50	P
Henry Bernard Hemmeter	12-24-69	Baltimore, Md.	75	U
William Henry Hillmer	11-18-04	Sylvan Grove, Kan.	40	U

TABLE 1--Continued

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Oswald C. J. Hoffmann	12- 6-13	Snyder, Neb.	31	P
Adalbert Raphael Alexander Kretzmann	4-15-03	Stamford, Conn.	42	P
Karl Gustav Heinrich Kretzmann	2-23-77	Dudleytown, Ind.	68	P
Otto Paul Kretzmann	5- 7-01	Stamford, Conn.	44	P
George John Kuechle	10-16-88	Alpena, Mich.	56	P
Werner H. Kuntz	4-23-98	Lewiston, Minn.	47	P
Erwin William Emil Kurth	5- 6-98	--unknown	47	U
Henry Hermann Kumnick	3-12-91	Forest Park, Ill.	54	U
Fred H. Lindemann	8-24-91	Fort Wayne, Ind.	54	U
Herbert F. Lindemann	4-17-09	Brooklyn, N.Y.	36	P
Frederick William Loose	1-29-85	Bremen, Germany	60	U
Adolph Fred Meyer	5- 7-99	Winfield, Kan.	46	P
Paul Frederick Miller	8-22-87	Stuttgart, Ark.	58	P
William Gustave Polack	12- 7-90	Wausau, Wis.	54	U
Oscar Adelbert Sauer	12-15-88	South Bend, Ind.	56	U
Theophilus Henry Schroedel	9-16-82	Ridgeville, Wis.	62	P
Otto Henry Theiss	3-21-00	Oakland, Cal.	45	T
Edmund William Weber	6-18-99	Cleveland, Ohio	46	U
John Frederic Wenchel	9-29-74	Baltimore, Md.	70	U
Henry Frederick Wind	1- 2-91	Millard, Neb.	54	P

<sup>a</sup>The basic data for Tables 1-3 were furnished by John F. Gaertner, Director of Personnel for the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod with offices at 210 North Broadway, St. Louis, Missouri 63102. Supplemental data were added from various materials found at the Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis; from interviews with various

TABLE 1--Continued

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signers; from the Amerikanischer Kalender für deutsche Lutheraner auf das Jahr 1945 nach der Geburt unsers Herrn Jesu Christi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [1945]); and from the Statistical Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States for the Year 1945 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946).

- Key to Table 1:
- (1) Name of signer, full form.
  - (2) Date of birth.
  - (3) Place of birth.
  - (4) Age on September 7, 1945.
  - (5) Father a Pastor (P), Teacher (T), Professor (Pf.) in the Missouri Synod, or father not a pastor, teacher, professor in the Missouri Synod (N). Unknown whether father a pastor, teacher, or professor in the Missouri Synod (U).

A Brief Analysis of the Material  
Contained in Table 1

On September 7, 1945, the average age of the signers was fifty-two. Twenty-three were fifty-two years old or younger. Twenty-one were fifty-three years old or older at the time they signed the "A Statement." The signers, therefore, were not a group of young radicals.

The youngest signer was Oswald C. J. Hoffmann who was thirty-one years old. Three other signers were under forty years of age: Thomas B. Coates was thirty-four; Herbert F. Lindemann was thirty-six; William F. Bruening was thirty-nine.

The oldest signer was Henry Bernard Hemmeter who was seventy-five years old when he signed the "A Statement." The next oldest was John Frederic Wenchel who was seventy years old. Both Hemmeter and Wenchel were born in Baltimore, Maryland. Since the average age of the signers was fifty-two, one may conclude that their decision to issue "A Statement" came after mature deliberation.

Bernard H. Hemmeter was the son of Henry Bernard Hemmeter. Karl Kretzmann was the father of A. R. Kretzmann and O. P. Kretzmann, all signers of the "A Statement."



One of the signers, Harold H. Engelbrech, celebrated his forty-eighth birthday by signing the "A Statement."

Six of the signers were born in Illinois and six in Wisconsin; five in Indiana; four in Missouri; three in Maryland, and three in Connecticut; two each in California, Kansas, and Nebraska; and one each in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, and Tennessee. One signer was born in Germany. The birthplace of one signer is unknown.

