

The Twentieth Century Shaping of United States Lutheranism

[1984]

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Part One: The Way It Was in 1900

There is a threefold timeliness involved in a treatment of “The Twentieth-Century Shaping of U.S. Lutheranism” at this time. For one thing, we have recently celebrated significant anniversaries of Lutheran Confessions; the quadricentennial of the Formula of Concord in 1977 and of the Book of Concord in 1980 and the 450th anniversary of the Catechism in 1979, the *Augustana* in 1980 and the Apology in 1981. A time of heightened concern for the Lutheran Confessions is a good time to view in some depth this century’s shaping of our denomination. It is obviously those Confessions that will determine and designate for us what in that shaping is proper alignment and what is ugly distortion, what is a result of confessional allegiance and what is confessional betrayal.

There is also a timeliness produced by the very time that sees the publication of this sketch of our century’s shaping of United States Lutheranism. In history work it is axiomatic that it takes a half century or two thirds for historical patterns to become obvious and for historians to become comfortable in making their evaluations and pronouncements. It is just two thirds of a century since action heated up in the shaping of our denomination back in 1917. Sixty some years later we should be able to distinguish what is telling from what is trifling and what is relevant from what is *rara avis*.

There is finally also a timeliness suggested by the look ahead. One does not have to be a prophet or a prophet’s son to be able to predict that in the very next five years there will be some far reaching developments in “The Twentieth-Century Shaping of United States Lutheranism.” A catalytic agent has been introduced into the developing LCA-ALC interaction, the agent of the dislodged Missouri left, the AELC. This agent wanted something to happen and has made something happen and more happenings will soon occur. What happens soon could well turn out to be the single most important event in the long history of United States Lutheranism. Important, yes; but also catastrophic. We could be doing worse things these days than fortifying our understanding of the happening in advance of its advent in 1988.

The general treatment of this timely theme might well be indicated at the outset to develop thought lines for the reader’s guidance. This is a five-fold division of the topic:

- I. The Way It Was in 1900
- II. First Mergers in the Twentieth Century
- III. The Twenties and the Thirties
- IV. The Realignments of the 1960s
- V. The Last Decades of the Century

In the treatment of the topic one basic assumption has been made: among the readers there will be few who do not have knowledge about the facts in this case. That knowledge is assumed. The effort will be to fortify the facts that are known by supplying an integrating pattern, a reliable touchstone that provides system and sense to the single developments. The effort will not be to belabor the obvious surface facts but to uncover and trace the pattern.

The tracing will have to be done in the main on the basis of the first-hand record, the prime documents. Some few books have been written on the subject. John Tietjen's 1966 study, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity?* comes to mind immediately.¹ The book presents much of the story accurately. Its main thesis, however, is flawed. The right path to Lutheran unity, Tietjen argues is an upgraded version of the General Council's position of "confessional subscription" in the LCA sense.²

This is an oversimplification that does not do justice to the General Council's clearly stated, if not always realized, desire to reach beyond mere confessional subscription. Already in the unalterable "The Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity" the Council leader, C.P. Krauth had insisted:

That Confessions may be such a testimony of Unity, and bond of Union, they must be accepted in every statement of doctrine, in their own true, native, original, and only sense. Those who set them forth and use them, must not only agree to use the same words, but must understand these words in one and the same sense.³

Thirty-five years later a leading General Council theologian made this point: "It is not subscription to Confessions of faith that is desired, so much as to the faith of the Confessors. The unity of the Church does not consist in subscribing to the same Confessions, but in the acceptance and teaching of the same doctrines."⁴ The last Council president, Theodore Schmauck, is even more explicit in torpedoing Tietjen's thesis when he writes: "The real question is not what do you subscribe, but what do you believe and publicly teach and what are you transmitting to those who come after?"⁵

Sufficient has been said to make the point that all who wish to augment their evaluation of these pages with home-reading in the few available books should approach their reading with some caution.

Also deserving of bibliographical mention in this connection is E. Clifford Nelson's *Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970*.⁶ It provides an abundance of material on recent Lutheran mergers, both as to what was visible to the eye and also as to what went on behind the scenes. The book is interesting, even fascinating, from this angle but its basic approach is to view Lutheran mergers in the framework of "the more the merrier" and to advocate "maximum cooperation and fellowship."⁷

Other books and articles on Lutheran mergers that deal with more specific subjects might better be referred to when their specific subject is being given consideration. In general it can be said at this point that the majority of these writings may be able to supply the facts in the case but usually manage to twist them because they share the same general approach to the subject that Tietjen and Nelson demonstrate. Our use of these bibliographical materials will have to be judicious and limited.

The differing approach of the writer, an approach which hopefully is shared by the readers, might well be set down specifically at this point. The thesis that dominates the five chapters in the writing can be summarily stated in this form: much of the merging of Lutherans in our country and century has served to enhance the goals of the General Synod - United Lutheran Church in America - Lutheran Church of America wing of United States Lutheranism. These are the goals that seek more numerical union but not more doctrinal unity. The search for these goals has succeeded in eroding more and more the confessional Lutheran position that calls

for unity of faith and unity in the confession of that faith and unity in the practice of the faith as the *conditio sine qua non* for mergers and federations.

A sketch of the line of thought for this first part of the writing is presented at this point for the reader's convenience:

Part One: The Way It Was in 1900

I. The 1900 Status Quo

- A. Some Statistics
- B. Picture in the East
- C. Picture in the Midwest

II. Merger Warm-up in the 1890s

- A. The United Norwegian Church
- B. The Danish Merger
- C. The Wisconsin Federation

III. Intersynodical Discussions at the Turn of the Century

- A. Diets in the East
- B. The Free Conferences on Conversion and Election
- C. Ohio-Iowa Agreements

IV. Prospects for Merger

- A. Merger Barriers
- B. Merger Theology
- C. Merger Possibilities

I. The 1900 Status Quo

These preliminary statements about the timeliness, the treatment and the thesis of this writing should suffice in setting the stage for a look at the *a quo* terminal, for a review of "The Way it Was in 1900." The contrast between the 1985 and the 1900 situation may well be demonstrated by a look at relevant statistics.

Some Statistics

At the turn of the century there were in our land according to the *Lutheran World Almanac* 1,665,878 Lutheran communicants.⁸ They were served by 6,710 pastors and had established 11,123 congregations.

Lenker's *Lutherans in All Lands*, using round numbers sets the figures at 12,000 congregations and 7000 pastors.⁹ He also supplies the astounding total of 10,200,000 baptized members. Even for the pre-pill era this sounds high as a companion figure to the 1,665,878 communicants. What is to be remembered is that many of those large families were recent immigrants from Lutheran lands. They had been baptized back in the Old Country but had not yet been gathered into the fold of a Lutheran congregation.

A statistic that is especially relevant for this discussion is the number of Lutheran synods established in the land. In 1900 there were 61 distinct Lutheran synods. Some, it is true, were loosely federated in such general bodies as the General Synod, the General Council, the United Synod of the South, the Synodical Conference and the Wisconsin *Allgemeine Synode*, formed in 1892. The 61 synods, however, were independent enough to be counted separately in spite of the federation membership that most possessed.

That total of 61 synods did not change appreciably in the first years of the present century. In 1917 it still stood at 62. In 1918 statistical reports indicate 21 Lutheran synods and subsequent mergers have lowered that number even more. That is of course what this writing is all about.

Picture in the East

A brief scan of the federations is in place. The old General Synod, formed in 1820, had suffered losses to the rising tide of Lutheran confessionalism in the mid 1860s but had by 1900 recovered numerically, if not in its share of Lutheran communicants then certainly in the number of area synods within its federation. It could count 24 such member synods. They ranged from such venerable and populous bodies as the East and West Pennsylvanian Synods, each with well over 20,000 communicants to such young and tiny bodies as the Rocky Mountain Synod, founded in the early 1890s and striving hard to achieve a membership total of 1000.

The General Council, in operation since 1867, had fewer area synods, only 9. Its communicant strength, however, easily surpassed that of the General Synod. With Pennsylvania, the mother synod, and *Augustana* each contributing over 100,000 communicants, the General Council could claim a membership of about 350,000 or almost one fourth of all Lutherans.

It could be noted that there were in 1900 only two other Lutheran synods besides Pennsylvania and *Augustana* that had over 100,000 communicants. They were Wisconsin with just over 100,000 and Missouri, by far the largest of synods, with some 400,000 members. Wisconsin and Missouri, along with the smaller Minnesota, Michigan and English Missouri Synods, brought the membership strength of the Synodical Conference over the half million mark. That represented one of every three Lutherans in the United States.

In the Southeast was the United Synod of the South, a witness to the enduring effects of the Civil War. The term, *United*, in its name referred to the 1884 union of the Tennessee and Holston Synods with the original seceders from the General Synod in the Civil War years. That union had strengthened the federation of the Southern Lutherans numerically, bringing its communicant membership in 1900 to about 40,000. Whether there was much strengthening confessionally can be debated. The heritage of Tennessee confessionalism upgraded the theological position of the Southern federation. In the process, however, that Tennessee confessionalism suffered setbacks according to the old adage of the many bad apples and the one good one.

In the area of our country below the Mason-Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi the small United Synod of the South pretty well ruled the Lutheran roost. Neither the General Synod nor the General Council were making serious efforts to establish southern domains of their own. It should be noted, however, that there were some strong Missouri holdings in the area and also some energetic Synodical Conference missions to the blacks.

Above the Mason-Dixon Line in the East there were shared holdings. Buffalo had some slim plantings. Ubiquitous Missouri had its congregations, one of them the oldest of Lutheran parishes in our land, St. Matthew's in New York. In the main, however, this area was General Synod and General Council stamping grounds.

By 1900 some of the 1866-67 separation bitterness had vanished but there were still rival synods of the General Synod and the General Council in such strong Lutheran areas as Pennsylvania and New York. Serious efforts were being made to avoid home mission competitions but in 1900 one would have had to classify a General Synod - General Council reunion as an improbable, if not impossible, dream.

Picture in the Midwest

The geographical area that offered most variety in the Lutheran scene and most promise for its future was the Midwest. Two characteristics of the area stand out: this was the stronghold of the most confessional Lutheranism, that of the Synodical Conference, and this was the area of strong, unaligned synods. Both characteristics merit additional emphasis.

At the century's turn there were some 450,000 communicant Lutherans who were members of independent synods, almost one of every three Lutherans in the United States. Of these more than a dozen independent synods four held dominant positions: the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Norwegian Synod, the Ohio Synod and the Iowa Synod. Together they account for three-fourths of the membership of the unaligned synods. Each of the four synods will be given its share of attention in subsequent sections of the writing.

In 1900 the strength of Missouri and of the Synodical Conference had to be recognized, even that of Wisconsin as has been previously noted. Such recognition may not have been much in evidence in the East. That is, however, more an indication of area myopia than of midwestern weakness in Lutheranism.

Whether a person liked it or not, he would in 1900 have to recognize that confessional Lutheranism was dominant in the Midwest and also strong in other areas. Confessional Lutheranism could in 1900 face the new century with high hopes and great expectations.

II. Merger Warm-ups in the 1890s

Those enthusiastic about Lutheran merger could have harbored similar hopes. The 1890s had been a decade auspicious for Lutheran merger efforts and effects. In the last half of the previous century *union* was a big word. In the geographical areas of Italy and Germany Cavour and Bismarck had pulled off miraculous union efforts.

Our own country torn by sectionalism and secession was being reunited *durch Blut und Eisen*, the blood shed on Civil War battle fields and the iron in the rails that spanned the continent. In the late years of the 1800s union was a major motif, a triumphant theme. The theme was sounded in several Lutheran union or unity endeavors that were to prove harbingers of bigger things to come.

The United Norwegian Lutheran Church

Most notable among them was the merger of three Norwegian church bodies into the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. E. Clifford Nelson in his 1952 doctoral dissertation has supplied a lengthy account of the efforts to bring together into one church body three synods that did not actually stand out as prime prospects for merger roles.

One of the three was the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood that had in 1887 broken away from the Norwegian Synod in the election battle that was raging at the time. After only three years of standing alone F. Schmidt and his followers were in the United Norwegian Synod.

Their partners in the venture were two bodies that had gone separate ways in 1870 when they and the Swedish Lutherans parted company and the Augustana Synod, previously Scandinavian, became exclusively Swedish. Disagreements over structure and personality clashes among leaders caused the remaining Norwegians and Danes to form two bodies: a so-called Synod, the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod, and a Conference, the Conference for the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

This 1890 merging of the Synod, the Conference, and the Brotherhood was not without its difficulties. Controversies developed, especially over the role of the Conference's Augsburg school. Sverdrup and others balked at the diminishing of a full program at the Augsburg

school.¹¹ The controversy resulted in court action and the formation in the 1890s of a disgruntled Lutheran Free Church. This is just one other exhibit giving evidence that church mergers with their goal of decreasing the number of church bodies have a way of spawning additional church bodies.

It might be stated here, however, that the merged body, the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, would from the time of its formation in 1890 be an energetic promoter of more Norwegian Lutheran merging, which would eventually bring about the grand Norwegian merger of 1917 that united it with the Norwegian Synod and with the Hauge Synod.¹²

The Danish Merger

Also in the 1890s there was a Danish Lutheran merger which brought into being in 1896 the United Danish Lutheran Church, later the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. Earlier in the decade there had been a shake-up in the original Danish church body gathered in our country in the early 1870s. Dissatisfied with the views and policies of the Grundtvig followers, the majority group popularly known as “Happy Danes,” the others in the minority, the “Gloomy Danes,” formed their own church body.

Earlier other like-minded Danes had formed a Danish Association. It was easy and natural for them and the breakaway group to unite. Thus the Danish Lutherans entered the Twentieth Century grouped in two church bodies. The one was this United Danish Lutheran Church, the “Gloomy Danes” who would eventually end up in today’s ALC. The other was the older body of “Happy Danes” who would help create the present LCA.

The Wisconsin Federation

One other merger of the last decade of the previous century merits attention. This is the formation of the federation known as the *Allgemeine Synode*, uniting Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and hopefully, “other states” such as Nebraska and the Dakotas. This story is so well known to most readers that any retelling before this group would be an exemplification of carrying the proverbial owls to Athens or coals to Newcastle or writing assignments to Mequon.¹³ Two points, however, merit mention.

For one thing, it is startling and somewhat refreshing to find that in the union and unity efforts of the last part of the previous century and the first part of the current century our synod was playing more of a vanguard than a foot-dragging role. The implication of this fact of the history of the Lutheran Church in our country and century give us all pause for reflection. It is a point that ought to receive special attention in subsequent chapters.

The other aspect of the 1892 federation that could elicit comment is that it follows that familiar merger pattern of provoking and promoting the formation of a new church body in addition to bringing older bodies together. The dust had scarcely settled on the union pathway of the *Allgemeine Synode* in 1892 when merger problems precipitated a split in Michigan into a Michigan Synod and a Michigan District.

Thus it was that our Michigan Lutherans ushered in the new century with a minority aligned with the *Allgemeine Synode* as a district and with a majority in league with the Augsburg Synod. That unholy alliance would be broken off before the first year of the new century ran its course. By 1910 the breaches in Michigan’s Synodical Conference circles were healed. The point might in fact be made that the very first of the many Lutheran mergers of this century was effected when the Michigan Synod and the Michigan District reunited in the last week of January 1910. It might be mentioned that at the turn of the century two new Lutheran synods

were created. In 1898 the Finns formed the 12,000 member National Evangelical Lutheran Church which in 1964 would join Missouri. In 1902 the Slovak Synod or Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches came into being. These steps, however, are not merger efforts strictly speaking.

One brief word might be added to complete this record of turn-of-the-century merger endeavors. In 1896 Iowa, formed its alliance with Texas that would endure until both entered the ALC in 1930.

