

MISSOURI'S TWO UNION DOCUMENTS OF THE 1930'S:
A Look at the Change in the Doctrinal Stand
of Missouri in their dealings with the A.L.C.

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The early 1900's saw a great reduction in the number of Lutheran synods. Various Lutheran bodies began to see that there was no real differences between them. The result was the merger of several synods into a larger synod. In 1917 there was the merger of the three Norwegian Lutheran bodies into the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska Synods joined to form the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other states. In 1918 the General Synod, the United Synod of the South and the General Council merged and became the United Lutheran Church of America. At the same time, the National Lutheran Council came into being, which included every major Lutheran body except the members of the Synodical Conference. In 1923 the Lutheran World Federation was founded which joined Lutheran churches all over the globe.

This spirit of uniting with all the other Lutheran churches was a predominant force also among the members of the Synodical Conference. In 1917 an Intersynodical Committee was formed by the synods of Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Missouri and Wisconsin. This committee was to work out an agreement on doctrine which would become the basis for church fellowship. In 1925 the committee came up with some theses and in 1928 they perfected these theses, which became known as the "Intersynodical Theses" or "Chicago Theses". It was hoped that these theses would form the basis for unity among these five Lutheran church bodies.

It was this attempt at unity and the theses which resulted from their meeting that played an important role in Missouri writing its first union document of the 1930's, In 1929 the Missouri Synod officially rejected the "Intersynodical Theses". The committee of the Missouri Synod, which had helped to formulate these theses, offered this recommendation to the Synod at their 1929 convention.

After careful examination of the revised theses of August, 1928, your Committee finds itself compelled to advise Synod to reject these theses as a possible basis for union with the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate. At times they do not touch upon the point of controversy; at times they are so phrased that both parties can find in them their own opinion; at times they incline more to the position of our opponents than to our own.¹

The other synods were stunned at the outright refusal of Missouri to accept ^{the} theses, especially since they had helped to formulate them. Ohio gave this criticism.

We deplore the refusal of the Missouri Synod to adopt the Intersynodical Theses which members of their own faculty at St. Louis had helped to formulate and adopt.²

All was not lost, however, in the struggle for unity among these bodies. At the same convention in which Missouri rejected the "Chicago Theses" they also affirmed their readiness for future meetings for the sake of closer unity.

We further recommend that Synod declare its readiness to deal also in the future with the synods concerned, provided the latest historical development, namely, the move toward a closer union between the Ohio and Iowa synods,

on the one hand, and the party of the Norwegian Onqioer, on the other, be taken up first and adjusted according to the Word of God. The President of Synod shall appoint a committee, which in this case shall lead the discussions.³

When Missouri rejected the "Chicago Theses" they gave reasons for doing so. It was mainly a negative response. They noted that the theses were inadequate and poorly phrased. So to balance their response, the committee also strongly recommended that another committee be set up for the purpose of stating exactly what the Missouri position was on these matters as briefly as possible.

In any event we recommend that Synod elect a committee which is to be instructed to formulate theses which, beginning with the status controversial are to present the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple manner. The committee is to present its report as soon as possible, if not in the meetings of the various district synods during the next years, then at least at the next Deligate Synod Convention.⁴

The result was the ~~1932~~ result was the "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod."⁵ We could call this document "The Missouri Synod Union Document of 1932", for this document was Missouri Synod's statement of what it considered the doctrinal basis for any union which she would enter into. Wolf, in his book, "Documents of Lutheran Unity in America", correctly states that Missouri Synod drew up this statement as a prelude for future negotiations

concerning church fellowship.

As the prelude to any negotiations, the Synod drew up an authoritative statement of the doctrinal basis for any discussions of church fellowship relations. All the primary matters of Christian faith were treated with special emphasis on election, conversion, the doctrine of the church, & plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.

Thomas Kuster, in his dissertation, also looked upon "The Brief Statement" in this way.

*The resolution defeating "The Chicago Theses" forever, contained an accompanying recommendation. In the interest of pursuing Lutheran unity, in it's traditional way, the Synod suggested that a new set of Theses be drawn up, beginning with the "Status Controversial", to set forth the position (The Pure Doctrine) of the Missouri Synod, so that the basis on which it would join other bodies would be clear. 7

This statement then is the first of the Union Documents of the Missouri Synod in the 1930's.