TABLE 2  
EDUCATION OF THE SIGNERS

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
L. Acker	Y	FtW	StL	1916	U
C. M. Amling	Y	Mil	StL	1922	U
W. Arndt, A.M., Ph.D., D.D.	Y	StP & Mil	StL	1903	Y
H. Bartels	Y	Mil	StL	1900	U
Walter Bauer, M.A., Ph.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1921	Y
C. A. Behnke	Y	Mil	StL	1913	U
A. F. Bernthal	U	FtW	StL	1904	U
A. F. Bobzin	Y	Spf	Spf	1916	U
Paul Bretscher, M.A., Ph.D., S.T.D.	Y	Mil	StL	1915	Y
W. F. Bruening, M.A.	Y	Con	StL	1929	Y
A. W. Brustat, M.A., Ph.D.	N	Bro	StL	1929	Y
R. R. Caemmerer, S.T.M., M.A., Ph.D.	Y <sup>a</sup>	Win	StL	1927	Y
Thomas Coates, S.T.M.	N	Oak	StL	1933	Y
Louis Deffner	Y	Win	StL	1917	Y
H. H. Engelbrecht	Y	Bro	StL	1920	N
E. J. Friedrich, D.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1912	N
O. A. Geiseman, M.A., S.T.D.	Y	Mil	StL	1915	Y
C. A. Gieseler	Y	Mil	StL	1913	Y
E. B. Glabe	Y	Mil	StL	1922	Y
Theodore Graebner, D.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1897	N
A. R. Hanser	Y	FtW	StL	1902	U

TABLE 2--Continued

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Bernard Hemmeter	Y	Con	StL	1917	Y
H. B. Hemmeter, D.D.	Y	U	StL	1892	Y
William Hillmer	Y	Win	StL	1930	U
Oswald Hoffmann, M.A.	Y	Mil & StP	StL	1936	Y
A. R. Kretzmann	Y	Bro	StL	1927	Y
Karl Kretzmann, D.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1899	Y
O. P. Kretzmann, Litt.D.	Y	Bro	StL	1923	Y
G. J. Kuechle	Y	Mil	StL	1910	N
Werner Kuntz	Y	StP	StL	1922	N
Erwin Kurth	Y	Mil	StL	1922	N
Henry Kumnick, LL.B.	Y	Mil	StL	1914	Y
Fred Lindemann	U	U	StL	1914	U
H. F. Lindemann	N	FtW	StL	1932	Y
F. W. Loose	Y	Bro & FtW	StL	1907	Y
A. F. Meyer, M.A.	Y	Win	StL	1922	Y
P. F. Miller, LL.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1910	U
W. G. Polack, Litt.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1914	Y
O. A. Sauer	Y	FtW	StL	1912	U
Theo. Schroedel	Y	StP & N'w	WW	1905	U
O. H. Theiss, M.A.	Y	Oak	StL	1925	Y
Edmund Weber	U	U	StL	1922	U
J. F. Wenchel, D.D.	Y	FtW	StL	1898	Y
Henry Wind	Y	Mil	StL	1916	Y

TABLE 2--Continued

<sup>a</sup>Caemmerer attended Lutheran parochial school one year.

- Key to Table 3:
- (1) Name of signers (brief form) followed by advanced degrees held in 1945.
  - (2) Attended Lutheran parochial school? Yes (Y), No (N), Unknown (U).
  - (3) Name of preparatory school attended.  
 Preparatory schools of the Missouri Synod located at:  
 Bro--Bronxville, New York  
 Con--Concordia, Missouri  
 FtW--Fort Wayne, Indiana  
 Mil--Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
 Oak--Oakland, California  
 Spf--Springfield, Illinois (in connection with seminary)  
 StP--St. Paul, Minnesota  
 Win--Winfield, Kansas  
 Preparatory school of the Wisconsin Synod located at:  
 N'w--Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin
  - (4) Name of seminary attended.  
 Seminaries of the Missouri Synod located at:  
 StL--St. Louis, Missouri  
 Spf--Springfield, Illinois  
 Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod located at:  
 WW--Wautatosa, Wisconsin
  - (5) Date of graduation from seminary.
  - (6) College or university work at a non-Missouri Synod institution before Sept. 7, 1945? Yes (Y), No (N), Unknown (U).

A Brief Analysis of the Material  
Contained in Table 2

Only three of the signers did not attend Lutheran parochial schools. Three others may have attended parochial schools, however, this information is not available. At the most, six out of the forty-four did not receive their early education in Missouri Synod schools.

In the Missouri Synod system of education grades nine through second year college (six years) were to be taken at a preparatory school. If and where three of the signers attended preparatory school is not known. Four of the signers attended two different preparatory schools in the course of their education. Of the remaining thirty-seven their preparatory school education was received at the following schools: Bronxville, New York, four; Concordia, Missouri, two; Fort Wayne, Indiana, twelve; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, eleven; Oakland, California, two; Springfield, Illinois, one; St. Paul, Minnesota, one; Winfield, Kansas, four.