III. Intersynodical Discussions at the Turn of the Century

In addition to the mergers actually effected during the closing decade of the 1800s there were significant intersynodical discussions taking place at the turn of the century that would help shape the United States Lutheranism of today. These too merit some mention and attention.

Out in the East, the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South held “General Conferences” in 1898, 1902 and 1904. These were a revival of the lapsed “Free Diets” of 1877 and 1878

Diets in the East

As the preface to the report of the 1902 General Conference states: “The aim ... was to secure a fair presentation of the life and spirit, the doctrine and work in each of the bodies. There was no effort, either to seek for differences or to conceal them. The question of their ultimate removal was assumed to be outside of the sphere of the Conference. ... The results gained are permanent and far-reaching.”¹⁴

At this 1902 Conference one of the last of the papers was presented by the Rev. F.H. Knubel on the topic, “The Attitude of the Lutheran Church to Current Discussions Concerning the Holy Scripture.”¹⁵ Among the four reactors was the Rev. T.E. Schmauck. At the time the occasion may not have loomed large, although the importance of the paper was recognized. In retrospect one can see foreshadowings in the shaping of Lutheranism in 1917, in 1988 and points that lie between.

Among other things Knubel made this statement: “It is largely a piece of assumption to assert that we have no doctrine of inspiration. It is likewise a misunderstanding of Luther’s broad conceptions to seek in him and in his statements concerning Scripture the justification for modern extravagances.”¹⁶ Another assertion with which we would gladly agree is Knubel’s statement: “Nor will Lutheran ideas of the Word allow that what was development in objective revelation from God should be presented as though it were a subjective development in the knowledge of God on the part of Israel and the individuals of the Scripture.”

Knubel does not fail, however, to add to such statements others that clearly point to a weakened stand on Scripture that carried over into the United Lutheran Church in America. He claims to speak for all Lutherans, except for “the single exception of ‘Missouri’ Lutherans here and abroad, holding with their usual uniqueness to the old verbal inspiration theory.” He then sets down the claim: “Behind the Scriptures which are for us the Word of God, we are ever contemplating Christ, who is the Personal Word of God: behind the written Word we have the Living Word.”¹⁷

Knubel reveals what he has in mind when he draws this comparison with the early Christian centuries and states:

In those centuries there was first the contest which established the divinity of Jesus Christ and then that which established His humanity. So also the first Protestant centuries fought for the supreme divinity of the written word; then, when that idea was carried to an extreme, there arose and still rages the battle for the establishment of the humanity thereof and their proper mingling. May we not hope that a coming Luther will proclaim the 'Communicatio idiomatum' in the written word, and beyond some coming Thomasius write of the "Kenosis" therein?¹⁸

This was in 1902. Less than two score years later the speaker himself, Knubel, as first president of the ULCA was playing part of the role of the "coming Thomasius."

Back in 1902 at the General Conference in Philadelphia one of the reactors to Knubel's address, Theodore Schmauck, last president of the General Council, warned against any false security to be found in the conflict over the Bible on the grounds that only the less important principle of the Reformation, the formal, was under attack and that the material principle was not in question. Schmauck made this point: "It is not chiefly the formal, but fundamentally the material principle that is at stake in current critical discussions. A criticism that eliminates the supernatural in the Old Testament cannot leave untouched the incarnation, the atonement, the supernatural operation of the means of grace and the miracles of redemption in the New Testament."¹⁹

Knubel had a last word at Philadelphia in 1902 and at New York in 1918 and in 1920 at Chicago and in 1938 at Baltimore. In 1902 at Philadelphia he had the privilege of responding to reactors. In 1918 in New York he was elected ULCA president over Schmauck. In 1920 in Chicago his "catholic spirit" paper keynoted the eventual formation of the National Lutheran Council. In 1938 in Baltimore the ULCA formalized the distinction between Word and Scripture already suggested by Knubel at the Philadelphia General Conference. Due attention will be given to these developments in subsequent chapters. In this one the summarizing statement suffices that conferences were drawing the three older general bodies closer together and that in the conferences the General Synod position was not by any means being stifled.

The Free Conferences on Conversion and Election

In 1902, the year of the Second General Conference out in the East, there was also the beginning of a series of inter-synodical conferences of the "free" variety. The objective was to see whether divisions over election and conversion that the previous generation had suffered in the *Gnadenwahlstreit* still pertained. Union-minded and unity-minded Lutherans at the turn of the century wanted their chance at rebuilding the shattered walls of the Lutheran Zion in our land.

After a Beloit meeting fizzled because of "too little, too late" publicity, free conferences assembled on five occasions to endeavor to find unity in the doctrines of conversion and election. Meetings were held at Watertown and Milwaukee in 1903, at Detroit in 1904, and at Ft. Wayne in 1905 and 1906. The bulk of those in attendance was supplied by Wisconsin, Missouri, Ohio and Iowa. Attendance peaked at 700 in Milwaukee and dwindled considerably thereafter.

Initial enthusiasm waned when continuing discussion revealed that differences in the doctrines of election and conversion were real and earnest, not just instances of men talking past one another. The old errors of human causes in election and conversion were being espoused as zealously as ever at Ft. Wayne in 1905 and 1906.²⁰

In fact, discussions revealed that conference participants were also hopelessly disagreed in the matters of analogy of faith and prayer fellowship. The result was that the free conferences seeking unity seemed to effect just the opposite. Doctrinal differences were enlarged and polemical writing in church periodicals became so intense that Synodical Conference spokesmen had agreed in advance that the 1906 Ft. Wayne meeting would have to be the last they would attend.

One result of the Free Conferences was to remind Ohio and Iowa representatives that they stood together in the controverted doctrines, if not in all other issues. The Synods of Ohio and Iowa had in fact been engaging in another of the turn-of-the-century intersynodical discussions. This was the Michigan City meeting of official Ohio and Iowa representatives in 1896 to discuss differences between the two synods in matters such as church and ministry, millennialism, Sunday and the like.

An agreement of sorts was hammered out and signed. This could only be achieved, however, through the early departure of one Ohio representative, Henry Allwardt, who had troubles with the statement on millennialism and ceased participation when his objections did not carry.²¹ Allwardt may have judged the Michigan City agreement between Ohio and Iowa as pro-Iowa. Many Iowans viewed it as a sell-out to Missouri. Without belaboring the details, one could simply state that the Michigan City approach was not able to achieve its aim. Ohio-Iowa fellowship would have to wait. More on that will be presented in subsequent writings. What remains in this “The Way It Was in 1900” discussion is a brief consideration of

IV. Prospects for Merger

As the new century began proponents of Lutheran merger must have had mixed emotions. There were favorable signs -some unions accomplished, dialogues continuing, time healing old wounds. Viewing these signs, merger enthusiasts might think of 1900 as a mountain top from which they could already see the goal they had not yet achieved. In other respects their cause seemed almost hopeless. There were’ barriers to additional Lutheran merger that were very evident in 1900.

Merger Barriers

The General Synod was in the process of subscribing to the *Augustana* “throughout” and repudiating the old distinction between fundamentals and nonfundamentals.²² The process would be completed in 1901. The likelihood, however, that the General Synod would ever subscribe to the Formula of Concord seemed remote. As late as 1910 General Synod theologians were objecting to any required Formula subscription.²³ Yet it was subscriptions to the whole Book of Concord that the General Council insisted was the *conditio sine qua non*, if not the only condition, for reunion.

The divisions that the strife over election and conversion had caused a generation earlier were still in force. Far from diminishing, the differences actually seemed to be growing. That Schmidt’s Norwegians and Koren’s Norwegians would ever reach agreement in discussions concerning election and conversion is a prediction few would have risked making in 1900.

Mention of the Norwegians brings to mind language barriers that still were serious hindrances to the cause of Lutheran merger. Many Lutheran bodies in 1900 were still operating without an English periodical and with little, if any, English preaching. The day of urbanization and of easy transportation was still not yet near the comer. It was easy and comfortable for a church body to stay in its own shell and not worry about other Lutheran bodies. As has been

mentioned, there were still 61 Lutheran synods that could be counted in 1900, up one from the 60 of 1899.

In the Midwest merger enthusiasts might in frustration ask, “Just what will it take to bring Ohio and Iowa together?” One thing it would certainly take would be some deaths and burials. While such controversial persons as John Klindworth and such die-hard controversialists as Henry Allwardt were on the scene, the odds on any Iowa-Ohio union would have to verge on the astronomical.

Many other long-standing differences and rivalries and problems that loomed like huge obstacles on the road to Lutheran merger could be added to the list already provided. They might lengthen but not necessarily strengthen the point being made: Lutheran merger was not just yet assured of its place as the dominant theme of the history of United States Lutheranism in this century.

Despite these many obstacles standing in the way of Lutheran merger in 1900, there was one thing favoring its cause. That was the gradual development of what could be called a theology of merger, a viewpoint that put merging Lutherans at the top of the priority list of projects for the new century.

Merger Theology

Actually, there wasn't all that much theology in the viewpoint. What there was, was bad theology based on misinterpretations of John 17 and *Augustana* 7. When merger advocates made their speeches and wrote their pieces, there were always appeals based on “that they all may be one” and *satis est*. Scriptural and confessional sections that spoke expressly of church fellowship were conspicuous by their absences in such speaking and writing.

It is quite obvious that there was an abundance of non-theological motivation for the rush to merger in the new century. The times were times of bigness, big business, big government, big navies, big railroads. The obvious question was: Why not big churches? The obvious conclusion was: The bigger the church, the better.

Another development in the secular scene that played a role was the marked shift in the country's immigration pattern. By 1900 the immigrant source had definitely moved in Europe from the West and North to the South and East. By 1900 the first and second generations of those emigrated from Europe's West and North, among them many Scandinavian and German Lutherans, were thinking of themselves as Americans and viewing newcomers as the ethnics. They agreed the times were at hand for abandoning national and language isolationism and moving into the mainstream. The national designations in the names of the church bodies were beginning to sound old-fashioned. The imperative, “Americanize,” took its place along side that other major motif of the times, “merge.”

These themes, of course, would have difficulty in surmounting all obstacles previously described. What could aid them would be two catalytic and in fact cataclysmic happenings seventeen years into the new century: the Reformation anniversary and this country's entry into World War I. These are matters, however, that should be reserved for a second chapter.

Merger Possibilities

By way of conclusion, one could point to especially outstanding, “Merger Possibilities” in 1900. First among them would be a reunion in the East despite evident problems previously described. It could not but be otherwise than that the inconsistency and indecision of the General

Council, noted in the earliest years by the Wisconsin Synod and others, should eventually succumb to the marvelously consistent and determined General Synod.²⁴

The Southern Lutherans could be partners. The inclusion of the Tennessee Synod in the Southern grouping would be a comfort to the General Council. The inevitable deterioration of the once strongly conservative Tennessee Synod in its new company would be viewed with satisfaction by the General Synod that had always regarded the Tennessee Synod as the *bete noire* of American Lutheranism on the right.

The Norwegian Lutherans also merit watching on the merger scan. They have in their midst a United Church whose goal, like that of today's Consultation on Church Union, is summed up in the desire to effect a name change from "United" to "Uniting." Another factor in this area of Lutheranism in this land is the effect of the *Bygdelag* movement, a combination of Norwegian patriotic and ethnic and religious drives.

The most interesting area for merger watch, however, is the Midwest. There the Synodical Conference was dominant. There were to be found numerous unaligned, independent synods of considerable strength, notably Ohio and Iowa. What would develop in this area is of special significance. What did develop is the tragedy of this century's history of United States Lutheranism. That is, however, a subject for a third chapter of this writing.

One reason it is a good thing to look back to "The Way It Was in 1900" is that the view has not been all that good since then. It has been downhill and deterioration ever since. That is the way that the human eye reads the history of this era of Lutheranism in our area. God be praised that the all-wise Writer and Reader of this and of all church history is the Lord of the church who "has done all things well," who is doing all things well, and who will do all things well.

Part Two: First Mergers in the Twentieth Century

As the quadricentennial of the Reformation drew near, Lutherans in our land readied themselves by planning massive celebrations. The planning could cross synodical lines. It was a time that put the emphasis on the heritage in which all Lutherans shared. It was a time to pray that the sundered Lutheran Zion in these parts could be put together again.

It could have been the best of times. In a way it was the worst of times. Somehow in the celebrations for many the thought was lost that in church history the Reformation stands for a rending for the sake of the Gospel's truth, rather than a huddling at any cost. For many 1917 signified an opportunity to celebrate the Reformation heritage with all who staked a claim in that heritage.

Out in the East the planning for the Reformation quadricentennial definitely got out of hand. That is of course the way some view the developments. The merger-minded, however, would see in those developments the very hand of God repudiating the theological gamesmanship of those who tried to brake the impulse for merger exerted by wiser, more enthusiastic lay Lutherans. Further discussion of that item must, however, be reserved for the second part of this writing.

One could get pretty good mileage developing a thesis that everything happens to the Lutheran Church, much of it for the bad, in the anniversaries of the Reformation counted by the hundreds and even by the fifties. For evidence one has only to look to Prussia in 1817 or to Ft. Wayne in 1867 or to the Twin Cities or New York in 1917 or to Denver in 1969. There is a

two-year gap in the final item, one can assume, because the Missouri Synod simply does not fit the pattern of the others. It has been, is, and probably always will be in a class by itself. What is 450 to others is to it 452.

Those readers who have expectations of joining in the grand semimillennarian Reformation anniversary are being put on notice to be prepared for difficulties. For a synod with a theological position like Wisconsin's it could be the worst of times. The writer is happy that he will have had to live through only the 1917 and 1967 anniversaries and will miss the one in 2017 A.D.

By the time the 1917 Reformation Festival came, America had been led into World War I by President Wilson. That World War affected our country's history profoundly, in many ways more profoundly than World War II in which our active participation was much larger and longer. One of the far-reaching effects of World War I is to be seen in the subject at hand, the shaping of United States Lutheranism in our century.

Lutheranism in America after 1917 was never again what it had been. It was not only that German language churches almost overnight became English language churches. This certainly happened in the years of World War I. Our *Northwestern Lutheran* dates back to 1914. That language change, however, was inevitable. World War I simply speeded up what would eventually have happened in any event.

A much more significant effect of those war years was to spur the move to merger. World Wars call for a concentrated and united effort. In 1917 joint effort and cooperation became the watchwords of America's grim hour. Old competitions gave way to the common cause. Labor and management buried the hatchet and those who would not, like Gene Debs, suffered the consequences. The ruthless railroad rivalries yielded to wartime nationalization. Inevitably the thought asserted itself: "Why not also the churches? Why should they be allowed the luxury of competition and conflict? Why shouldn't they work together in the common cause of bringing religion to the soldier in camp or trench, to the riveter in the booming ship-building town, to the deprived in war-torn areas?"

These emotional drives, linking themselves with older motivations, helped bring it about that 1917 was an *annus mirabilis* of sorts for Lutheranism in America. A major merger of Norwegian Lutherans took place. A grand reunion of the divided eastern and southern Lutherans was set in motion for completion in the next year. A federation of Wisconsin's fathers was transformed into the merged body named in 1917 the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States and in 1919 the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. The groundwork for the formation of the National Lutheran Council was firmly laid. The same is true of the Ohio-Iowa fellowship declared in the next year.

With the exception of the last item, these union developments will be given the larger treatment they deserve in this section. The Ohio-Iowa fellowship, however, properly falls into the subject of the creation of the first American Lutheran Church and consequently needs to be reserved for the next part of this writing. At this point the Ohio-Iowa agreement is merely mentioned to complete the list of merger developments during the years of World War I.

An outline of these merger developments and of this chapter might well be supplied at this point.