It is to be noted that "the" "Brief Statement" put special emphasis on election, since this was the doctrine for which they mainly criticized the "Chicago Theses"

The chief criticisms of your Committee are that, in the "Short Presentation", etc, & under "C" the Scriptural doctrine of the universal will of grace is not clearly separated from the doctrine of election by grace. One gains the impression that election is included in the universal will of grace & concerns persons only in so far as it decrees that those shall enter heaven who, according to the foreknowledge of God, already believe. Everywhere one misses the clear statement that, in Christ Jesus, God elected unto faith, unto sonship, unto perseverance, & unto salvation, certain persons who are known to him alone. *8

Also notable is their lengthy statement concerning the doctrine of the church, spiritual priesthood, pastoral office, since in their rejection of the "Chicago Theses" they remarked,

In the article on the church, a clear confession that the church, in the true sense of the term, is invisible, was not made. The language enables the opponents to retain their old doctrine of a visible side of the church --- In the statement regarding the spiritual priesthood and the doctrine of the ministry nothing is said of the doctrine of conveyance, neither is it clearly stated that every local congregation is the supreme and sole authority in calling a minister, independent of the clergy of the body to which it belongs.

Many of the other articles in this statement are likewise a direct result of the grievances Missouri found in the "Chicago Theses." They felt that they needed to express themselves, therefore on these points, before any further strides forward in unity could be made. They wanted to ~~make~~^{make} it known what their doctrinal position was on every doctrine that was in controversy. They did not want to compromise any doctrine for the sake of unity.

Missouri was expressing itself on the principle of unity as she has always done. From their beginnings, there had emerged ^{two} ~~the~~ urgent needs which have always been complementary up to this time. The first of these needs was to establish and maintain pure doctrine. The second was to seek and establish unity in the church.¹⁰ Whenever unity was attempted with any other church body, the first principle of pure doctrine first had to be

attained by the other church body. So again we see these two principles proceeding hand in hand in this union document of 1932.

Dr. Maier of the Concordia Seminary also at this time expressed the strong view of Missouri, that there can be no true church fellowship where there is not complete doctrinal agreement. If the teachings of the various churches do not agree one-hundred percent, then there is no basis for any fellowship.

But complete and absolute agreement in all articles of faith is imperative. A church in which one group insistently and unreservedly holds to the complete inspiration of the Scriptures with all the implications of that doctrine, but in which another maintains that the Bible may be regarded as an infallible norm and rule only so far as it is inspired; in which one group denies the visible millennial presence of our Lord on the face of the earth, but in which another maintains this belief; or in which one division regards predestination as the pure and unconditional gift of God's grace, while another division insists that we are predestined to salvation because God has foreseen our faith, --- in such a church, with all its external union, regardless of how well organized and coordinated its joint efforts may be, there can be no inner, spiritual unity. . . .

And Dr. Maier continues to point out ^{the} destructiveness of trying to unite opposing forces.

Although Missouri made these strong, immovable statements concerning fellowship among Lutheran bodies, they did not close the door to future unity. This document was looked upon as a document with which to base future church fellowship. Their desire was to set up committees with other church bodies which they recognized as not presently being one in doctrine and

practice with them. There was always the hope that doctrinal unity could be achieved with other Lutheran bodies according to the doctrinal beliefs of Missouri. In other words, they hoped to first spell out what the differences were between them and another church body, and also then change the teachings of the other synod to agree with their teaching.

At this time the Ohio, Buffalo, and Iowa Synods, now merged as the American Lutheran Church, again extended the invitation to Missouri to reopen negotiations leading toward church fellowship. At their formation in 1930, they made this quite clear that they wanted to seek doctrinal unity with other Lutheran bodies, especially Missouri.

We stand ready to reopen negotiations (with Missouri Synod) looking toward better mutual understanding. As regards any other Lutheran Synods from whom we are still separated, we express our readiness to negotiate with them also on the basis of the Minneapolis Thesis, and we sincerely hope and pray that such negotiations will ultimately result in uniting the Lutheran forces in America. Resolved that we take part in the organization of the American Lutheran Conference, and become a member thereof.¹²

The ALC was likewise strong on not entering into a union with any other Lutherans who did not confess as they did.

Let it be a warning to our own American Lutheran Church, to which God has entrusted His truth as contained in the Scriptures and set forth in the glorious confessions of the Lutheran Reformation, never to deviate from this truth, but to hold fast our heritage. Let it be a warning to our Church never to attempt to enter into compromise with those who deny the truth, thus relinquishing certain truths for the purpose of gaining favor with the masses,

especially at the present day when the enemies of Christ, within and without the organized Church, have joined forces to put an end to Christianity. The danger of making concessions to those who have a "different spirit" for the purpose of self-protection, seems to be greater than ever before.¹³

But at the same time, it needs to be noted that the ALC. ~~has~~^{took} a dim view of Missouri's demand that full agreement, even in non-fundamental doctrines, be reached.