After completing preparatory school, the next step in Missouri Synod education was to enter the seminary at St. Louis. All the signers except two graduated from St. Louis. Bobzin graduated from Springfield in 1916.

Schroedel graduated from the Wisconsin Synod seminary at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin in 1905. Henry Bernard Hemmeter was the earliest seminary graduate (1892). He had been in the ministry for fifty-three years in 1945. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann was the latest graduate from seminary (1936). He had been in the ministry for nine years in 1945. Four of the signers had graduated from the St. Louis seminary before 1900. They were: Henry Bernard Hemmeter, 1892; Theodore Graebner, 1897; J. F. Wenchel, 1898; and Karl Kretzmann, 1899.

Of the forty-two signers who attended the St. Louis seminary, all except Hoffmann and possibly Coates had opportunity to take course work from Franz Pieper who gave his last lecture at the seminary on March 5, 1931.

At the most, only seven of the forty-four did not receive their education, first grade through seminary, in schools of the Missouri Synod. Of the three signers known to have attended public elementary schools for grades one through eight, all three received the rest of their education, ninth grade through seminary, in Missouri Synod schools.

Over half of the signers (twenty-five) had pursued college and/or university studies at a non-Missouri Synod

institution. It is not known whether or not twelve others pursued such study. They may have. Although the overwhelming majority of the signers received their education through the seminary level in Missouri Synod schools they were able to take an honest look at their synod. Perhaps one of the reasons that they could lies in the possibility that while a number of the signers were pursuing college and university work outside of Missouri Synod circles they learned that other people, too, were sincere Christians.

TABLE 3

POSITION AND DISTRICT OF SIGNERS, SEPTEMBER 7, 1945

(1)	(2)	(3)
L. Acker	Pastor, Omaha, Neb.	N. Nebraska
C. M. Amling	Pastor, Spokane, Wash.	Ore. & Wash.
W. Arndt	Prof., St. Louis	Western
H. Bartels	Pastor, Cleveland, Ohio	English
Walter Bauer	Prof., Valparaiso	English
C. A. Behnke	Pastor, Rochester, N.Y.	Eastern
A. F. Bernthal	Pastor, Saginaw, Mich.	Michigan
A. F. Bobzin	Pastor, Flushing, N.Y.	Atlantic
Paul Bretscher	Prof., St. Louis	Western
W. F. Bruening	Pastor, Washington, D.C.	Southeastern
A. W. Brustat	Pastor, Mineola, N.Y.	Atlantic
R. R. Caemmerer	Prof., St. Louis	Western
Thomas Coates	Asst. Exec. Sec., Walther League, Chicago	N. Illinois
Louis Deffner	Pastor, Wichita, Kan.	Kansas
H. H. Engelbrecht	Pastor, Gary, Ind.	Central
E. J. Friedrich	Supt. & Chap., Luth. San., Wheat Ridge, Colo.	Colorado
O. A. Geiseman	Pastor, River Forest, Ill.	N. Illinois
C. A. Gieseler	Pastor, Denver, Colo.	Colorado
E. B. Glabe	Exec., Luth. Childrens Friend Society, Minn.	Minnesota
Theodore Graebner	Prof., St. Louis	Western
A. R. Hanser	Pastor, Seaford, L.I., N.Y.	Atlantic
Bernard Hemmeter	Pastor, Chicago	English
H. B. Hemmeter	Pres. of Springfield, retired June 1945	Cent. Ill.
William Hillmer	Dist. Exec., Ore. & Wash. District	Ore. & Wash.



TABLE 3--Continued

(1)	(2)	(3)
Oswald Hoffmann	Prof., Bronxville	Atlantic
A. R. Kretzmann	Pastor, Chicago	N. Illinois
Karl Kretzmann	Curator, Historical Institute, St. Louis	Western
O. P. Kretzmann	Pres., Valparaiso	Central
G. J. Kuechle	Pastor, Cleveland, Ohio	English
Werner Kuntz	Exec. Sec., Social Welfare, Mich. District	Michigan
Erwin Kurth	Pastor, Ft. Wayne, Ind.	Central
Henry Kumnick	Prof., Valparaiso	Central
Fred Lindemann	Pastor, Buffalo, N.Y.	Eastern
H. F. Lindemann	Pastor, St. Paul, Minn.	English
F. W. Loose	Pastor, Lorain, Ohio	Central
A. F. Meyer	Pastor, Woodlawn, N.Y.	Atlantic
P. F. Miller	Pastor, Ft. Wayne, Ind.	English
W. G. Polack	Prof., St. Louis	Western
O. A. Sauer	Pastor, Richmond, Va.	Southeastern
Theo. Schroedel	Pastor, Minneapolis, Minn.	Minnesota
O. H. Theiss	Exec. Sec., Walther League, Chicago	N. Illinois
Edmund Weber	Chaplain (U.S. Army)	Michigan
J. F. Wenchel	Synodical Representative	Southeastern
Henry Wind	Institutional Missionary	Eastern

Key to Table 3: (1) Name of signer, short form.  
 (2) Position and residence of signer September 7, 1945.  
 (3) District in which signer held membership September 7, 1945.