Part Two: First Mergers in the Twentieth Century

- I. The Norwegian Merger
 - A. The Long Negotiations to Opgjør
 - B. The Opgjør Battle, 1912-1917
 - C. The Merged and Unmerged Norwegians
- II. The United Lutheran Church in America
 - A. Pathways to Reunion
 - B. The Rush to Merger
 - C. The General Synod Victory
- III. The Wisconsin Synod Merger
 - A. Moves to Merger
 - B. Creating the Joint Synod
 - C. A Merger Problem
- IV. The National Lutheran Council
 - A. World War I Cooperation
 - B. Forming the NLC
 - C. Varying Viewpoints

The earliest of the mergers was

I. The Norwegian Merger

When on June 9, 1917, representatives of the Hauge Synod, the Norwegian Synod and the United Norwegian Church marched into St. Paul Auditorium, already crowded by a gathering of 8000 people and a chorus of 1800 voices and the Luther College Band, they began the festivities that created the merged Norwegian Lutheran Church, later known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This church in 1960 became a part of the American Lutheran Church. Wentz does not hesitate to call this event “the greatest church demonstration ever held by Norwegians anywhere in the world.”²⁷

Even more astounding than the massive crowds, the impressive ceremonies, the nation-wide ringing of bells was the basic fact that Schmidt’s Norwegians and Koren’s Norwegians were merging, that spiritual descendants of Eielsen in the Hauge Synod and of Preus in the Norwegian Synod were in visible joint fellowship. It could be called the “miracle merger.” It makes the many other Lutheran unions of this century look easy.

Whole books have been written to explain the miracle and the mystery of this merger. They supply the details regarding the locked meeting room, the vanished minority, the forgetting footnote, the under-the-oaks desire for an honorable heritage and all the other intriguing aspects of the Norwegian merger. Readers are urged to read extensively on this episode sometime. Better still they ought to read twice. T. Aaberg writes on this development extensively in a *City Set on a Hill* from the viewpoint of the few left unmerged in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.²⁶ E. Clifford Nelson, who approves of the outcome, has a massive section on the developments in his dissertation referred to in the previous section.²⁷

Long Negotiations

Perhaps the main reason why the eventual outcome in 1917 was a merger of Norwegian Lutherans was that there were, as the outline suggests, “Long Negotiations.” Too many meetings

were held. Resistance was worn down. The “big lie,” presented frequently and persuasively emerged as the “truth.”

The writer has vivid recollections of hearing two score years after the Norwegian merger an eloquent declaration by an opponent of the development. His main point was that he dreaded too many meetings with the adversary. The declarer was Dean Madson; the place was New Ulm; the year was 1957, the occasion was the Wisconsin Synod’s convention; the Bible reference was Titus 3: 10. Dean Madson was opposing at length future meetings with Missouri. He was obviously thinking about the “Long Negotiations” that took place before the Norwegian merger.

These negotiations began some years before 1900. There is, however, no obligation to trace this difficult subject back beyond 1900. In 1901 the old battler in the conversion-election controversies, F.A. Schmidt, who had been an original opponent of Walther in the 1870s managed to win for himself a “most unpopular” accolade. Perhaps disgruntled because his theses for a conversion discussion in 1899 were opposed, he resorted to his old bad publishing habits.²⁸ He promulgated privileged proceedings of a United Church - Norwegian Synod discussion of the subjects in controversy. The Norwegian Synod’s demand that he be sidelined in future union negotiations as a “hindrance” was denied by the United Church. The result was that discussions were broken off.²⁹ Schmidt retired soon thereafter and died in 1924.

Another startling development occurred in the Norwegian negotiations when President Stub of the Norwegian Synod, presidential successor when Koren died in 1910, prepared discussion theses and had them labeled “unbiblical and un-Lutheran” by President Dahl of the United Church.³⁰ Discussions obviously had to be terminated until Dahl either proved or removed his charges. An impasse had seemingly been reached.

The United Church, however, pressed on at its 1911 convention. It drew up new union resolutions, elected an entirely new union committee and appointed a special fraternal delegate to the Norwegian Synod convention. President Stub quite correctly rebuffed this delegate, questioning how the United Church could send a “fraternal” delegate to a church body that upheld theses which the United Church charged were “unbiblical and un-Lutheran.”

Union sentiment at the Synod’s convention, however, was strong. There too an entirely new union committee was chosen consisting of pastors and putting on the sidelines theological professors and church officials. There was a stipulation that, should the Hauge Synod not elect a new committee, the old committee of the Norwegian Synod would be back in the saddle. Because of this stipulation the Hauge Synod did not participate in the next round of discussions. In any event, they had little interest in the main subject on the agenda, conversion and election.

Meetings of union committees, both separate and joint, and of special sub-committees were held in an effort to reconcile the two stands that could not be reconciled, namely an election with two causes and an election that added to the two the third element of foreseen faith. The first step was to “accept that doctrine of election which is set forth in the Formula of Concord, Part II Article 11, and in Pontoppidan’s ‘*Sandhed til Godfrytighed*’ question 518.”³¹ It seemed, however, impossible to agree on a description of the relation of the so-called First and Second Forms.

At this crucial point, the device of the locked door was employed. One man from each side was told, “We are going to lock you in a room, and do not open the door until you have found the right way of stating this matter.” The result was a statement that awarded the accolade of orthodoxy to both “forms.”

After that it was relatively easy for the colloquists to produce the historic document of six paragraphs known as “The Madison Agreement” or *Opgjør*. This document was now presented

to the involved churches with the claim that it and previous agreements on call, conversion and order of salvation constituted “essential agreement ... sufficient for church union.”³²

It did not take long for the United Church and the Hauge Synod to express approval of *Opgjør* and to press on toward a union of Norwegian Lutheran church bodies. The approval was enthusiastically expressed in the June 1912 conventions of the United Church and the Hauge Synod. It was another story when the Norwegian Synod took up the matter. Serious opposition developed from the first, involving a sizable minority. The five-year battle in the Norwegian Synod over *Opgjør* was soon in full swing.

The Opgjør Battle

This is not the place to go into a detailed doctrinal analysis of the storm center of the conflict. That has been done. Already in 1913 Franz Pieper put out his *Zur Einigung der amerikanisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl*.³³ Pieper’s evaluation was less severe than what might have been expected from the doctrinal conscience of the Missouri Synod. A brother of his, it is reported, is supposed to have wondered whether Franz wasn’t becoming soft-hearted, if not soft-headed.³⁴

Actually, Franz Pieper stood in 1913 as decisively for a two-cause [the mercy of God and the merits of Christ - Ed.] election as he had in 1880 and in 1904. Choosing to refrain from the harsh charge of synergism, he based his appeal for unity on the heart belief of every true child of God in “grace for all” and “by grace alone.” An *intuitu fidei* approach, he said, was actually bad head theology and should simply be discarded, even if no synergism was deliberately intended. Pieper was by no means at loggerheads with the *Opgjør* opponents. He agreed that they had a right to reject *intuitu fidei* as a second form of the Bible doctrine set down in Article XI of the Formula of Concord and granted equality with it. He also pointed to the erroneous phrasing in Point 4 that man is accountable in conversion for both the rejection and the acceptance of grace.³⁵ These were the two chief points in *Opgjør* under attack.

At the 1913 convention of the Norwegian Synod President Stub obtained for a majority report urging steps toward organic union 394 votes. For the minority report which argued that doctrinal differences still remained 106 cast their ballots. Final approval would rest with the congregations. When Stub announced the results of the congregational referendum, he counted 231 non-reporting congregations with the 359 who voted for merger to get a total of 590 for and 27 against.

Opposition to *Opgjør*, however, continued. When the merger proposals worked out by the joint union committee reached the 1914 Norwegian Synod convention, the majority had 360 votes and the minority 170. It is interesting that the pastor delegates voted 138 for to 96 against. A “Peace Committee” was named to resolve the differences. At its first meeting this 12-man committee split 6-6 when voting.

In 1916 at the United Church convention, as expected, merger-enabling resolutions were given unanimous approval. Some Hauge Synod opposition to the merger had developed through fears that its unique traditions in liturgics, rather non-liturgics, and piety would be obliterated. The enabling resolves, however, were passed by about 5-1 voting.

In the special convention of the Norwegian Synod in May 1916 in Minneapolis there was determined opposition to merger. It is true, the enabling resolutions passed by an average vote of 497 to 190. When, however, a loyalty resolution was proposed, the minority presented a statement with 176 signatures declaring they would enter no union unless their views about *Opgjør* prevailed.

One of the major tasks of the joint union committee was to deal with this determined and sizable minority. An unsuccessful meeting in October was followed by the controversial Austin meeting. Here an agreement of sorts was worked out in that the minority views were granted acceptance as being in accord with Scripture and the Confessions. It was, however, subsequently noted that the Austin Agreement in no way altered or abridged Opgjør as the basis for union. In some strange way doctrinal objections to Opgjør were sanctioned but Opgjør itself remained untouched.

The Merged and Unmerged Norwegians

Stranger even was the decision to enter the merger expressed by most of the minority attending a meeting of their group in the middle of January. When the time for the final merger vote came, the 180 strong had dwindled to 18. Perhaps strong is not the best word in the circumstance.

The result was that in June the Norwegian merger was consummated, as previously described. Nine districts were formed out of the 3,276 congregations. There were over 1000 pastors and almost a half-million members.

While the union convention was going on, some 40 men, half pastors and half laymen, met in St. Paul's Aberdeen Hotel to plan for calling a new church body into being. Sure of little else than the moral support of the Synodical Conference and the rightness of their cause, the forty took the steps that would lead on June 14, 1918, to the organization "under the oaks" of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. Through change of name and abbreviation this became the more familiar ELS.

One paragraph is needed to complete the Norwegian picture. In December 1900 in Milwaukee several pastors of independent congregations and a few other disgruntled members of the United Norwegian Church and the Lutheran Free Church formed the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. Their interest was "pure congregations" made up of "converted" or "reborn" members and headed by pastors that could get Donatist approval. The Brethren are still in business as the most unlutheran of Lutheran bodies.

II. The United Lutheran Church in America

While the 1917 Norwegian merger moved at what might well be called snail's pace, proceeding slowly and tortuously through almost a quarter century, the 1918 merger of synods with General Synod foots that produced the United Lutheran Church in America could claim some sort of speed record in the course of Lutheran merger. From the time of the first resolution to form a union in April 1917 all negotiations were completed within 17 months.

Pathways to Reunion

In another sense, one could claim that the formation of the ULCA was long in the making. In the "Historical Report of the Merger" that Schmauck, as chairman of the Joint Committee of Ways and Means wrote for the first ULCA convention, he begins: "Ten years after the organization of the General Council the first steps were taken toward the reapproach of the separated Lutherans of the three great Bodies uniting here today. This was in 1877, forty years ago. The initiative was made by Dr. John Morris of Baltimore. He with Dr. J. A. Seiss, held the First Free Lutheran Diet in Philadelphia."³⁶

About the same time that the first Lutheran Diets were being held, that is in the late 1870s, the three synods that formed the ULCA began work on a common Order of Service. In a decade the work was completed and two editions of “A Communion Service for all English-speaking Lutherans” came off the presses in 1888. All competent observers agree that this liturgical effort was a major step in bringing the three synods back together.

The next step in the direction of merger was the interchange of “Fraternal Visitors” in 1895 between the General Synod and General Council. A tangible result was the three General Conferences, previously described, in 1898, 1902 and 1904.³⁷ The noble goal of the “General Conferences” was succinctly stated by Chairman H. E. Jacobs in the opening address of the 1904 Conference in this declaration, “Our aim is not Church Union, but Church Unity.”³⁸

From 1895 on there were official efforts to minimize competition and friction in the home missions of the General Council and General Synod. By 1909 a Council Home Mission Arbitration Commission was working effectively with its opposite number in the General Synod.

Much more important for merger prospects were gradual changes and improvements in the confessional platform of the General Synod. Back in 1869, as a reaction to the General Council split, the General Synod finally moved from the absence of any confessional commitment in its constitution to the 1869 paragraph in the constitution that can be summed up as a pledge to substantial agreement with the fundamental articles of the doctrinal section of the *Augustana*, the traditional stand in General Synod circles. The actual constitutional wording was that the *Augustana* provided a “correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines.”³⁹

In 1895 this was improved to the point that the *Augustana* was acknowledged to be “throughout” in perfect consistency with the Word. In 1901 a repudiation of the old distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals in *Augustana* doctrines was resolved. Finally in a later constitutional change these confessional declarations were formalized in the statements that the *Augustana* was “a correct exhibition of the faith and doctrine of our Church as founded upon the Word.” Other confessions are acknowledged as “expositions of Lutheran doctrine of great historical and interpretative value.” The Small Catechism is praised as a book of instruction that the church body “especially commends.”⁴⁰

The General Council was impressed. Schmauck puts it this way: “In 1911, the doctrinal differences between the Three General Bodies were removed by constitutional amendment in the General Synod, and the greatest barrier in the way of Lutheran unity between them was eliminated.”⁴¹

Meanwhile cooperation in an observance of the 1917 Reformation anniversary had begun in 1909. In addition to the three bodies under discussion, others such as Ohio and Iowa were drawn into the anniversary planning. Already at the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Quadricentennial, Sept. 1, 1914, a committee layman introduced a resolution to the effect that the main feature of the anniversary observance should be a reunion of the three bodies. The chairman of the committee states that the motion “was then considered premature.”⁴² This chairman was Theodore Schmauck.

The Rush to Merger

It was a different story three years later and a dozen days after President Wilson led the United States into World War 1. On the evening of April 17 eight laymen on the Joint Committee on Quadricentennial prepared this resolution: “Resolved that this gathering request the Joint Lutheran Committee to arrange a general meeting of Lutherans to formulate plans for the unification of the Lutheran Church in America.”⁴³

When the full Joint Committee reacted, it was to pass the proposal submitted by Dr. H.E. Jacobs which read:

Believing that the time has come for the more complete organization of the Lutheran Church in this country, we propose that the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South, together with all other bodies one with us in our Lutheran Faith, be united as soon as possible in one general organization to be known as The United Lutheran Church in America.⁴⁴

This was the breakthrough. Thereafter events moved rapidly. Schmauck's Ways and Means Committee worked out the merger details in an efficient way. In June 1917 the General Synod adopted the merger proposals. The General Council did the same at its fiftieth convention in October 1917. And in November 1917 the Southern Synod did likewise. Of 44 area synods in the three bodies 43 enthusiastically endorsed the merger that was consummated in Holy Trinity Church, New York City, on November 14, 1918.

The lone exception was the Augustana Synod. The stated reason for its vote against merger was a reluctance to commit Swedish Lutheranism to the emerging English body. That doctrinal misgiving may have been a motivation can easily be read between the lines of the official statements of both the Augustana Synod and the ULCA. It is not a flight of fancy to assume that the Augustana Synod, whose fathers had been in the vanguard of those withdrawing from the General Synod back in the mid-1800s were in 1917 also agitated about merger with the General Synod, as well as about the stated language problem.

One other serious voice against merger was raised. It came from a non-member of the bodies involved, but from a synod that had been linked with the General Council off and on for fifty years in a non-voting but cooperative and advisory capacity. This was the Iowa Synod. At the last full convention of the General Council in Philadelphia in 1917, the Iowa advisory delegate, Dr. J. Michael Reir delivered the sad obituary of the General Council that had wanted so badly to be the voice of confessional Lutheranism but had never been able to muster the strength to match its practice with its position.

In a moving speech to the General Council at Philadelphia in 1917, Dr. Reu acknowledged the outstanding contributions of the Council in English language work, in mission endeavors and in deaconess and charitable efforts. Then he sounded a warning that seemed to be pointing back to the old "Four Points" debate that had kept Iowa from full Council membership. He urged that the Council not become more deeply involved with a church body whose loose fellowship and lodge practice was notorious. In a situation where the old weak Akron-Galesburg Rule was no longer even assumed to have significance, Reu's testimony fell on deaf ears.