In the January 1933, issue of the "Concordia Theological Monthly," a series of doctrinal statements is submitted upon whose adoption the recognition of other Lutheran bodies on the part of the Missouri Synod is made dependent. In ~~the~~ conclusion the editor states: "A few other questions which will have to be discussed and settled according to the Word of God are those of the celebration of Sunday...and a number of other points, chiefly in the field of Christian ethics." If these matters are essential to unity in the faith and if this type of unity is to be the basis of a union with other Lutheran bodies, there is no hope whatsoever for the Lutherans of this country ever to get together.¹⁴

ALC. took the first step in setting up a commission for looking into church fellowship between itself and Missouri. In their resolutions of the Third Convention, they stated,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Church authorize its president to appoint a committee to confer with those synodical bodies with which we are not in fellowship, with the end in view of establishing pulpit- and altar-fellowships on the basis of the Minneapolis Theses.¹⁵

That this resolution also included the Missouri Synod,

can be seen by the first part of the report of Committee 21 of the 1935 Missouri Convention.

Whereas, the American Lutheran Church has addressed a communication to our Synod, seeking to establish "pulpit-and altar-fellowships", and has appointed a committee to confer with us to that end . . .

In this same report, Missouri resolves to confer with the American Lutheran Church.

Resolved, that we declare our willingness to confer with other Lutheran bodies on problems of Lutheran union with a view towards effecting true unity on the basis of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

Between 1935 and 1938 six meetings were held between the committees of the two synods.

But with all this flourish for achieving unity, the obstacles to be overcome were great, especially with Missouri's insistence on complete doctrinal unity even when it came to non-fundamental doctrines.

The main hindrance was the American Lutheran Church's involvement and participation in the American Lutheran Conference. In September, 1930, the Concordia Theological Monthly carried the complete "Minneapolis Theses" of the American Lutheran Conference, and gave their comments concerning them. While speaking favorably of these theses in some points, it points out weaknesses of omission, vagueness, and ambiguity in others. Its main criticism, however, came in the doctrine of election. While the statement on election in the "Minneapolis Theses" could scripturally stand, it was questionable whether it was taken scripturally because the

Norwegian Lutheran Church subscribed to these theses and, at the same time, held to its own Opgjoer, which was unscriptural concerning the doctrine of election. An article in the Concordia Theological Monthly notices this apparent discrepancy.

Concerning the paragraph on Election the question suggested itself to us whether it is not too brief. While the statements made are Scriptural and important, they are not specific enough to exclude, for instance, the error of Huber, who identified the decree of Redemption and the decree of Election. In this connection a question arises with reference to the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. This body stands committed to the Opgjoer, which agitated men's minds a decade ago. Will the Opgjoer continue to represent the official position of the Norwegian Lutheran Church when these theses have been adopted, or will it be superceded by the declaration we are considering? Does this agreement imply that the two objectionable features of the Opgjoer, namely, that, on the one hand, it places the intuitu-fidei view of Election on a par with the doctrine taught by Article XI of the Formula of Concord, and that on the other hand, it fails to be specific enough in its rejection of synergism, will be corrected? We, who were among the critics of the Opgjoer regret that these matters are not touched upon. 18

There were also other matters concerning the American Lutheran Conference with which the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was opposed. One was concerning the ~~same~~^{false} spirit portrayed by the Scandinavians when they accepted the section in the "Minneapolis Agreement" dealing with unionism. In 1931 the Concordia Theological Monthly, in an article entitled "What is Unionism?", reprinted the third paragraph of the second article of the Minneapolis Agreement. They then gave this insight.

Acceptation ex animo of the proposition just quoted will place all these bodies solidly upon the footing of Lutheran confessionalism.

If the rejection of "all unionism" is meant to reject all unionism and the principle of Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, etc., is accepted as it stands and without the weakening clauses that were attached to the Galesburg Rule, a greater Lutheran union than anything hitherto hoped for by Lutheran students of events might not be far in the offing. As a matter of fact, the Scandinavian bodies in the Conference -- the Norwegian to a less, the Swedes to a greater extent -- have long ago permitted violations of the rule and cannot subscribe to it with clear convictions.¹⁹

In various articles they also revealed some of the unionism which was being practiced by members of the American Lutheran Conference. In 1934, C.T.M. cited a newspaper article revealing just this fact. They added this comment.

We have frequently called attention to such gross unionistic practices of pastors of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, and of pastors of other churches which are members of the American Lutheran Conference. Up to this time we have not heard of any discipline or criticism of such practices, and we are obliged to believe that they are becoming a fixed policy in the American Lutheran Conference.²⁰

Another false doctrine found taught by a member of the American Lutheran Conference was chiliasm. The guilty member was again the Augustana Synod. "It was with regret that we read an article in the Lutheran Companion (Augustana Synod),...which plainly teaches chiliastic doctrine."²¹ Then they quote some of the statements from this article to prove they taught chiliasm.

But the errors which Missouri found were not only among the other members of the American Lutheran Conference. There were also things which bothered Missouri

about the confession and practice of the American Lutheran Church itself. Aside from the fact that the A.L.C. was practicing church fellowship with the other members of the American Lutheran Conference, they confessionally held a pretty loose interpretation of the rule of pulpit fellowship. The official organ of the A.L.C., the "Lutheran Standard", was noted as having the ^{following} question and answer on pulpit fellowship:

"Is cooficiation on any occasion whatsoever included in the prohibition of pulpit-fellowship with any churches outside of the American Lutheran Conference?