A Brief Analysis of the Material  
Contained in Table 3

Twenty-four of the signers were serving as pastors of congregations. Eight were professors. Eleven were serving in other positions and one was retired.

Henry Bernard Hemmeter had served as president of the Missouri Synod seminary at Springfield, Illinois, from June, 1936 until June, 1945, when he retired.

O. P. Kretzmann was president of Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana.

E. J. Friedrich was superintendent and chaplain at the Lutheran Sanatorium, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, near Denver.

E. B. Glabe was the executive director of the Lutheran Childrens Friend Society with offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

William Hillmer was an executive secretary for the Oregon and Washington District of the Missouri Synod.

Karl Kretzmann was curator for the Concordia Historical Institute with offices in St. Louis, Missouri.

Werner Kuntz was the executive secretary for social welfare for the Michigan District of the Missouri Synod with offices in Detroit.

Edmund Weber was a chaplain in the United States Army.

J. F. Wenchel had retired from the pastoral ministry after serving Christ Lutheran Church, Washington, D. C., from 1908 until 1944, and was serving as a special synodical representative in Washington.

Henry Wind was serving as institutional missionary for the Eastern District of the Missouri Synod with offices in Buffalo, New York.

Eight of the signers were from New York State. Six were from the greater Chicago area. Six were from St. Louis. Three were from Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. Three were from the greater Cleveland, Ohio, area. Three were from Minneapolis-St. Paul. Two of the signers were from Fort Wayne, Indiana; two from Washington, D. C., and two from the Denver, Colorado, area. There was one signer from each of the following cities: Omaha, Nebraska; Saginaw, Michigan; Portland, Oregon; Spokane, Washington; Richmond, Virginia; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; and Wichita, Kansas. One was serving with the United States Army.

In 1945 there were twenty-seven districts of the Missouri Synod in the United States. The signers came

from fourteen of these districts. A tabulation by district follows:

Atlantic . . . . .	5
California and Nevada . . . . .	0
Central . . . . .	5
Central Illinois . . . . .	1
Colorado . . . . .	2
Eastern . . . . .	3
English . . . . .	6
Iowa East . . . . .	0
Iowa West . . . . .	0
Kansas . . . . .	1
Michigan . . . . .	3
Minnesota . . . . .	2
North Dakota and Montana . . . . .	0
Northern Illinois . . . . .	4
Northern Nebraska . . . . .	1
North Wisconsin . . . . .	0
Oklahoma . . . . .	0
Oregon and Washington . . . . .	2
South Dakota . . . . .	0
Southeastern . . . . .	3
Southern . . . . .	0
Southern California . . . . .	0
Southern Illinois . . . . .	0
Southern Nebraska . . . . .	0
South Wisconsin . . . . .	0
Texas . . . . .	0
Western . . . . .	6

Although it is true that the signers represented the various ministeries within the Missouri Synod, it is incorrect to claim, as the signers did, that the forty-four came from all parts of the church. Thirteen of the districts, or 48 percent of the districts, were without representatives among the signers.

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Hemmeter, Bernard H. Fort Wayne, Indiana, April 8, 1970.

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## Manuscript Collections

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St. Louis, Missouri

## Theodore Graebner MSS Collection.

The collection is made up of correspondence, copies of minutes, magazine articles, mimeographed essays, and much other miscellaneous material. It is an extensive collection, only partially cataloged, with some duplication.

## George J. Meyer MSS Collection.

Box 3, Folder 2, contains material dealing with the "A Statement."

## Lawrence B. Meyer MSS Collection.

Boxes 76 and 77. The boxes contain mostly correspondence.

## Francis Pieper MSS Collection.

## Private MSS Collections

## O. P. Kretzmann File.

Two folders with approximately 150 pieces of miscellaneous materials including letters, articles, essays, and magazine articles. The file is temporarily in the possession of the writer. It will be returned to O. P. Kretzmann.

## Thomas Coates File.

Two large folders of miscellaneous materials with approximately 60 pieces. This file contains much useable material which pertains directly to the "A Statement." The file is temporarily in the possession of the writer. It will be returned to Thomas Coates upon his return from Korea.

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