In a pathetic demonstration of the debilitating effects of merger dementia, Chairman Schmauck diffused Reu's pertinent declaration by suggestion that such concerns were met by the constitutional stipulations. Schmauck knew better or should have known better. He lost face, not so much when he failed to be elected ULCA president, but rather when he fumbled this last chance to redeem the General Council's honor.

What Schmauck's non-election signified is indicated in an Iowa report on the ULCA merger convention. This report declares:

Viele hatten wohl gehofft, dass der tuechtige, feste und konservative Dr. Theo. Schmauck zum ersten Praeses erwählt werden wuerde, aber die Glieder der Generalsynode, die

*den Merger ueberhaupt als einen Triumph ihrer Grundsätze ansieht, waren offenbar nicht willens diese Ehre einem andern als einem von ihnen zur geben, und sie hatten die Mehrheit der Stimmen. So wurde Dr. Knubel erwählt.*⁴⁵

(Many had indeed hoped that the able, staunch and conservative Dr. Theo. Schmauck would be elected first president but the members of the General Synod, who especially view the merger as a victory of their position, were obviously not willing to give this honor to anyone else but one of their own and they had the majority of the votes. Consequently Dr. Knubel was elected.)

Reu's speech to the General Council's last convention may have fallen on deaf ears at Philadelphia. But it resounded as music to Ohio ears. Reu reprinted his address to the General Council in the *Zeitschrift*.⁴⁶ It was read appreciatively in Ohio. Iowa's complete break with the General Council made possible a declaration of fellowship between Ohio and Iowa in 1918. Eventually the 1930 merger into the first ALC would follow. That, however, is another story to be recounted in the next chapter.

The General Synod Victory

What was the dominant theological position in the ULCA merger? A superficial scan of the developments and the interpretation usually offered is that the General Synod was finally forced to knuckle under or rather step up to the confessional position of the General Council.⁴⁷ It is true the General Synod did make confessional commitments in the pre-merger years. What the pledges actually amounted to, however, is clearly indicated by the 1934 ULCA Savannah Declaration that "we believe that these Confessions are to be interpreted in their historical context, not as a law or a system of theology but as a witness and declaration of faith as to how the Holy Scriptures were understood and explained on the matters in controversy within the Church of God by those who then lived."⁴⁸ This pledges itself to the fact that Chemnitz and Andreae believed what the Formula of Concord states. How much more than that is pledged is anybody's guess.

It must also be remembered that, if the General Council gained anything in the matter of confessional commitment in the ULCA foundation, it also had to surrender much of its concern for a practice consistent with the confessional pledge. The General Council that in 1869 chided the Wisconsin Synod for "hasty" withdrawal while the "Four Points" were still being considered, in the late 1880s told Michigan that not it, but area synods should be concerned with "Four Point" violations. By 1917 Dr. Reu couldn't even get the Council's ear when he dealt with violations of the "Four Points."

The General Council stands on the pages of the history of American Lutheranism as the second most tragic instance of the failure of confessionalism and as Exhibit A in the demonstration of the inevitable deterioration that sets in when fine-sounding paper pledges are not matched by consistent practice.

In the 1917-1918 mergers confessional Lutheranism was not helped but hindered. Two strong synods with the reputation of confessional commitment, the Norwegian Synod and the General Council, entered fellowship marriages, not for better, but for worse. This does not apply to the next merger of that time to be considered,

III. The Wisconsin Synod Merger

Since this subject is familiar to most readers only the briefest of accounts is warranted and that brief account ought concern itself with broad conclusions rather than minute details. That will be the procedure followed.

Moves to Merger

There is no mystery as to the motivation for the move from a federated to a merged Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States in 1917. After the Michigan problem, previously mentioned, was settled to the satisfaction of nearly all concerned, the federation could be called a success on all counts.⁴⁹ Naturally the thought suggested itself that even larger blessings would accrue if the unity of faith exhibited by the four synods could express itself in a more united organizational structure. The move to change that structure from a federation of four synods to a merged synod with six districts was soon under way.

The earliest definite proposal for the merger seems to be a 1903 overture. In 1907 the Eastern Conference of the Wisconsin Synod urged merger. Further impetus was provided by the lay delegates at the 1911 Wisconsin convention. A committee was appointed at that convention to explore merger ramifications. Two years later it offered a four-point plan: creation of a merged general body; division into districts without regard for synodical boundaries; transfer of properties to the general body; and retention of all debts by the body that incurred them.⁵⁰

There were no doctrinal barriers to merger; unity of faith prevailed. About the only real difficulty the move to merger encountered was the effort of some to enlarge the scope by including more, if not all, of the Synodical Conference. The old dream of state synods that Walther harbored in the 1870s was resurfacing. It did not achieve reality on this second occasion. As the Wisconsin merger effort moved along toward 1917, the old dream faded.

Creating the Joint Synod

In 1917 the proposed constitution became operative. Final problems were solved in 1919. The merger was seemingly effected without difficulty. Two districts were quickly added to the original six: the three in Wisconsin and the three created out of what had been the Minnesota, Michigan and Nebraska Synods. The new districts were the Pacific Northwest and the Dakota-Montana, formed in 1918 and 1920 respectively.

There would obviously be little difficulty for a synod to transform itself into a district. About all that was required was that names of officers and boards be changed to suit the new arrangements. There was therefore little, if any, merger sweat or strain in Minnesota or Michigan or Nebraska.

A Merger Problem

The transition would obviously be more difficult in Wisconsin. Men used to meeting with all their Wisconsin brethren annually faced the prospect of meeting with some of them henceforth only on rare occasions. Leadership above the conference level did not exist in sufficient quantity to man the new district offices that had been created. This became a crucial factor before the first decade of the merged body was completed.

In 1924 began what has been termed the Prot stant Controversy. It resulted in the formation of the Prot stant Conference, a church grouping still in existence, and consequently merits mention in this discussion of our century's shaping of United States Lutheranism.

How much of a relation is there between the 1917 Wisconsin merger and the emergence of the Prot stant Conference in 1927? Apart from other motivation the Prot stant cause was to

no small extent an opposition to the establishment or, to use their term without epithet, *Beamtentum*. There obviously had to be more of that *Beamtentum*, more synodical and district machinery after 1917 than before. Some did not appreciate the increase and some did not approve of its *modus operandi*.

Whether more expert district leadership could have prevented the controversy from bringing into being a Conference, a new dimension in the shape of today's Lutheranism, is so much a hypothetical question that an answer need not be attempted here. This much is obvious: some district leadership in the controversy showed its inexperience and contributed to the impasse that developed. This writer from his remote vantage point views this factor as having considerable significance. Such a conclusion does not exonerate the other side. It simply points to a negative factor in the real point at issue, the merger of Wisconsin in 1917.

IV. The National Lutheran Council

One more development during the WWI years remains to be treated, briefly by necessity. This is the creation of the National Lutheran Council that endured until Missouri was willing to join the offspring body, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.

World War I Cooperation

The roots of the National Lutheran Council are not hard to trace. When our country entered WWI an ecclesiastical Pandora's Box was opened. The government's desire to deal efficiently with a minimum of church organizations and the need of the churches to serve dislocated members made the development of some form of organization of Lutheran bodies almost inevitable.

Among the first such organizations was the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare. The original membership of six synods was soon swelled to thirteen. The Synodical Conference limited its participation to "external" cooperation.

Forming the NLC

Soon efforts were under way to enlarge the objectives of the wartime agency. Preliminary meetings in the summer of 1918 threshed out details. Without waiting for the approval of their church bodies, leaders on September 6, 1918, called into being the National Lutheran Council. Involved were twelve Lutheran synods. The objective was cooperation in endeavors that interested not just one Lutheran synod but many of them, such as statistics, publicity, war emergencies, government dealings and the like.

How far that list could be extended was soon a question for debate. Most were agreed that *res externae* were a matter of proper concern. Some were willing to agree that *res internae* could also be included. Few seemed able to draw a clear line between the two *rebus*. In fact, the new ULCA was soon advocating the proposition that a "catholic spirit," should replace the difficult distinction as the touchstone of cooperation manifested by Lutheran bodies not yet in fellowship. This viewpoint was embodied in the paper, "The Essentials of a Catholic Spirit," originally a Knubel product, later a joint Knubel-Jacobs effort. It set forth an "ecumenical confessionalism."⁵¹

Opposed to this was an "exclusive confessionalism" espoused by Stub, first National Lutheran Council president. He prepared for discussion of the issue a paper titled, "Chicago Theses," which dealt with the troublesome questions of Lutheranism in America not as yet fully settled.

Within the National Lutheran Council, as well as in Lutheranism in America in general, there was developing more and more an *in tres partes* division that would dominate subsequent developments.

Varying Viewpoints

On the one hand, there was the ULCA position that called for more and more union and cooperation and less and less division and conflict among those that bore the Lutheran name and subscribed to the Lutheran Confessions. This was the old General Synod position with a new name.

At the other pole was the viewpoint of the Synodical Conference that insisted on the basis of God's Word that unity in doctrine and practice was the prerequisite for fellowship and church cooperation in fellowship endeavors. Iowa was sufficiently minded in this direction that it denied itself the "benefits" of National Lutheran Council membership after a short time.

Rallying around Stub's "Chicago Theses," another camp was establishing itself. Dragging its feet against ULCA leading but reluctant to stand aloof as firmly as the Synodical Conference, a middle party coalesced.

Much of the story of the shaping of United States Lutheranism after 1920 revolves around this so-called "middle." Its official shaping is the major subject of the next section. Its shift to the left and consequent disappearance is another subject to be treated in subsequent chapters. These preview remarks indicate that the stopping point for this section has been reached.

Part Three: The Twenties and the Thirties

The time between the Wars was in many ways for the Lutheran churches in the land what that time was for the realm on the left hand. It was a time of peace but in those years of peace positions were taken and claims staked and alliances formed that would have to lead to confrontation and conflict.

Among the nations and among the Lutheran churches of our land there was an effort to find neutral ground between two “extreme” positions. There were, however, few neutrals in fact when war came again for the world. Likewise, the middle ground for Lutheran churches in America would prove to be shifting sand, sliding steadily leftward, an untenable no-man’s-land.

Between 1918 and 1939 the major development in the shaping of US Lutheranism was the formation of the middle party, represented by the first American Lutheran Church and by the federation of this body with others of like mind in the American Lutheran Conference. This middle party will receive major attention in this third section and its congenital attraction to the left will be noted.

There is one outstanding account of this major merger movement. It is Fred Meuser’s book, *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, published in 1958 as a paperback of the author’s doctrinal dissertation at Yale University.⁵¹ Meuser is now an ALC vice-president. His book has the subtitle, “A Case Study in Lutheran Unity,” and makes good reading for anyone interested in the subject.

An outline of this section can conveniently be inserted at this point:

Part Three: The Twenties and Thirties

I. The First ALC

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One other matter could well be raised in these introductory paragraphs. This is the role of the Great Depression in the 1930s in Lutheran mergers. It has been argued that need for churches to pinch pennies in order to keep essential operations going in that decade was a major impetus to church union and merger. In a spiritual marriage, it was held, the old rule also applied, “Two or three or more can live just about as cheaply as one.”

Church history writers and teachers who play up the sociological and economic aspects tend to assign greater significance in US Lutheran church history to the Great Depression than it actually deserves. Weighty evidence can be gathered to demonstrate that merger-minded church

bodies were merger-minded both before and after, as well as during, the Depression and that confessional bodies were just as confessional during the Depression as they were before or after.

In other words, it is an exaggeration to assign the Depression a large motivating role in the Lutheran merger story. At best it played the part of a catalyst that speeded up a process already underway. This certainly is the case in the main US Lutheran merger in the Twenties and Thirties:

I. The First ALC

Ohio-Iowa Fellowship

Ohio - Iowa fellowship as previously stated had been declared in 1918. It would take a dozen years and the emergence of the Great Depression before that fellowship relationship would result in the merger that produced the first American Lutheran Church. In many ways, however, that merger was almost a foregone conclusion when fellowship was declared. Hindsight suggests that the question was never *if* but only *when*.

This is not to suggest that the Ohio and Iowa pastors of two generations ago were gung-ho merger enthusiasts. Few, if any, were of the mind that misread John 17:21, "that they may be one," as an imperative to merger. These were men who, for the most part, rejoiced in the fellowship declaration in 1918 as the all-important matter and were ready to wait for any further developments according to a timetable God would set.

Here and there a merger drummer surfaced. Examples are Pastor Peter Klueppel of Iowa's Perrysburg, Ohio, congregation with his 1919 address to the Iowa Eastern District and the Capitol University editorialist whose title for a 1920 article, "Merge or Submerge," speaks for itself.⁵³

There were also certain barriers to an Ohio-Iowa merger. For example, Iowa took a comparatively hard line over against National Lutheran Council efforts to subsidize rebuilding efforts among European Lutheran Church bodies. In 1920 it dropped out of the NLC picture. Ohio's president from 1894 on, who was elected president of the National Lutheran Council in 1923, K.H.L. Schuette, was much more interested in Ohio participation in NLC programs than in Iowa merger. In the 1920 convention he even neglected to give Iowa's official visitor, G. Fandrey, the privilege of the floor and succeeded thereby in setting Ohio-Iowa relationships back a few stages and years.

A major move in the opposite direction was the 1924 Ohio election of Carl Christian Hein to succeed the retiring Schuette. Hein was a rare blend, a leader who kept Ohio in the direction of conservative, confessional Lutheranism and one who at the same time was willing to exert his considerable administrative ability in the interest of a larger union of conservative Lutherans.

By 1925 a definite merger mood had asserted itself. In both Ohio and Iowa district after district expressed itself in favor of a merger by almost unanimous votes. What little opposition there was centered on the future of the theological seminaries and the fear that one synod might dominate the other. In the fall of 1925 at a meeting of the synodical presidents in Minneapolis plans were made for a Joint Merger Commission to begin work immediately on a plan of union.

In several ways this Minneapolis event is one of the most momentous in the annals of the history of US Lutheranism in this century. For one thing, Presidents Richter and Hein were joined by President Hoessel of the Buffalo Synod. Buffalo had been mending its theological fences for several decades. It never recovered numerically from the divisions of the 1860s but it

had been ameliorating extreme views of Grabau and was becoming more and more like other conservative Lutheran bodies. In 1920 Iowa-Buffalo fellowship was declared. It was quite natural for the Buffalo convention in 1925 to resolve 'That definite steps be taken to effect a merger or union with Iowa and possibly with the Ohio Synod, provided mutually satisfactory arrangements can be made.'⁵⁴ A direct result of that resolution was the presence of Hoessel at the November meeting which Hein and Richter had set up to plan merger.

The presidents of the synods that would in 1930 merge into the first ALC also utilized their Minneapolis gathering in November to meet with representatives of the Norwegians for doctrinal discussions, chiefly on election and conversion, although other subjects were included. The "Minneapolis Theses" resulted and far-reaching influences in the shaping of today's Lutheran scene in our land were exerted. Those November 1925 Minneapolis meetings comprise a subject to which we will have to return on several occasions in this section and others to follow. No more need be said on this point.

To draw together the picture that prevailed in the ALC merger developments as the 1926 conventions of Iowa and Ohio approach, a quotation from Meuser's book will serve well. He writes of the Iowa-Ohio relationship:

By 1925 the synods had been in fellowship for seven years, the districts had voted in favor of merger, a constitution had been written, committee work on every detail of merger was in the advanced stage. Over forty years had passed since the Richmond Colloquy but consultation had eventually led to doctrinal agreement; doctrinal agreement finally brought pulpit and altar fellowship and some cooperative work; fellowship had produced the determination to merge; the determination had been translated in detailed plans. To the casual observer and even to the majority of both synods the legal and institutional problems of merger seemed to be the only thing keeping Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo alive as separate synods. All were ready for merger.⁵⁵

Then with all merger systems at "Go," with the final countdown seemingly already underway, suddenly there erupted a controversy over inspiration that not only delayed the merger four years but actually jeopardized its realization.