The American Lutheran Church is an advisory, and not a legislative body. If you keep this in mind, it will help you to answer this and like questions. Pulpit-fellowship with errorists is wrong because it compromises the truth and encourages error. Now, just how far can one of our pastors go in appearing on the same platform at a high-school baccalaureate service, at a community memorial service in a hall, on the cemetery, or even in a church before he is guilty of compromising his Lutheran faith and encouraging what we believe to be an error? Can we expect all to be absolutely agreed on each individual case? Can we expect all to be inclined to be too liberal and others too conservative. And all that we can expect of the American Lutheran Church is that it will exercise a brotherly supervision over its pastors and congregations also in respect to this matter." Under this interpretation of the rule the prohibition of pulpit fellowship with errorists no longer prohibits. 22

Another doctrine which needed to be checked out fully by Missouri was the doctrine of election. It was noted earlier that the Norwegian Lutheran Church held to false views concerning election. A.L.C. had also previously held erroneous views about election, especially the Ohio Synod, which was one of the three

synods which formed the A.L.C. Back in 1872, the Ohio Synod had joined with the Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Norwegian synods, to form the Synodical Conference. But in 1882, they withdrew because they did not agree with Missouri and the others on the doctrine of election.

There was one final major hindrance in these years of meetings from 1935 to 1938, This was the attempts by the U.L.C.A. to effect unity with the A.L.C. Missouri had also been invited by the United Lutheran Church of America to come to meetings in order to bring about church unity. However, after a few meetings Missouri realized that union here was next to impossible. The main reason was the difference in the doctrine of inspiration.

Whereas, in these discussions the theologians declare themselves in full harmony with the presentation of the doctrine of conversion and predestination contained in the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, but were not able to come to an agreement with our committee on the fundamental doctrine of inspiration . . . 23

The American Lutheran Church had not yet made any sign that there was any hope of unity with the Lutheran Church of America. They also voiced their opinion that the L.C.A. held to serious false doctrines, especially in regard to the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy.

Against the U.L.C.A., the Conferences "Minneapolis Theses" bore witness that on the issues of inspiration of Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, fellowship with other churches, and attitude toward secret religious societies, the U.L.C.A. was seriously deficient. 24

Nevertheless, they also at times showed a leaning toward unity with the U.L.C.A., inspite of their differences. The editor of the Lutheran Companion had a very strong feeling toward unity.

When we stop to consider that the 'new federation will devote its energies toward elimination of overlapping of work of the various bodies which will compose it, treating the problem of the churches as a whole . . . ' there is one Lutheran body which, in our opinion, should be a part of this American Lutheran Conference, namely, the United Lutheran Church in America . . . If we cannot as yet expect the Synodical Conference to join in a larger Lutheran confederation, we can prevent that there shall be three instead of two large Lutheran groups.²⁵

If Missouri were to hold true to the course it had always taken of unity, and again expressed in the "Brief Statement", any hope of a future church fellowship between itself and the American Lutheran Church looked empty. The A.L.C. would have to make quite a few changes in their doctrine and especially in their practice. The A.L.C. was making itself clear that it would not give up membership in the American Lutheran Conference. Therefore its practice of the doctrine of church fellowship would never agree with Missouri's traditional view of church fellowship. If the A.L.C. was not going to change in all of its false views, then the only other course for possible union, was a change on the part of Missouri. Missouri would have to take a different stance on the doctrine of church fellowship than they had previously taken.

Since Missouri had held to their present stance since their beginning, and had again strongly asserted itself on their traditional view of church fellowship

in 1932 in their "Brief Statement", change did not seem likely, at least not for quite a while. However there were some subversive trends and feelings coming to the forefront in Missouri in the 1930's which would change the situation quite soon.

The most prominent of these trends can be seen in a group of men who were devoting themselves to bring about change in the Missouri Synod. They wanted to effect whatever changes were necessary to put Missouri into the public eye and eventually to make the Missouri Synod a very prominent synod. While this goal is not that bad of goal, it did not always keep, or at times even favor, Missouri's strong doctrinal stand. This was especially true when their doctrinal stand stood in the way making Missouri favorable to the public.

The leader of this group was Paul Lindemann. Already back in 1914, Lindemann sensed that reform was needed, especially in the area of changing from German to English. Kuster gives this account of the beginning of their group.

As early as 1914, Lindemann, together with a number of Eastern pastors and laymen of the synod, had foreseen the time soon coming when German immigration would no longer supply the synod all the growth it desired. At that time it would have to begin work in earnest with the general American populace among which the synod was either unknown or, because of faint knowledge of its position, misunderstood and disparaged.²⁶

The emphasis on German was only one area which Lindemann wanted to bring about change. There were also other areas.

Other church bodies had become very well-known through the influence of popular personalities, Lindemann noted; but Missouri's conservative stance, especially its insistence on separation of church and state, its stand against unionism (i.e., joint activity in matters of faith with those with whom one is not in fellowship), its preoccupation with the tremendous task of gathering in the massive German immigrations, and its widespread use of the German language, especially during and after the World War, all tended to keep the synod out of the favorable public eye. The time was coming, these men felt, when the synod would have to make efforts to present a more favorable image to the American public.

To accomplish this purpose, Lindemann founded the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. He stated that its purpose was "to acquaint the general public with the history, doctrines, principles, and practice of the Lutheran Church."²⁸ In 1917-1918, for the purpose of further carrying out his goals, Lindemann started the publication of the American Lutheran. This magazine was an unofficial magazine of the Missouri Synod and gave as its purpose "to deal with the practical side of church work, as a kind of Lutheran technical magazine; refraining from doctrinal or devotional discussions and concentrating on practical methods of local church expansion."²⁹

Kuster further remarks on the purpose of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau and of the American Lutheran magazine. He notes that by starting a special unofficial organization within the synod for the purpose of promoting their reform, they implied that such reform could not be expected to originate from official sources. "The synod would not change itself but would have to be changed." And by placing their emphasis on

practical, rather than doctrinal matters, they further implied that this reform of the Missouri Synod would not be made entirely on doctrinal grounds.³⁰

In the early years of the American Lutheran, Lindemann and its other writers never came out with explicit criticisms, but by 1934, shortly after the "Brief Statement" was adopted by the Missouri Synod, the American Lutheran started preparing to make its criticisms more explicit. Lindemann again was the one who worked out a plan for doing this. The plan was entitled "Plan for the American Lutheran -- covering the issues from October 1934 to May or June 1935 (for the information of the board of directors, not for publication)."³¹ The stated purpose of the "Plan" was to address itself to three areas, namely, "1) the existence of serious problems, 2) the reason for these problems, 3) the possible solution of these problems."³²

Although the American Lutheran didn't accomplish the far-reaching goals it had anticipated because of the lack of whole-hearted support, it did achieve three important effects among the small but influential group it did manage to penetrate.

The first effect it had was creating "a rhetorical situation where one didn't exist previously." Lindemann "succeeded in raising for rather wide discussion matters which had never been widely discussed before. He had placed in the realm of contingency matters which had previously been beyond dispute."

The second effect which it has was that it "tended to shake any total confidence that may have been felt

for the synod's officials, and through them, for the synod's entire position." Simply by calling for the far-reaching reforms which he did, he most likely raised doubt in the minds of some "regarding the unassailability of the synod's tradition-oriented position". Especially was this true in regard to Missouri's doctrinal position and its feeling that it had the monopoly on the truth. That general belief was now being challenged.

The third effect of this "Plan" was that it "advocated a shift in the criteria by which synodical activity of any kind was to be judged." The criteria previously had been "if a particular course were sanctioned by some element of doctrine, no other criterion, such as public opinion or synodical 'image' would matter." Lindemann, on the other hand, while being careful not to attack the doctrinal standard, very strongly suggested that pragmatic standards be raised above the traditional doctrinal standards.³³

So Paul Lindemann and the others who belonged to his bureau and helped publish the American Lutheran turned out to be quite influential in this period between the two union documents of the 1930's. Before 1938 they didn't effect any major change. Neither can we say that it was their intent to undermine the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. They just did not like to see the practical matters, especially the image of the synod, suffer because of a traditional doctrinal stand.³⁴

From a broader viewpoint, the synod under

went no major change until 1938, but it was the subver-
sive trends which made the change in 1938 possible.
These men had injected a feeling that what Missouri
had always traditionally held to was not necessarily
the best thing for Missouri, This was especially true
in regard to the fellowship stand of Missouri. The
influence of these men helped to set the stage for
1938 and also later for 1944.

There were also other events leading toward a
changing attitude on the part of Missouri in its
fellowship principles. In 1935, Missouri decided that
there was no reason for staying out of the army and
navy chaplaincy programs. In its Synodical Convention
of this year, it noted the following:

. . . Whereas, Thus the acceptance of a com-
mission in the United States Chaplain's Corps
is in no wise contrary to Scripture, the
Lutheran Confessions, and the Constitution of
Synod and violates no article of faith nor
synodical principal . . .; and
Whereas, The very object of Synod . . . are
best and most advantageously accomplished in
this large missionfield by having such of our
clergy as are especially fitted for this type
of work represented in the United States Cha-
plains' Corps; therefore be it
Resolved, that . . . be authorized to . . .
3) officially commission such pasors as qualify
for this important soul-saving service in the
Army and Navy of the United States of America,
both in times of peace and war.³⁵

In 1939 and 1941 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran
Synod came up with a different conclusion regarding
involvement in chaplaincy.