Inspiration Debate

This inspiration controversy was a surprise. Both Ohio and Iowa, and Buffalo too for that matter, had a long tradition of standing firmly for the authority and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures in the face of departures and aberrations so common in the early years of this century.

Writing for the Reformation anniversary on *Welche Aufgabe. stellt uns das Erbe der Reformation in unserer Zeit?* Ohio's theologian Henry Ernst declared flatly: "One single error in the Scriptures, and it has ceased to be the Word of Him who neither lies nor deceives, and has ceased to offer us a sure comfort and anchor in our dire needs and in our fear of death."⁵⁶ Hein was a firm believer in Scripture inerrancy and soon demonstrated that this was not just a personal but also a professional and official stand with him.

As late as 1923 Iowa's outstanding voice in doctrinal theology had been heard testifying eloquently and firmly on inspiration. The scene was the Lutheran World Convention at Eisenach. The occasion was a Reu address calling for a return to the biblical historic Lutheran position on the inspiration of the Scriptures. To many who prided themselves on modern progressive views, and this included both old-line liberals and new-born neo-orthodoxists, Reu pleaded for the old,

old stands and terms as contained in classical Lutheran dogmatics: *impulsus ad scribendum, suggestio rerum, suggestio verbi*.⁵⁷ For a second time within six years Reu had offered lonely testimony in the cause of confessional Lutheranism. His warning to the 1917 convention of the General Council, as has been noted, fell on deaf ears.⁵⁸ To the many at Eisenach who rejected his appeal to an old systematics, but one based on the testimony of Scripture, Reu testified: “Only that church has a future which, like Luther, bows unreservedly to the Scriptures in their entirety.”⁵⁹

Commenting a year later on the differences in theological approach between American and European Lutherans, Reu set forth this solid declaration on inerrancy: “Whatever inspiration theory German theology may devise in the future, we are convinced that it will be false unless it unmistakably asserts that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are God’s Word in the sense that we can so at random reach into them as did the New Testament writers into the Old Testament and in every case be absolutely certain that we have God’s Word before us.”⁶⁰ Certainly Reu seems to be speaking the same language on the inerrancy question as was being heard in Ohio, Buffalo and all conservative Lutheran circles then and now.

Before the next year, 1925, ran its course, however, it was becoming apparent to insiders that Reu was willing to step down from Ohio’s standards of an inerrancy position and profession. By convention time in 1926 it was common knowledge that an inspiration controversy was not only in the making but was already raging. What happened? Two things. Two inspiration and inerrancy statements on Scripture appeared in 1925 as results of intersynodical discussions involving the most conservative Lutheran church bodies. They served as touchstones to determine that there was some dross, some hidden foreign element in what had appeared to be pure unanimity on Scripture in the Ohio and Iowa Synods.

Early in the year representatives of Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo, who had begun by studying conversion and election but had enlarged their subject to include other doctrines, issued a statement on Scripture that was to be studied and discussed by the synods involved. The chief paragraph is a clear and unequivocal testimony to inerrancy. It reads: “We pledge adherence to the Holy Scriptures as the only source and norm of doctrine and faith (2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pe 1:19-21). Over against modern theology we maintain, now as formerly, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration (I Cor 2:13; 2 Tm 3:16). We believe and confess that Scripture not only contains God’s Word but is God’s Word, and hence no errors or contradictions of any sort are found therein.”⁶¹

At his Iowa District meeting in the summer of 1925 Reu raised objections to this declaration, claiming it so confined him that he could not continue teaching theology for Iowa if such a statement became official synodical doctrine of the church body.⁶² Reu also persuaded the Iowa District to request that any new constitution of a merged body limit itself to a simple declaration on Scripture such as was contained in the Iowa constitution and was the vogue, also in Synodical Conference circles, in the previous century.

Later in the year, as has been mentioned, representatives of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo met with Norwegian Church leaders in Minneapolis to ascertain whether doctrinal agreement existed between those synods. In the consideration of the doctrine of Scripture Hein’s original thesis confessing the Scriptures to be “the divinely inspired and revealed Word of God” and “the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life” was reinforced, at President Stubs request, by adding to the two direct modifiers, *inspired* and *revealed* a third, *inerrant*. Thus the “Minneapolis Theses,” an important doctrinal basis of the American Lutheran Conference and

subsequently of the present American Lutheran Church, like the “Chicago” or “Intersynodical Theses,” stood clearly for inerrancy.

One of the Iowa representatives at Minneapolis was Dr. Reu. There is no record that he voiced the same objections that he had raised at his district meeting. He, in fact, expressed his “extreme satisfaction” at the Minneapolis outcome. Perhaps he foresaw no immediate practical consequences of the Minneapolis meeting. Perhaps he deemed a stronger Scripture statement desirable when dealing with Norwegian Lutherans. In any event, the Reu who had objected to the inerrancy of the “Chicago” or “Intersynodical Theses” did not object to the inerrancy of the “Minneapolis Theses.”

When, however, the Ohio-Iowa-Buffalo Joint Commission spoke out for inerrancy in its constitutional proposal, Reu’s protests soon became a matter of record. The proposal read: “The Synod accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the only source, norm and guide of faith and life.”⁶³ In a letter to President Hein, Reu offered this reaction:

I could wholeheartedly approve the statement: “The Scripture is the inspired Word of God and the only and inerrant source, guide, and norm for Christian faith and life. “ This I would defend to my last breath against any opponent in Germany or here, as God would give me grace. For the testimony of the Scriptures would support me ... But Scripture itself does not say that it is inerrant on all other things that neither directly nor indirectly pertain to faith and life; therefore I cannot elevate such a claim to an article of faith or a confessional paragraph. If I did, I would exclude from church fellowship those who said that this or that historical reference is incorrect or questionable. I myself hesitate to say this ...⁶⁴

When the Iowa Synod’s 1926 convention considered the merger question, there emerged two reactions, not at all compatible. By a 128-0 vote the convention asked that the proposed constitutional paragraph be amended by transferring *inerrant* from its position modifying “Word of God” and making it modify instead “source, norm and guide of faith and life.” The wording Iowa desired was thus: “inspired Word of God and the inerrant and only source, norm and guide of faith and life.”

That same convention, however, rejected a minority report seeking to block the merger by a vote of 96-7 and then favored the merger resolution by 120-9. Iowa was definitely for merger but only on its terms and those were the terms of Michael Reu, terms which fell short of espousing full inerrancy.

Ohio’s convention that summer could only mark time until the situation would clarify itself. To this end Hein sought the advice of Ohio’s theological faculties that very summer. From Columbus and St. Paul came similar responses to the effect that Iowa’s wording, while possibly acceptable under the best circumstances, was in this instance suspect, especially because it was insisted upon as a *conditio sine qua non* for merger.

Iowa obviously tried to play down the difference that had emerged. Its explanations came close to declaring a belief in full inerrancy but at the same time an unwillingness to withhold church fellowship from those who held Scripture inerrant only in matters of doctrine and life.

Ohio became more and more concerned. It wanted a clear declaration of full inerrancy and it wanted no partnership with anyone who would settle for less. Hein labored to ascertain

just where Reu and Iowa stood. Even student notes of Reu's dogmatics course were checked out.⁶⁵ All discussion and investigation tended to make Ohio stand more firmly for its position.

It was up to Iowa to mend the merger fences. Strong segments of the Synod declared themselves for the Ohio stand. One of Iowa's representatives on the joint merger committee threw his vote to Ohio. Reu began to talk about a recent revision of his lecture notes. When votes were taken on the issue, the result indicated a divided Iowa. For moving *inerrant* back to its position alongside of "inspired and revealed" there were 328 votes against 300, blank 20, and "under protest" 7. A logjam developed. The joint merger committee did not meet from April 1927 to April 1929.

What broke the logjam? The Iowa 1928 convention backtracked from the 1926 convention's resolve as to the location of *inerrancy* in the constitutional statement on Scripture. In 1928 Iowa voted not to "insist on the formulation adopted at Dubuque, Iowa, in 1926."⁶⁶ The vote was nearly unanimous. It might not have been if the lengthy report had taken up the touchy subject of church fellowship with those who limited the Bible's inerrancy. Cherished ties with Neuendettelsau were involved, ties that Reu cherished more than anyone. Enthusiasm for merger suggested that this sticky and sticking point be avoided. The avoidance of the fellowship issue then would help win the battle for merger; it would also help lose the total war.

After the Iowa 1928 convention the task was to find a wording in the constitution's paragraph on Scripture that would synthesize Ohio's firm stand with Iowa's improved resolutions. Numerous Nestors on both sides came forward with suggestions. Hein opted for: "The Synod believes that the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments in their original texts are, as a whole and in all their parts, the inspired and inerrant Word of God and therefore accepts these books in the now generally recognized texts as the only inspired and inerrant authority, source, norm, and guide of faith and life." Hein had managed, it should be noted, to get two *inerrancy* references in the brief paragraph. Bodensieck of Lutheran Encyclopedia renown, seconding Richter's plea for a laymen's statement on Scripture, plugged in the *Lutheran Herald* for the concise and almost incontrovertible wording: "The Synod believes that the Bible is the written Word of God."⁶⁷

The final wording in the constitutional paragraph on Scripture strongly resembled, *mutatis mutandis*, what Reu had been plugging for all along. The pledge was to the "inspired Word of God and the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life." Ohio commissioners voted for this Reu phraseology only after they gained the consent of all present to the inclusion in an appendix of the longer Hein paragraph as a commentary on the shorter form just quoted.

There were Iowa objections to this appendix. Reu objected on substantive grounds; he could not accept a total inerrancy, even if buried in an appendix. Others in Iowa objected to the inclusion in a constitution of an appendix deemed necessary to insure Iowa orthodoxy.

Buffalo was obviously pleased by the inclusion of the Hein appendix. It had voted at its 1927 convention not to merge unless both inspiration and inerrancy were officially recognized. It now had an official appendix to back up its merger resolve.

Ohio-Iowa-Buffalo Merger

The merger convention was held in Toledo during August. On August 11, 1930, official delegates from Ohio and Iowa and Buffalo resolved a merger. Did Reu so resolve? Yes and no. After the merger vote and after the bilingual singing of "Now Thank We All Our God" - *Nun*

danket alle Gott, Reu offered this explanation of his stand that perplexes as much as it explains. He declared:

I did not rise when the last vote was taken. While I am in full accord with the confessional paragraph and while I voted for the merger, I could not vote for the Appendix. It is my opinion that the Appendix establishes an article of faith. It is, however, my conviction that in the Lutheran Church articles of faith must be clearly and unmistakably set forth in Holy Scriptures.⁶⁸

No one challenged Reu and no one spoke on his behalf. Reu entered the merger although he denied the validity of the confessional appendix in the constitution of the merging church. Later on Reu continued to teach and lead in the merged church.

Why did Reu and the church body follow this strange course of action, or rather lack of action? In both cases the excuse probably was that Reu personally agreed to full inerrancy and only hesitated to make what he viewed as a subjective conviction of his a binding article that would determine fellowship associations. For Reu the umbilical cord binding him to Neuendettelsau was as strong as it was long. He simply refused to break the bond then or later.

Were there important consequences? At the surface level one might argue that despite the Reu disclaimer of the appendix the successor ALC of today has as solid a Scripture statement in its constitution as can be found anywhere. That would not take into account the fact that this paper pledge has been vitiated by constant malpractice and by official interpretation of two presidents who have disavowed full inerrancy. Schiotez, incidentally, followed the Reu line of denigrating the appendix when he used as an argument for his view that “inerrancy ... does not apply to the text but to the truths” the suggestion that the only antecedent body of the present ALC that pledged inerrancy was the first ALC but that its pledge was only in a footnote.⁶⁹ More on this later.

A more realistic view would be that the nonsolution of the inerrancy controversy was a first mincing step that would begin the drift toward the byway now being followed. An inordinate amount of time and words has been devoted to this behind the scenes development in the shaping of today’s Lutheranism. This is, however, not an apology. The reason for the extension of this point is a conviction that here the real issues of US Lutheranism were surfacing, that what mattered then and matters now was centering on a single event, the creation of the first ALC in 1930, and in the role of one man, Reu, in that event. Paul has summarized the issue perfectly in the few words: “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” All the commentary that has been added simply adds up to the old maxim, “Resist the beginnings.”

The commentary can be disputed but not the history of the developments. On August 10, 1930, at Toledo, Iowa and Ohio with Texas and Buffalo merged to create the first American Lutheran Church. No doubt, depression conditions helped the new body solve amalgamation problems in such areas as education and publication. In any event, the new church body soon showed itself to be viable and aggressive. Within the first two months of its existence it helped sponsor a federation of the middle among US Lutherans.

II. The American Lutheran Conference

Preparation at Minneapolis

A major step in the creation of the American Lutheran Conference had been taken when leaders of what would be the ALC agreed with their counterparts in the Norwegian Lutheran Church. This agreement was reached, as has been related, at Minneapolis in November, 1925. Beyond the 1925 Minneapolis agreement, the roots stretch back to the 1918 National Lutheran Council formation where viewpoints were shared and where associations were made also with representatives of other Norwegian and Swedish and Danish church bodies. By 1929 Ohio and Iowa had declared fellowship with the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

The Swedish Lutheran connection presented certain difficulties. In the mid 1920s the Augustana Synod had felt compelled to go along with some of Sweden's Archbishop Söderblom's ecumenical activities. The Augustana Synod was also being courted, as an old General Council member, by the United Lutheran Church in America. Both leftward leanings were disavowed by the 1929 Augustana Synod which definitely cast its lot with the synods in the middle. The decision would, however, prove to be unending somewhat later.

An entirely different and altogether unique problem developed when the Lutheran Free Church was drawn into the organization of the American Lutheran Conference. Anticipating a stand of the ULCA and of the present LCA, the Lutheran Free Church stood unreservedly on the principle that it would not add to its confessional base any new doctrinal statements. That confessional base was the three ecumenical creeds, the *Augustana*, and Luther's Small Catechism. For membership in the American Lutheran Conference, however, adoption of the "Minneapolis Theses" was a *conditio sine qua non*. How could this dilemma be overcome?

President Hein found a way. He arranged for a colloquy. Lutheran Free Church leaders avowed the orthodoxy of their body. The "Minneapolis Theses" were read but not discussed. Lutheran Free Church leaders then stated that they "had read and considered principles expressed in the so-called Minneapolis and Chicago Agreement, and finds this Agreement in harmony with the confessions of the Lutheran Free Church."⁷⁰ Fellowship declarations and federation membership were then recommended

Creating the Conference

With no special problems developing in relations with the United Danes or "Gloomy Danes" the American Lutheran Conference could be organized in the last days of October 1930 in Minneapolis.⁷¹

This federation could claim 1,384,000 members, slightly more than the Synodical Conference's 1,351,000 and somewhat fewer than the ULCA's 1,520,000. To this total federation members made these contributions:

American Lutheran Church	498,565
Norwegian Lutheran Church	489,968
Augustana Synod	310,647
Lutheran Free Church	38,636
United Danish Luth. Church	29,590

A recent history of US Lutheranism bluntly declares: "That the American Lutheran Conference possessed the character of a defensive alliance particularly over against the United Lutheran Church can hardly be denied."⁷² The sympathetic historian also speaks of "idealists who wanted to see the Conference as a step along the road to ultimate Lutheran union."

Stance of the Conference

In both the American Lutheran Conference and the American Lutheran Church there can be easily discerned a preoccupation with the middle positions these bodies held between ULCA Lutheranism and Synodical Conference Lutheranism.⁷³ This could show itself as a defensive posture when ULCA or Missouri theology seemed to threaten. In other circumstances it could endeavor to provide a bridge between what it viewed as extremes to the left and right.