2. We believe that to appoint or call ordained
pastors as commissioned chaplains in accor-
dance with the rules and regulations of the
government, which include remuneration by the
government for their services, as well as the

final choice by the government of the men so commissioned, is not in harmony ~~with~~ ^{with} Scripture, because the fundamental principal of the separation of Church and state is thereby violated; and

3. Although we have been most definitely assured by such who have been, and are now in the service that it is possible for such commissioned chaplains to practice sound doctrine and confessional Lutheranism, we fear after a thorough study of AR 605-30, TM 2270-5 and AR 60-5 that it will become a practical impossibility for them once in the service. ³⁶ (1938)

The commissioning of Army and Navy chaplains by our Synod would conflict with Scriptural principles and established Lutheran practices ^{37 (1941)}

This report to the Synod in 1941 went on to list three areas of conflict. the first was that the chaplaincy commissioning was a direct violation of the divine call. The second was a violation of the separation of church and state. And the third conflict was given as "the spirit of doctrinal indifferentism pervades the regulations of the War Department pertaining to the office of chaplaincy and fosters unionism".

Who was right or wrong in regard to the Scriptural sanctity of chaplaincy is not the point of this paper. But the last point made by the Wisconsin Synod seems to have been a very valid one, for chaplaincy was often looked upon as a ministry which crossed over denominational lines. An article in the Milwaukee Journal in 1944 brings this out. It is entitled "Great Unity of Purpose Seen Among Chaplains at Front."

Out here, religion does not follow established patterns. Ministers, priests and rabbis preach from the same altars. There is a great unity of purpose. Whatever differences there may be at home, the churches must maintain the spirit of this unity. ³⁸

So whether or not Missouri had scriptural grounds for entering the chaplaincy program, its involvement added to the influence of having change for the benefit of unity among the churches. Unionism was given an entrance into the solid Missouri Synod stand against unionism. In its official union document of 1932, the "Brief Statement", Missouri let it be known that there could be no union without complete doctrinal unity. Chaplaincy was another big influence away from that stand.

The third major influence attacking Missouri's traditional stand on fellowship came about in the form of the Brux case. Adolph Brux was a Missouri Synod missionary among the Mohammedans in India. In his field of work, he crossed lines with other missionaries of different denominations. Working with them, he became convinced that they were as much Christian as he was. Although their denominational backgrounds were different, he felt that there was no just reason why he should not pray with these fellow missionaries. To defend his views, Brux wrote a paper on prayer fellowship in which he challenged the traditional Missouri Synod interpretation of Romans 16:17. This challenge is often seen as the first explicit internal challenge by anyone to Missouri's stand on unionism.

The first challenge came in the form of an exegesis of Romans 16:17 by Dr. Adolph Brux, a scholar who was attached to the Missouri Synod mission in Madras State, India. This exegesis was written by Brux to defend his own action in engaging in prayer-fellowship

with missionaries of other denominations. Dr. Brux's conclusions were that the traditional Missouri interpretation of Romans 16:17 was wrong, and the the Synod's all-encompassing application of ³⁹the text to other churches was in error.

The matter came to a head in 1935 when on Furlough, Brux came to the United States and presented his case to the Synod. Those who were given the charge of looking into Brux's argumentation and presenting a recommendation to Synod at its convention were not able to refute Brux's arguments. They likewise began to wonder if you could make prayer fellowship equal church fellowship as Missouri had always done.

Since 1905 (Bente) synodical position was that prayer fellowship equal church fellowship; all texts forbidding unionism forbid prayer with Christians outside the Synodical Conference. The test case, Brux. Like the Indian Conference, the Foreign Mission Board, the faculty committee (Fuerbringer and myself), the Cleveland floor committee was unable to make prayer fellowship equal church fellowship and the resolution resulted which define unionistic prayer ~~and~~ ^{and} recommended Brux for return to India. This was a complete reversal of the 1905 position. ⁴⁰

But even though the committee that was working with Brux had not refuted him, in fact they had acknowledged that his argument held weight, they nevertheless did not report this to Synod. Instead they reported only part of the facts, stressing Dr. Brux's retraction of his false doctrine charge against the Missouri Synod.

Dr. Brux states that he withdraws his appeal and expresses his regret for the publication of any subjective judgments. He withdraws the charge of false doctrine against Synod. As for the essay Prayer-Fellowship, he states that he had never considered the treatise as final, but merely as a contribution to the discussion of the issue. ⁴¹

Their report also emphasized his willingness to retract any passages which are proven to be unscriptural.

As to the clarity of Scripture . . . Dr. Brux declares that he in no manner doubts the clarity of Scripture and is in full agreement with our Church's doctrinal position. Furthermore, he states that, if there is any passage in his essay which any one is inclined to interpret as being unscriptural, he is willing to reconstruct such a statement or withdraw it entirely.⁴²

And they also mention a part of his paper which talks about unionistic prayer in a perfectly legitimate way.

Scripture very plainly prohibits compromise of the truth, indifference to doctrine, unionism, and giving of offense and therefore forbids every kind of prayer-fellowship which involves one of these objectionable features. -- There are in the domain of casuistry cases where the question whether unionistic prayer-fellowship is involved cannot be answered in advance.⁴³

The ^{report of the} committee did not say, however, that they were unanimously agreed with all of Dr. Brux's essay, even though he never meant it to be final. They never pointed out that they agreed with Dr. Brux's interpretation of Romans 16:17 and other passages, which contradicted the traditional interpretation of the Missouri Synod. So in effect they left the question of whether prayer fellowship was equal to church fellowship or not, wide open.

But with us the refusal of Synod to place on record in 1935 the unanimous opinion of the committee that Brux was right and his critics had been wrong in their use of certain texts, continues to plague us whenever the question is made an issue.⁴⁴

These are three of the events which laid the groundwork for change in Missouri's position on fellowship as

expressed in their "Brief Statement". There were probably many other contributing factors. Bauer in his article, "To Recall", sums up the different influences quite well.

There was the matter of Christian fellowship (altar, pulpit, prayer). This had come to be a major concern to many pastors and laymen especially with regard to foreign missions and to certain aspects of practice on the home front. The Brux case had raised serious doubts about the evangelical practice in foreign fields. At home, there were some new problems created by our men in the armed services and the chaplaincies established by Synod to serve them. There were all the campus churches attending to the spiritual needs of increasing numbers of Lutheran students of all synods. In general there was the increasing social mobility of American society. Like others, Lutherans were on the move from place to place and from church to church. Synodical lines were becoming more and more indistinct and, to many, insignificant. Was it still possible in practice to draw hard and fast lines? . . . ⁴⁵

The result of all these influences was a turn-about in Missouri's position when they put out their "Union Resolutions" in 1938. Prior to Missouri's Synodical convention in 1938, the representatives of the American Lutheran Church, who had been meeting with the representatives of the Missouri Synod, put out a document which summarized their views concerning the doctrines ^{which} Missouri felt were the controversial doctrines between the two synods and which were taken up in their "Brief Statement". This document of the A.L.C. was entitled "Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church".

Basically this declaration covered the doctrines of the "Brief Statements" in three categories. ⁴⁶ The

first category consisted of doctrines in which the A.L.C. was conscious of being in agreement with Missouri. These doctrines were not discussed in detail in the "Declaration".

The second grouping contained doctrines which they felt were correctly stated in the "Brief Statement", but which they also felt needed to be supplemented. These doctrines were "Scripture and Inspiration", "Universal Plan of Salvation", Predestination and Conversion", "The Church", and "The Office of the Public Administration of the Means of Grace". So far the "Declaration" was a fairly good document. It stayed within the bounds of Missouri traditional doctrinal stand. However, even in this part some did find some weaknesses in phraseology and interpretation.⁴⁷

The third part of the "Declaration" was the part which certainly would have cut off any hopes for future church-fellowship, if Missouri still stood on the same ground on which it stood when it formulated the union statement of 1932. In this third part the "Declaration" listed four areas in which the A.L.C. could not totally agree with the "Brief Statement". These areas were the doctrines concerning the Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, the resurrection of the martyrs, and the doctrine of the 1000 years.⁴⁸ In this third area the "Declaration" did not say that Missouri's position was wrong. Rather it asked that Missouri be tolerant of the views of the A.L.C., views which had been traditionally rejected by the Missouri Synod.

At the convention at St. Louis, Missouri, in 1938, the Missouri Synod voted to accept the "Brief Statement" and the "Declaration" of the A.L.C. as the doctrinal basis for future church fellowship.

2. That Synod declare that the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the Provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod's action thereupon, be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.⁴⁹

This together with the remaining comments of their report became known as the "Union Resolutions" of 1938.

It is true that Missouri did not, as of yet, establish church-fellowship with the A.L.C. They listed some important qualifications which first needed to be met before any church-fellowship could take place. But even though they made these important qualifications, the fact still remains that they considered the "Declaration", with which they were not in total doctrinal agreement, to be part of the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship.