As 1930 drew to a close those in Lutheranism's middle position, and many others outside of it, could not be faulted for presuming that the future would bring considerable convergence from the left and from the right toward the middle. The result would be a US Lutheranism created in the image of the American Lutheran Church and Conference. That was certainly the consummation devoutly desired by those church bodies. It did not, however, actually work out that way. But more on that later.

The creation of the American Lutheran Church and American Lutheran Conference can and should also be viewed as an effective

III. Stymie for Synodical Conference Lutheranism

While the merger negotiations that formed the ALC were running their course, Synodical Conference synods were carrying on significant doctrinal discussions with the very synods that would merge - Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo - and came close to reaching an agreement that might have given our country's Lutheranism a shape much different from the one it now has. These doctrinal discussions that originated in the late 1910s and ran through the 1920s produced the "Chicago" or "Intersynodical Theses" - "Chicago Theses" in Synodical Conference circles, "Intersynodical Theses" among those synods involved in the creation of the 1920 "Chicago Theses" that served as a basis for the National Lutheran Council formation.

More Election-Conversion Discussion

The roots of our "Chicago Theses" go back as far as Reformation anniversary planning in Sibley County, Minnesota. In the summer of 1915 Missouri, Minnesota and Ohio pastors of the area discussed the old conversion-election differences. They found agreement existed among them. On September 15, 1915, at Arlington they expressed their unity in joint worship.⁷⁴ They broadcast their brief "Sibley County Theses" and soon larger gatherings in the Twin Cities were recasting them into a set of "St. Paul Theses" to which 555 Lutheran pastors with varied synodical affiliations in the Midwest subscribed their names. The time for official action had come.

The Intersynodical (Chicago) Theses

Representatives of Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, and later Buffalo, went into the disputed matters in greater depth. There were high hopes that unity was being discovered when the first statements on conversion and election were produced. J.P. Koehler, a Wisconsin representative, commented in 1922 in this fashion: "God has also endowed us through the settlement of the election controversy achieved up to this point with powers that were not available at the close of the Thirty Years War."⁷⁵ Soon additional subjects, covering all disputed issues in American Lutheranism were added to the original conversion-election agenda. By 1928 the "Chicago Theses" in finished form were presented by the committee to their church bodies.

End of the Endeavor

In 1929 at River Forest the Missouri Synod summarily rejected the document. The reason for this action is a story too long for telling in detail here. Suffice it to make the point that those who view the “Chicago Theses” as a step in the right direction, if not the whole trip, should not blame Missouri too much. There were some unclarities and ambiguities in the wordings. Two Ohio representatives insisted on footnoting the election section with a personal declaration that they would continue tolerating the *intuitu fidei* approach which the section disavowed.

Last but not least, it was known that Hein and Iowa and Buffalo men had agreed with the Norwegian Lutherans on conversion and election in the Minneapolis meetings in November, 1925. Now agreement in the same matter was being reached with those who definitely disagreed with the Norwegians. Fears that a compromise was being effected were not without justification.

The end result was that the merger of Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo stayed on course. The Synodical Conference was left to its own devices. It would never again have a major opportunity to enlarge its theological sway in the Lutheranism of this land. It was soon itself a house divided and was never accurately represented by Missouri in the intersynodical discussions that followed. Elaboration of that point must be reserved for subsequent treatment. What remains for this section is a broad and brief sketch of

IV. Merger Maneuvers in the Thirties

The ULCA Activites

The United Lutheran Church reacted to the emergence of a unified and not necessarily friendly center with activities that were very much in character. It continued the formalization of its broad theological plank by adding to its 1920 “Washington Declaration,” stressing the ecumenical nature of Lutheran confessionalism, a 1934 “Savannah Declaration,” affirming the Lutheran confessions “in their historic context” as the only fellowship test, and finally in 1938 a “Baltimore Declaration,” distinguishing between Word and Scripture.

With the “Savannah Declaration” supplying guidelines, the ULCA in 1934 sent out to other Lutheran bodies an invitation to discuss closer relations. Soon there were discussions underway with the ALC and very briefly with Missouri and eventually with others as will be described later.

The Left Hand and the Right Hand of the Middle

It is not surprising that the church in the middle, the ALC, would respond to the ULCA overture. It also managed to begin with Missouri the long, long negotiations, that would climax in the Missouri declaration of fellowship with the ALC in 1969.

Missouri About-Face

Missouri in the meantime was doing its remarkable about-face which changed it in a half-dozen years from the old to the new Missouri. It went from the “Brief Statement” of 1932 to the Union Resolutions of 1938. It replaced President Pfothenauer with President Behnken in 1935. It shed its “isolationist” image, an image that never accurately matched the realities, and became very involved in intersynodical affairs.

In the Thirties the stage was being set for major developments in the shaping of the Lutheranism of this country in the decades to follow and in our own time.

Part Four: The Realignments of the 1960s

Previous sections have traced the shaping of United States Lutheranism to 1930, the year in which the first American Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference were formed. The title of this fourth section indicates a jump to 1960. What of the intervening thirty years? Did three decades pass without any significant occurrences in the Lutheran shaping process?

It is a surface fact that in all that time no major U.S. Lutheran mergers or federations or realignments or divisions took place. Much, however, was happening below the surface and behind the scenes that strongly influenced the realignments of the early 1960s and in fact are continuing to influence the shaping of U.S. Lutheranism in the present decade. To these influences we give our attention in the first section of Part Four which describes what motivated the realignments of the 1960s.

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I. The Long Preparation

One could do worse than at the outset focus on 1934. In that bleak depression year a series of dialogs were set in motion whose effects are still very much with us. In 1934 Missouri and the American Lutheran Church reopened doctrinal discussions that had terminated abruptly in 1929 and now involved changes in participants and designations. Wisconsin was no longer involved, as will be detailed later. Across the table from Missouri was an ALC blend of what had previously been Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo. The Missouri - ALC discussions, begun in 1934, would continue with ups and downs and interruptions until a Missouri - ALC fellowship was declared in 1969, which on Missouri's part soon became a "protesting fellowship" and in 1981 was terminated.

Also in 1934 occurred an intersynodical happening of less obvious significance but of much more enduring importance. This was the ULCA "Overture" that asked Lutheran bodies to discuss the possibilities of closer relationships.

The ULCA Call for Closer Relationships

The groundwork for the invitation had been carefully laid. In several position papers of the ULCA - the Washington Declaration of 1920 and the Savannah Declaration of 1934 - the church body was spelling out its position that would distinguish between Scripture and Word of God and would make agreement to the Lutheran Confessions the only prerequisite for church fellowship. What this lip service to the Confessions actually signified is indicated by the Savannah declaration that:

we believe that these Confessions are to be interpreted in their historical context, not as a law or as a system of theology but as a witness and declaration of faith as to how the Holy Scriptures were understood and explained on the matters in controversy within the Church of God by those who then lived.⁷⁷

One obviously isn't making much of a confessional commitment when he declares that he believes that the Formula's formulators believed what the Formula says must be believed.

Here was laid the groundwork for the now generally prevailing position of the LCA, the ALC and the AELC that for fellowship between Lutheran bodies acceptance of the Lutheran Confessions in a minimal sense is *satis* and that discussions involving differences in doctrine and practice are *nec necesse*.

Such eventual success, however, could not have been imagined back in 1934 when the ULCA "Overture" was issued. Some synods turned it down, ours among them, as will be detailed subsequently. Missouri Commissioners had several meetings with ULCA representatives but the project floundered and foundered when mutually unacceptable positions on Scripture were advocated. Discussions involving the ULCA and the ALC endured longer and even produced the "Pittsburgh Agreement" on the inerrancy of the "whole of Scripture" which Reu defended and which ULCA barely managed to swallow.⁷⁸ There were no important immediate results from the grudging acceptance of the "Agreement." But the ULCA leaven was at work. In another three decades it would leaven the whole lump.

The ALC - Missouri Negotiations

Meantime the American Lutheran Church had been engaging in doctrinal discussions with Missouri. The first round of talks produced certain ominous results in 1938. In that year Missouri in convention declared 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 ... be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church fellowship."⁷⁹ Also in 1938 the American Lutheran Church at Sandusky declared the Brief Statement "viewed in the light of" its *Declaration* to be not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses and asserted frankly that it was "firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines."⁸⁰

Protests against the Missouri 1938 union resolutions were voiced in many areas of the Synodical Conference. Demands for a single union document were heard and heeded. The single document brought out by ALC and Missouri representatives in 1944, the "Doctrinal Affirmation," however, pleased no one, neither the ALC, nor Missouri, nor Missouri's sister

synods. The document deserves the oblivion it has achieved, finding mention, but not quotation, in Wolf's *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* only in a footnote.⁸¹

The next product of ALC-LCMS doctrinal discussions was the controversial "Common Confession," Part I of which was agreed to in December 1949 and the supplementary Part II with additions and clarifications that was completed in February 1953. It was this "Common Confession" that aroused extended opposition in Synodical Conference sister synods and strained relations to the breaking point. More elaborate treatment is therefore reserved for the fourth section of this fourth part.

Suffice it to say at this point that within three years after the appearance of the second section of the "Common Confession" Missouri had to face the fact that the document could not serve as a "functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship" and had to be acknowledged as only a "significant historic statement."⁸² The rush to merger had passed the "Common Confession" by. The one party of the proceedings, the old ALC, was by that time so far along in the enlargement project of merging most of the American Lutheran Conference into a new and bigger ALC that any agreements between it and Missouri ceased to have significance.

From 1956 on the old ALC would especially concern itself with the merger that would be consummated in 1960 and which is described in the next section. Missouri, on the other hand, very likely more because of necessity than because of choice, devoted itself from 1956 on in a too little, too late Synodical Conference fence-mending endeavor. More on this topic also in a subsequent section.

It will not be amiss at this point to inject the synodical point of view and to describe these intersynodical proceedings from the vantage point of our Wisconsin Synod. How did all this look to us? The view was

A View from the Sidelines

Wisconsin stayed on the sidelines when it received the 1934 ULCA pan-Lutheran invitation to discuss closer relations as a matter of choice and conviction. Earlier that ULCA invitation has been described as historic and determinative in that it heralded the position that agreement to the Confessions precludes the necessity of additional doctrinal discussions or theological agreements. The Wisconsin reply to the invitation was, for us, equally historic and determinative.

When President Brenner received that invitation in January 1935 and consulted with the Conference of Presidents in the matter, he endeavored to reply in a way that would underscore the confessional issues at stake. He appointed a special committee to draft a reply and made the matter a subject for a synod convention essay.⁸³

Approving of any God-pleasing effort at true unity, the Wisconsin reply to the 1935 ULCA invitation charted a safe pathway in intersynodical dealings by setting up specific guidelines. First of all, the ULCA presupposition that Confessional subscription obviated the need for doctrinal discussions or assertions was refuted for these two reasons:

- 1) "doctrinal issues may arise which did not exist and were not even foreseen at the time these Confessions came into being";
- 2) "confessional writing, even as Scripture itself, may meet with varying and often contrary interpretations."⁸⁴

Next the reply underscored “practical considerations which precluded any approach” between the two bodies such as doctrinal tolerance, lodge practice and unionistic tendencies. These, the reply pointed out, the ULCA alone could remove.

By way of conclusion and emphasis the Wisconsin reply referred to the principle that practice is very much involved in the matter. That wording merits actual and full quotation and reads as follows:

While some of these questions are often relegated to the realm of church practice, we hold that it is dangerous thus to segregate practice from doctrine. On the contrary, the practice of a church in such matters is the clearest manifestation of the doctrine which it holds. Tolerance here becomes synonymous with liberalism, indifference and denial. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” 1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9.

This appreciation for the importance of practice in fellowship determination, while frequently misunderstood or ignored, is nothing novel. Back in 1868 and 1869 Wisconsin resolved to withdraw from the General Council, whose doctrinal platform it enthusiastically endorsed, for eminently practical “Four-Point” reasons. In 1882 Friedrich Schmidt’s practices in the election controversy, such as ruthless attacks in publication and unauthorized invasions of congregations, more than anything else lost for him the privilege of the brother and prevented his personal confession regarding his views on election from gaining a hearing at the Synodical Conference convention.⁸⁵

So much for the reaction of Wisconsin to the 1935 ULCA invitation. What about its role or non-role in the Missouri-ALC discussions of the same era?

The Wisconsin Synod has been roundly criticized in this connection. The argument is advanced: “It is easy to be an *ex post facto* objector but a nobler role is to participate in the positive proceedings to which objections are subsequently made.” In principle one might agree; in practice, in point of fact, it is another story.

Whether or not Wisconsin in principle should have joined ALC-Missouri discussions in the mid 1930s need not become an issue. The plain fact is that Wisconsin was not issued an invitation to the discussion table. Missouri’s leader at that time, President Behnken, makes the point emphatically.⁸⁶ Dr. Reu of the ALC provides the rationale when he explains that Wisconsin simply was *persona non grata* for several reasons.⁸⁷

One of these reasons carries considerable weight, also in Wisconsin circles. A Wisconsin involvement as a Missouri partner could hardly avoid involving ALC partners in the American Lutheran Conference. Problems could have multiplied. There is, however, another side of the picture with its suggestion that the prior and principal regard for existing fellowship in intersynodical dealings should take precedence over the zeal for finding new spiritual partners.

The Wisconsin Synod, however, emphatically rejects the charge of being some sort of Johnny -come-lately supercritic. It received no prompt invitation to the discussion table. The belated invitation could not be accepted even on the grounds of Emily Post, to say nothing of a higher etiquette and ethic.

It may seem that this is a minor point being blown out of all proportions. It should be remembered that many, some in ignorance and some for other reasons, have miscast Wisconsin in the ultimate isolationist and unneighborly role that exists only to find fault. One could plead that the motivation for Wisconsin Synod practice stems from better impulses and could argue that previous history demonstrates the point adequately.

What happened in the mid-1930s was that under ULCA influence the rules of the game were gradually, but inexorably, changed so that serious intersynodical discussions of doctrinal differences became all but impossible, the LCUSA theological division notwithstanding. The game that remained was one we preferred to view from the sidelines, rather than to participate in it at the risk of violating something more than the rules of the new gamesmanship of intersynodical relationships. In this respect little has changed from then to now.

When the decade of the 60s dawned, two of today's large Lutheran bodies were in the process of formation and another at the point of dissolution. In this series of critical events we take note first of the origins of

II. The New ALC

In this episode the year 1940 and the role of the "Pittsburgh Agreement" can be utilized as demonstrating a shift in the thinking and activity of the old ALC. True enough, it had been busy producing with Missouri a platform of fellowship that was tacked down in 1938. It had also, however, in those years been energetically engaged in discussions with the ULCA on inerrancy, unionism and lodge membership.

These discussions resulted in the 1940 "Pittsburgh Agreement," a document that allowed inspiration and inerrancy for the Scriptures "as a whole." The ULCA accepted, or rather swallowed hard and gulped, the "Pittsburgh Agreement" but only after vocal opposition by a minority headed by a young Franklin Clark Fry and the withdrawal of the names of three ULCA commissioners from the report favoring acceptance of the "Agreement."

Firming up the Middle

The ALC was disenchanted enough at this point to take the eggs it had in a ULCA basket and transfer them to the Missouri basket. Through NLC membership and its programs relations with the ULCA were not altogether cut off, but the direction was being set and the die was being cast. World War II obviously hindered the practical progress of merger efforts, even if it produced a long-range effect of the opposite kind.

In the first years after World War II the merger thrust manifested itself in a definite drawing together of the federated members of the American Lutheran Conference. Proposals for a National Lutheran Council development into either a merger or a federation were rejected as the first post-war decade began. What remained on the table of union discussions was a 1949 proposal to merge three members of the American Lutheran Conference: the ALC, the Norwegian ELC and the Danish UELC.

Two explanations are in place. The first has to do with the absence from the list of two American Lutheran Conference members. *Augustana*, had expressed itself in favor of a larger merger. The Lutheran Free Church was so fundamentally concerned about independence and freedom that no possibilities of its involvement could be given serious consideration at the time.

Another explanation should deal with the exclusion of the ULCA from this merger possibility. Hard as it is to conceptualize this in the 1980s, three decades back the Danish UELC was agitated about dancing, drinking and lodge membership in the ULCA and its schools. The long and strong roots of the "Gloomy Danes" in the United States that reached back across a century and an ocean to Beck's Danish "Inner Mission" program were still a factor at mid-century.

Wisconsin Synod Lutherans are congenital foes of any pietistic influence. Concern for the ultimate doctrine of objective justification keeps them so. Amid the ravages of contemporary

society's amorality, however, even a Wisconsin Lutheran could pause to regret the withering and dying of the positive nurture of this pietistic root that was so recently very much alive in the Lutheran scene of our land.

To the credit of the Norwegian ELC, it should be said that serious concerns had been manifested about the Scripture position of the ULCA. Along with the ALC, whose stance has been previously described, the ELC wondered about the writing of Dr. Alleman, an American pioneer in Lutheran historical-critical approach to the Scriptures.⁸⁸

The result was that strenuous efforts to transform the American Lutheran Conference from a federation into a merger began seriously about 1950. A decade would pass before the consummation of

The 1960 Merger

In that decade Augustana unmistakably indicated its preference for a pan-Lutheran, instead of a limited, merger. It withdrew from the American Lutheran Conference merger discussions and cast its lot with the ULCA. More detail on this subject will be supplied in a subsequent section.⁸⁹ The Lutheran Free Church had to remove itself from merger discussions in the late 1950's after two congregational referenda disapproved of the project. The other American Lutheran Conference members, however, persevered in their limited merger project despite forceful and frequent objections to the limitations both from without and within.

Merger details were hammered out in the next years. Meetings on April 22-24, 1960, completed the project. January 1, 1961, was set as the day when official operations of the new church body should begin. One of the biggest problems was the matter of name. To avoid confusion in legal documents, a distinction was made in the names of the old and new ALC by capitalizing the *The* of the new ALC. When objections to this grotesque grammatical usage were raised, the decision was to allow the normal in ordinary situations and to retain the grotesque for official and formal usage.⁹⁰

The inclusion of the maverick Lutheran Free Church remains to be considered. A third referendum on the merger question in 1961, in which congregations finally gave the green light, enabled the Lutheran Free Church to enter the merger in 1963. The old spirit of individuality and freedom did not, however, die easily. Opponents of the merger fought it as long as they could, refused to join and endeavored to continue as the "Lutheran Free Church." Legal actions followed and use of the name by the non-joiners was enjoined. They are still in business under the name, "Association of Free Lutheran Congregations."

There are 148 such congregations with 17,447 baptized members served by a clergy whose roster numbers 108.⁹¹ The small average size of the Association's congregation points to difficulties the group could be having. It prefers not to supply financial statistics.

With the Lutheran Free Church finally and safely included in the fold in 1963, The American Lutheran Church achieved the form it has retained to the present time. More important than that form is the theological position of the newly formed body. What was in theological terms

The ALC Stance

The inerrancy issue is of fundamental importance. This was the issue that had caused the old ALC its greatest merger difficulties. What stand did the new ALC take in this matter?

The constitution of the new ALC contains one of the better affirmations of inerrancy to be found in the constitutions of U.S. Lutheran church bodies. It speaks of the "inerrant Word of

God” as the “only infallible authority.”⁹² It would seem that Hein’s footnote to the old ALC constitution had won out over Reu’s constitutional paragraph. It so seemed but it just was not so. Within six years the head of The American Lutheran Church, the Rev. Dr. Fredrik Schiotz, gave his official interpretation of that constitutional statement. The interpretation came as no undercover, subversive measure. It was included in an essay delivered not once but twice, first to the ALC North Pacific District in Tacoma, Washington, on June 9, 1966, and subsequently to the Southeastern Minnesota District on June 18.⁹³ The church body’s Church Council voted during its June 1966 meeting to have the address printed in full and distributed to ALC pastors. The Schiotz essay has this to say:

Let us now turn to The American Lutheran Church and its teaching regarding the Scripture. The constitution states, “The American Lutheran Church accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed and inerrant word of God, and submits to this as to the only infallible authority in all matters of life.” The ALC holds that the inerrancy referred to here does not apply to the text but to the truths revealed for our faith, doctrine and life. The ALC has not voted this statement in a general convention. I base this interpretation on a number of factors.

First of all, the four antecedent churches did not use the word “inerrancy” in their constitutional statements although the former ALC had a footnote wherein this was used.⁹⁴

It is sad to note how irresponsibly the head of the new ALC disposes of a hotly contested “appendix” to the constitution of a major component of his merged body. The appendix is converted by some Schiotz oratory into a footnote, a footnote that really, so goes the suggestion, doesn’t mean all that much.

If there could be a rolling over in the grave, Hein must have done that on June 9th and June 18, 1966, three decades after his interment. His prized contribution to Scripture inerrancy in the true sense of the term, for which he had battled years on end and which he had seen firmly attached to the constitution of the merged body for which he had terminated his Ohio Synod, was almost completely obliterated by some official oratory.

All that is, however, past history of the ALC. Constitutional paragraph or not, it has abandoned inerrancy. We can sympathize with Alert Lutherans who are entrapped by an official commitment that has been transformed into a stand that witnesses to much less. We can try to help them as much as is possible. The real question, however, is this: What does all this mean for us?

For us the handwriting is on the wall in clear and unmistakable terms. The first and, in another sense, the last line of defense is Scripture inerrancy. On that battleline it is of utmost importance to detect camouflage and shibboleth. Defeat in the battle and loss of the war hinge on such detection and alertness.

So much for the 1960 ALC establishment. The obvious successor topic has the title,

III. From the ULCA to the LCA

In that development a key factor was the role of the Augustana Synod. In many respects this synod has the most interesting and illuminating intersynodical history of any United States Lutheran body.

The Augustana Role

The Augustana Synod's predecessors were in the vanguard of those withdrawing from the General Synod during the middle years of the previous century. The Augustana Synod was the one Scandinavian body that helped form the General Council. The Augustana Synod was the one General Council synod that failed to participate in the merger that formed the ULCA. The Augustana Synod was the one American Lutheran Conference member that declined to participate in its merger into the American Lutheran Church.

The Augustana Synod had been a constituent member of the American Lutheran Conference in 1930. Soon thereafter it began to show indications of a desire to bridge the theological gap between its old friends in the ULCA and its new partners in the American Lutheran Conference. A sharp turn-over in five professorships at Augustana Seminary in 1930-1931 brought in new viewpoints in theology. The best known name among the five new theological educators was Conrad Bergendoff. He, with President Ryden of the American Lutheran Conference and President Bersell of the Augustana Synod, would push for the Conference resolution in 1942 that said doors must be left open in union endeavors for all Lutheran bodies.⁹⁵

When the door was closed to the ULCA, Augustana wanted out, thus bringing about the official termination of the American Lutheran Conference in 1954. From then on it was only a matter of time until Augustana and the ULCA would effect some kind of closer relationship.

Adding Finns and Danes

In 1953 *Augustana* and the United Lutheran Church sent out an invitation to all Lutherans to share in the creation of a church body that would by its organic unity give expression to unity of faith. There were expected declinations from the Synodical Conference bodies. There were other declinations from the three synods that were in the process of putting together a modern version of the ALC. Two acceptances enabled President Fry to carry out his hopes of enlarging the ULCA. They were from the "happy Danes" in the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and from the Suomi Finns in the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The four interested parties formed a Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity to lay the merger groundwork. Lodge membership was perhaps the thorniest problem. Augustana had been concerned about this in 1917 when it refused to enter the ULCA merger; it was still concerned in 1957. The result was the statement:

After the organization of the Lutheran Church in American no person, who belongs to any organization which claims to possess in its teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to His Church, shall be ordained or otherwise received into the ministry of this church, nor shall any person so ordained or received by this church be retained in its ministry if he subsequently joins such an organization. Violation of this rule shall make such minister subject to discipline.⁹

The statement obviously does not affect lay lodge membership and has no *ex post facto* implications for existing clergy lodge membership.

The 1962 Merger

With the lodge hurdle overleaped, or rather circumvented, the union documents received favorable votes from the four bodies. The constituent convention in Cobo Hall, Detroit, was held at the end of June and beginning of July in 1962. On January 1, 1963, the Lutheran Church in American began official operation.

As far as theological position is concerned, the LCA is the inheritor and perpetuator of the most liberal Lutheran theology in our land. It maintains the old distinction between Scripture and Word. The Scriptures in their Christ-centered and soteriological aspect are “normative for the faith and life of the church.” The *Augustana* and the Small Catechism are viewed as “true witnesses to the Gospel.” The other Lutheran symbols are considered “further valid interpretations of the confession of the Church.”⁹⁷

The same year the LCA began its organizational operations, 1963, is the year the Synodical Conference for all practical purposes ended its existence when the WELS and the ELS withdrew, leaving as members only Missouri and the Slovak Lutherans who would soon dissolve their synod and enter the Missouri ranks as a district. The Synodical Conference officially came to an end with the beginning of 1967. This major event in this century’s shaping of United States Lutheranism becomes the point of interest in the fourth and last part of this segment dealing with the reshaping of the early 1960s.

IV. Synodical Conference Dissolution

The writing at this point assumes that hearers are generally well acquainted with the subject matter. Narrative and exposition will be curtailed. Stress will be on broad issues.

Aberrations

At the outset let this thesis be set down in unmistakable terms: the confessional character of the Synodical Conference did not foreordain its demise; instead it was aberrations from that confessional stand that caused that dissolution. Many view what happened to the Synodical Conference as evidence that a church body should not become too rigid in its theological stance so that it might be able to survive some differences of viewpoint and to accommodate itself to certain inevitable changes. That is the old logical fallacy of mistaking the cause. The trouble was never with the Synodical Conference’s confessional principles; the trouble was departures from these principles by a Conference majority.

This last point was vehemently denied at the time the controversy was raging. Missouri was wont to insist, “Nothing has changed.” With the passing of time the point that there was change can be made rather easily. In fact, by this time such dissimilar Missouri voices as those of Roland Wiederaenders and Richard John Neuhaus have made for us the point that Missouri did change and venture off old Synodical Conference pathways.⁹⁸ What were the changes and aberrations?

Some involved a direct slackening of fellowship lines. Less than complete doctrinal unity was acceptable in the 1938 Resolutions and the Common Confession. In 1944 at Saginaw the

ill-fated “prayer fellowship” route was undertaken that was undergoing restudy in Missouri recently.

Other aberrations from old Synodical Conference stands involved more practical issues: scouting, participation in the military chaplaincy, cooperation in externals and the like. All of them and the previously mentioned items were eventually lumped by Wisconsin objections in the one category of unionism, that is joint worship and church work in the absence of doctrinal unity.⁹⁹ By 1955 the situation had become critical. In that year a highpoint was reached in the Wisconsin and Norwegian.

Admonitions

Without going into detail, one could profitably pose two questions: Was the Wisconsin Synod patient enough in its admonitions? Was it too patient? First of all, some reactions to the first question.

The Wisconsin admonitions began in 1939 as a response to the 1938 “Union Resolutions” of Missouri. They stretched over two decades. They involved countless meetings and discussions at the synodical and district and conference level. They produced thousands of words in pamphlets and periodicals. They continued after 1955 and 1957 when their continuance threatened and provoked a diminution in the ranks of Wisconsin pastors and congregations and members.

Patience involves more than a prolongation of admonition. It involves abstinence from unnecessary faultfinding and nit-picking. What of that issue? A look at the record should suffice. The Wisconsin Synod still stands four-square in opposition to scoutism and involvement in the government’s military chaplaincy. We still stand in opposition to a cooperation in externals that really masks a cooperation in internals. All this suggests and insists that the Synodical Conference issues of the 1940s and the 1950s were not just instances of nit-picking on the part of certain presidents and vice-presidents but real issues that still evoke our commitment and testimony.

Was the Wisconsin Synod too patient in its admonitions? The Church of the Lutheran Confession thinks so. Its members broke from our ranks in the course of the controversy without, however, agreeing among themselves exactly when the patience exceeded allowable limits. What is our reply to them?

For one thing, we would try to recall the situation as it was, not as it is viewed from hindsight, from Sunday or Monday or Tuesday or Friday morning quarterbacking. Before 1955 few were convinced that a break with Missouri should have already occurred. In 1955 the Wisconsin Synod had to face the fact that its 1953 “unionism” admonition had not yet been considered by a Missouri convention. In 1956 Edmund Reim led the effort to maintain relations with Missouri. In 1957 he was of the opposite view but failed to convince the Synod. By 1959 a doctrinal study was under way that was to test thoroughly whether doctrinal unity still prevailed in the Synodical Conference. The result was an excellent Scripture statement, unanimously adopted by Synodical Conference members. That effort, however, also revealed an impasse in the doctrine of fellowship that led to the Synodical Conference.

Dissolution

Why did Wisconsin break ranks with Missouri? In 1961 when the Synod declared a break in fellowship with Missouri the issue was the doctrine of fellowship.¹⁰⁰ In the same year in the convention of the Synodical Conference the Scripture issue had to be read into the record. The

reason for the 1961 termination of fellowship with Missouri, however, remained the doctrine of fellowship. This should be borne in mind.

Part Five: The Last Decades of the Century

The 1970s may on the surface appear to have had little effect on the shaping of our country's Lutheranism. The way things were at the decade's beginning in so far as unions and partnerships and cleavages are concerned, so they remained, for the most part, at the close. The emergence of a sizable grouping of Missouri malcontents as an Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches was less a matter of the development of a new situation and much more an honest confrontation with the existing realities.

The decade of the 1970s has, however, actually served to transform certain trends of 1970 into sharply defined movements that in 1984 can be seen as moving along inexorable lines toward goals that appear reachable in this decade. Among these trends that have gained momentum in the '70s can be mentioned: a sharp drift to the left of groupings once thought of as being in the middle; more and more victories for the persistent GS - ULCA -LCA theology; and a sharp identity crisis in the ranks of the more confessional Lutherans.

Not all of the decade's questions have been answered. A major riddle remains to resolve itself. The ultimate shape of things to come is, however, more and more asserting itself. The big events of the late 1980s need not come as surprises. They can be predicted with some degree of exactness. They can be encountered with faithfulness.

An outline indicating the line of thought in this fifth section is supplied at this point.

Part Five: The Last Decades of the Century

- I. Missouri Happenings
 - A. After the Fellowship Break
 - B. LCMS - ALC Fellowship
 - C. Preus Purge
- II. Toward an LCA - ALC Merger
 - A. Dwindling Differences
 - B. LCA Victory
 - C. Adding the AELC
- III. View Beyond Our Borders
 - A. The Lutheran Nineteen
 - B. The Vanishing Middle
 - C. The Missouri Riddle
- IV. Prospects for Confessional Lutheranism
 - A. Remnants of the Synodical Conference
 - B. Potential Allies
 - C. Celebrating Anniversaries of the Confessions

I. Missouri Happenings

Missouri happenings loomed large during the decade. In the early years they ranked high on the list of most newsworthy religious events. They may have attracted the attention of the news media. They did not always please the Lord of Church History.

Missouri After the Fellowship Break

Missouri entered the decade of the 1970s with the split personality that had emerged at its Denver convention in 1969. The Dr. Jekyll Missouri replaced its so-called “moderate” president with a refugee from the ELC and ELS, a president who wanted no part of any ALC fellowship.

The other Missouri declared the ALC fellowship, and the new leader told the synod, “I’ll follow where you lead. “ The split personality would eventually produce a sizable split in Missouri ranks.