The committee declared -- and was supported by others from the floor in its declaration -- that adoption of the report would not be identical with establishing fraternal relations, the report merely pronouncing acceptance of the report of the Committee on Church Union as a settlement of the doctrinal controversies . . . not only as a basis for further negotiations, but as a sufficient and adequate basis for future fellowship.⁵⁰ (underlining my own)

Kuster makes the following comment concerning this:

According to its "Declaration," it was in agreement with all the doctrines of the "Brief Statement," with the exception of the "non-fundamental" doctrines; with these it

asked only that Missouri recognize that differences there would not be disruptive of church fellowship. It did not seem much to ask. And yet, Missouri, by acceding to this request, would in effect be denying its former corporate conviction regarding the completeness of its doctrinal system. Such a denial, as noted above, would have a profound effect on the synod's fellowship principles . . . 51

When looking at the difference in Missouri's two union documents of the 1930's, you can't help but notice the change in their stand. The "Brief Statement" was the last official statement which bore out the stand they had taken on church-fellowship ever since their beginnings. The "Union Resolutions" issued in a new era for the Missouri Synod. The concept of complete doctrinal agreement in both word and practice, before there can be any doctrinal basis for church unity has left the picture. And with that concept out of the way, the door was opened for a very real fellowship between Missouri and the A.L.C. and even with the L.C.A.

ENDNOTES

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3. Preceedings of the 34th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1929, p. 110.
4. Ibid., p. 110.
5. A good summary of the "Brief Statement" can be found in Documents of Lutheran Unity in America by R.C. Wolf, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, pp. 381-393.
6. R. C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, p. 379.
7. Thomas A. Kuster, The Fellowship Dispute in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod: A Rhetorical Study of Ecumenical Change, Part of his doctoral thesis at the University of Wisconsin, 1969, p. 43.
8. Proceedings of the 34th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1929, p.111.
9. Ibid., p. 111.
10. Kuster, Op. Cit., p. 24.
11. Dr. W. A. Maier, "What is Essential for a Union of the American Lutheran Church-Bodies?" Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 3, November 1932, pp. 866-867.
12. Official Minutes of the 1st Convention (ALC), 1930, p. 36.
13. Official Minutes of the 3rd Convention (ALC), 1934, p. 10.
14. Ibid., p. 25
15. Ibid., p. 235.
16. Proceedings of the 36th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1935, p. 221.
17. Ibid., p. 221.
18. "Theses Representing the Doctrinal Basis of the Proposed American Lutheran Conference", Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 1, September 1930, pp. 688-692

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19. "What Is Unionism", Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 2, August 1931, p. 579.
20. "Unionistic Practices", C.T.M., Vol. 5, May 1934, pp. 402-403.
21. "Chiliasm in the 'Lutheran Companion'", C.T.M., Vol. 5, January 1934, pp. 63-64.
22. "The 'Lutheran Standard' on Pulpit Fellowship", C.T.M., Vol. 2, Nov. 1931, p. 857.
23. Proceedings of the 37th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1938, p. 233.
24. R. C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, p. 339.
25. "The American Lutheran Conference and the U.L.C.", Theological Quarterly, Vol. 28, January 1931, pp. 60-61, also C.T.M., Vol. 2, January 1931, pp. 65-66.
26. Kuster, Op. Cit., pp. 46-47.
27. Ibid., p. 47.
28. Ibid., p. 47. Cited from Paul Lindemann, "Publicity Work in the Missouri Synod", in Ebenezer, pp. 456-465
29. Ibid., p. 48.
30. Ibid., p. 48.
31. Ibid., p. 50. Cited from Theodore Engelder in Ebenezer, p. 112.
32. Ibid., p. 51. Cited from Paul Lindemann, "Plan for education and discussion, American Lutheran," included in a packet of materials he sent to Lawrence Mayer, October 30, 1934,
33. Ibid., pp. 52-57. These pages cover in more detail the 3 effects just mentioned.
34. Ibid., p. 58.
35. Proceedings of the 36th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1935, pp. 132-133.
36. Synodal-Berichte (WELS), 1939, p. 68.
37. Synodal-Berichte (WELS), 1941, pp. 43-44.

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38. Milwaukee Journal, August 29, 1944.
39. John W. Hattery, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine of Unionism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. 44, p. 181.
40. Theodore Graebner, "The Cloak of the Cleric", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. 44, pp. 4-5
41. Proceedings of the 36th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1935, p. 293.
42. Ibid., p. 293.
43. Ibid., p. 293.
44. Theodore Graebner, "The Burden of Infallibility", C.H.I. Quarterly, Vol. 65, p. 93.
45. Bauer, "To Recall", C.H.I. Quarterly, Vol. 43, p. 173.
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47. Ibid., p. 62. Kuster cites, as proof for this, unprinted (mimeographed) material from Theodore Hanssen in folder "1938 Convention".
48. For a more complete picture of the Declaration's views concerning these doctrines, cf. Proceedings of the 37th Regular Convention (LCMS), 1938, pp. 221-227.
49. Ibid., p. 231.
50. Lutheran Witness, Vol. 57 No. 14, July 12, 1938, p. 234.
51. Kuster, Op. Cit., p. 64.

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