How did Missouri get into the Denver situation? A look back into the 1960s may provide some answers. Some will recall the favorite argument that conservatively inclined Missourians used to use privately and sometimes publicly, when the break-up of the Synodical Conference loomed. They would plead: “Once Wisconsin goes its own way, the last brake on the Missouri liberals will be gone and there will be no stopping them on their drive to take Missouri down their pathway.”

For a while it looked like that was exactly what was happening. In Missouri the so-called “liberals” seemed to rule the roost through most of the 1960s. Event after event pointed in that direction.

When Dr. Behnken was ready to call it quits after over a quarter century of difficult service in the presidential office, the Missouri Synod elected as his successor Dr. Oliver Harms. His leadership pointed in the same direction the synod was tending. On the sidelines the venerable Dr. Behnken had time for theological reflection. He tried to blow the whistle on what was happening.¹⁰¹ He showed where his theological heart was but also demonstrated the futility of whistle-blowing by a non-official on the sidelines off the field of play.

The whistle blowing involved the view of Holy Scriptures at the St. Louis seminary. A tolerance and espousal of the historical-critical approach to Bible interpretation became more and more evident. It had previously operated in low key behind the scenes, within the confines of classrooms and at the discussions on the agenda of faculty meetings. Now bolder tactics were possible. Columns and pages of captured periodicals could be utilized. What Luther once said in complimentary fashion to Erasmus, *petisti iugulum*, could be repeated in this instance. The Achilles’ heel, the jugular came under visible and audible attack.

At its 1965 Detroit convention the Missouri Synod openly declared in its “Mission Affirmations” that it was casting its lot in the mission enterprise with those who bind the Lord’s church with a “corporate responsibility towards the structures of society.”¹⁰² Not only one who is suffering from mission myopia, but also the run-of-the-mill conservative Lutheran will recognize the ominous implications in such a commitment that has rendered ineffectual and has ruined so many contemporary mission efforts to save lost souls.

In 1967 the Missouri Synod formally joined the Lutheran Council in the USA, a reshaping of the National Lutheran Council that made room for a Missouri membership. A chief selling point that was to allay fears of conservative Missourians was the new body’s theological division. This would make possible discussion of divisive theological issues with a Lutheran Church in America that disavowed any such discussions as a route to fellowship declarations. The history of some fifteen years of such discussions demonstrates that no Missouri gains have been registered. Quite the contrary!

The Missouri drift, rather plunge, in the wrong direction reached a high-water mark in a determination that was still very much an object of concern for the 1981 LCMS convention. This is the 1969 declaration of

Perhaps many, like the writer, lost interest in the ALC - LCMS discussions after the 1963 withdrawal of Wisconsin from the Synodical Conference. A review may be in place to set the stage for the fateful Denver action. Negotiations between the ALC and the LCMS, broken off in the 1950s when the old ALC began the business of becoming the new ALC, were officially resumed in January 1964. Already in 1960, however, the constituent ALC convention had before it a Missouri invitation to carry on “doctrinal discussions looking to pulpit and altar fellowship.”¹⁰³

When invitations to the newly formed LCA to join the discussions were issued, the LCA declined, standing on its old principle that it was already committed to Lutheran union on the basis of confessional subscription and that therefore more discussion of doctrinal differences was an inconsistency and a redundancy. Lutherans of a liberal bent may be redundant but they are never inconsistent.

Missouri and the ALC moved ahead regardless. After statements on grace, Scripture and the confessional view of the church were drawn up, disseminated and discussed, a “Joint Declaration and Statement” was accepted by Missouri in 1967 and by the ALC in 1968.¹⁰⁴

The Missouri acceptance in 1967 was the green light for the Denver 1969 convention. The man who threw the switch that changed the light from red and yellow to green was unseated in the process. The light, however, was green. By a narrow, eighty-four vote margin Missouri declared fellowship with the ALC.

The ALC did Missouri one better. It not only declared fellowship with Missouri. It did the same with the LCA. President Schiotz had found the solution to the old problem: how to bridge a gap between a Missouri that wanted to discuss divisive doctrines and an LCA that objected in principle to doctrinal discussions with fellow subscribers to the Lutheran Confessions. Schiotz in 1966 urged the ALC to declare fellowship with both at the same time

Preus Purge

Back to the LCMS. In 1969 at Denver it not only declared ALC fellowship, but also elected as new president J.A.O. Preus who had placed himself in opposition to such a declaration prior to the convention. For a few moments at Denver the moving finger that writes church history paused while Missouri’s new president pondered. The pausing and pondering did not last long. Preus soon stated his willingness to follow the synod in its declaration. This is said to point to faulty leadership, to nonexistent leadership.

To the credit of Dr. J. Preus, he did manage to halt a headlong drive in the wrong direction. During his presidency a major denomination was turned away from the liberal direction into a more conservative pathway. That happens so seldom in America or elsewhere, in our denomination or others that it calls for very special mention and for heartfelt expressions of gratitude.

That should be borne in mind when an honest evaluation of the so-called “Preus Purge” points to less than admirable means employed and less than perfect outcomes achieved. Instead of facing all doctrinal and disciplinary issues head-on the Preus administration had a way of dealing on the surface, corporate level. The errorist in a leadership position was not always dealt with as such. Instead, he could wake up some morning to find his job abolished. Executives could be driven to resignations by fiscal frustrations and policy ploys. Constitutional provisions were too often used to hold restive pastors and congregations in line to the neglect of the more important issue of doctrinal unity and God-pleasing fellowship. Few of the Preus foes, or friends

would quarrel with such an explanation of the situation. Its future implications will be probed in a subsequent section.

The biggest victory achieved by the Preus administration was the recapture of the St. Louis Seminary. It typifies other gains in conservative worker-training at other Concordias but is so rich in drama and bathos - the word is not *pathos* but *bathos* - that it tends to overshadow all other similar developments.

Interesting accounts have been written from both perspectives. The best account of the event by one on the Preus side is Marquart's *Anatomy of an Explosion*.¹⁰⁵ Danker's *No Room in the Brotherhood*, may be less theological, but it is certainly not lacking in color and excitement as it portrays what was going on in the minds and hearts of the majority that walked out early in 1974 at the St. Louis Seminary.¹⁰⁶

At that time those walking out had a faculty majority of 9 to 1. In the student body the ratio was not much less than that. All credit to the faithful faculty few! One could, however, also want to put in a good word for the minority of the seminary students who with less to go on stuck to their guns and set an example for all embattled Lutheran conservatives in the years ahead.

Was Preus the genius and Tietjen the blunderer in the St. Louis battle? Those with decided opinions on the question have to face the fact that a very strong majority of faculty members and students found themselves retreating from the battlefield. They themselves said they were going into exile. That is just what they did. Preus is supposed to have said, "It couldn't have gone any better if I had planned it that way."

Since then their seminary has been decreasing; the seminary they left has been increasing. Will there be for the exiles a return and restoration, if not in the near future, then in another decade or century? That is the question that remains.

With so much of Lutheran attention centered on the dramatic Missouri happenings that have been only briefly described, many paid little heed to an equally important development of the late 1960s and the 1970s: the unification of those who stood to the left of Missouri. The drift there was

II. Toward an LCA - ALC Merger

Toward an LCA - ALC merger with the AELC as an added starter.

As has been outlined in the previous section, the ULCA had not been included in the post-WW II merger discussions that produced the present American Lutheran Church.¹⁰⁷ This threw Augustana into the ULCA camp and the ultimate result was the creation of two new church bodies, the present ALC and the LCA.

Earlier differences between components of the two mergers may have been sharpened temporarily by merger activity. They were maintained as the new ALC continued its "middle" role of bringing the ecclesiastical groups to its left and right into its middle. In the course of the merger year the leader-to-be, President Schiotz, made this strategy a matter of record in the *Christian Century* when he bluntly stated that the church body coming into being "would not want another organic union unless it included both the Missouri Synod and the forthcoming Lutheran Church in America."¹⁰⁸ Soon thereafter, however, a trend was under way in the ALC and LCA that could be called

Dwindling Differences.

Missouri's changing and shifting positions played an influential part in this development. When Missouri, after the break in fellowship with Wisconsin, leaned more and more in the ALC and LCA direction with its tolerance of the historical-critical interpretation and with its mission affirmations, it became less necessary for the ALC to seek to influence the LCA to accommodate old Missouri stances. The stances were being abandoned. The LCMS was becoming more like the ALC and the LCA.

Then Missouri in 1969 changed direction, even though the change stopped far short of 180°. When it refused to continue to play the role of rejected suitor in intersynodical dealings, the ALC was forced to face the facts of United States Lutheranism. If it did not want to join forces with the Preus Missouri, the Preus ALC would have to be partners with the LCA. Any differences that once might have kept the ALC and LCA at arm's length were played down and were soon dwindling to the vanishing point. The result was basically an

LCA Victory

Omitting less significant matters, one would point to two cases in point: inerrancy and fellowship requirements. In both instances the ALC has come round to the position consistently and insistently espoused by the GS - ULCA - LCA camp.

The previous lecture pointed to the 1966 Schiotz essay as an official indication that ALC inerrancy no longer was what it used to be. In that essay the ALC head flatly stated that his church body held that inerrancy did "not apply to the text but to the truth."¹⁰⁹

The current ALC president, David Preus shares such an inerrancy view. In a published letter which contains as much bad history as bad theology he writes:

The idea that declaring the Scriptures "inerrant" helps matters among Christians simply does not wash. All it does is cause further argument over the question of what people mean by inerrancy.

As I'm sure you know, the word "inerrant" did not find its way into the Christian vocabulary until very recently. It has not been a part of our Lutheran vocabulary until this century. In the main it has caused divisiveness by having everybody appeal to it as descriptive of their own interpretation of the Scriptures.¹¹⁰

A September 27, 1976, release of the Religious News Service, reporting on a David Preus address to the Inter-Lutheran Forum, notes him as saying, "One of the less theological matters Lutherans have to do with is the inerrancy of Scriptures" and "Inerrancy is a slippery word."

Some of the ancestor church bodies of today's ALC in times past fought hard for Scripture inerrancy. Their stand is embodied in the ALC's constitutional paragraph on Scripture. Six and sixteen years after the adoption of that constitutional paragraph, the ALC president wants to rid himself of concerns about the term *inerrancy*. That is just what the ULCA did formally and finally and fully in its 1938 Baltimore Declaration with its distinction between Word and Scripture but had already been doing less formally for several decades.¹¹¹

The consistent position of the ULCA, continued by the LCA, that a pledge to the Confessions is a sufficient basis for the declaration and practice of fellowship has also won out over concerns that the Confessions do not cover every major aberration and that practice must conform to doctrine. The ULCA - LCA position was clearly spelled out as early as 1934 in the

ULCA's "Savannah Declaration" that apart from the Confessions "no other standards or tests of Lutheranism are to be devised or employed!"¹¹²

Church bodies now merged into the present ALC have a long tradition of insisting on the need for more evidence of agreement than assent to Scripture and Confessions before fellowship relations can be declared. Now, however, the ALC is indicating that it desires fellowship relations with all Lutherans who accept as *norma normata* the historic Lutheran Confessions. It no longer considers the traditional and valid discussions about differences in doctrine and practice as having relevancy in determining fellowship relations.

A case in point is the reaction of David Preus to his cousin's "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" which sought to pinpoint differences between the two theological camps in Missouri. This is what David Preus said:

It is my conviction that the LCMS action in adopting "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" has had the effect of narrowing down the Confessions of the Lutheran Church...The Lutheran Confessions provide a full and adequate understanding of the Christian Faith...The ALC believes that the differences that exist within the LCMS are not destructive of a confessional unity among Lutherans.¹¹³

Running the risk of oversimplification, one could boil down for clarification's sake the David Preus and ALC and LCA argumentation on this point in this fashion: Because the historic Lutheran Confessions have no specific articles on historical-critical interpretation, inerrancy, liberation mission thinking, the role of women in the church, and the like, positions at variance with Scripture on such points should not be considered barriers to fellowship relations. Behind this erroneous proposition lurks the never stated but always present heresy that either Scripture doctrines do not necessarily have weight in fellowship determination or Scripture doctrine is somehow created by a confessional *dixit* or *scripsit*.

Again in this matter of insisting that confessional subscription in some sort of sense is sufficient for fellowship declaration and that any additional tests are either a "narrowing down" or a "going beyond" or both, the present ALC has patently yielded to the position of the LCA and its ancestor bodies.

If the grandfather grouping of Lutheran synods in our country, the General Synod formed in 1820, could be assumed to have had a theological position it would have been that its fellowship was determined by some sort of substantial agreement to the fundamental articles of the doctrinal section of the *Augustana*. After some revision and up-dating that is the position dominant in the LCA and the ALC today. There is in those bodies no full subscription to all doctrinal articles in both sections of the *Augustana* and in its companion Lutheran Confessions.

The point is not to beat a dead horse or church body or to cloak ancient American church history with a garb of relevancy. The point is to emphasize the marvelous consistency and the eventual triumph of the GS -ULCA - LCA brand of Lutheranism. There are no riddles or mysteries when dealing with that theological camp. You know where its proponents stand and you know what they want. And on this side of the Judgment, what the LCA, like Lola, wants it gets.

One of the biggest hoaxes ever perpetrated in the church history of American Lutheranism is the notion that the LCMS was an antediluvian monster so mired in the mud of reprimand theology that it simply could not move a spiritual muscle, much less change its theological position. Along with that goes the fallacy of the other side of the coin, the view that the GS - ULCA - LCA type of theology has always been ready to change in order to keep abreast

with the times. Nothing could be farther from the truth than these caricatures of the realities of the church history of Lutheranism in America.

Missouri has changed, more than once, not always for the better. That, however, is not now apropos. The other camp, the camp of today's LCA actually never changed. It stands today for what the GS stood for eight score years ago. Whether that camp has had any actually new theological positions since 1820 could be debated.

In fact, the real theological father of the present LCA and the church body to be born in 1988 is S.S. Schmucker, founding president of Gettysburg, an advocate of *Augustana* recension with ecumenical leanings. He was for a long time a prophet without honor during his generation and those that followed. He has been coming into his own more and more. The course that he charted way back in 1826, the course of low key Lutheranism that specializes in denominational down-play, is still being followed, and is being followed more and more faithfully, not only by the church body that developed out of the General Synod, but also by alien groups that have been attracted to the pathway.

Those attracted include the present ALC and the recent

AELC Addition

The shared positions of the ALC and the LCA are also shared by the Missouri dissidents who bolted and formed their own church body in midyear 1976. The prompt willingness of both the ALC, in fellowship with Missouri, and the LCA, a Missouri partner in LCUSA, to endorse the efforts of those creating the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in itself forces this conclusion.

Within a half year of its creation the AELC in December 1976 requested from the LCA and the ALC, not to forget the LCMS, altar and pulpit fellowship. Let a May 1977 news release of the LCUSA report on the reaction:

The affirmative response to the overture to the LCA came from its president Dr. Robert J. Marshall. The LCA constitution offers fellowship to all church bodies which accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Martin Luther's Small Catechism. No legislative action is required.

The response from the American Lutheran Church came with notification that ALC President David W. Preus had said that a "de facto fellowship" exists between the two churches and that he had recommended that this relationship be formalized by action of the church's 1978 convention!¹¹⁴

The old saying, "Birds of a feather..." comes to mind. The meeting of minds in this case occurred in record time. Within a year from the time of its incorporation the AELC had all but nailed down formal recognition from two major Lutheran church groupings, both of which were in some form of partner relationship with the church body from which the AELC had broken. Not bad for a one-year-old church body!

It was not just a matter of the AELC finding a spiritual haven and home in which it could recoup and regroup, could nurse the wounds of broken fellowship, could strengthen itself for future endeavors. Actually, the AELC began to out-do its new partners. It offered fellowship right and left. It soon issued "A Call to Lutheran Union" at its April 1978 convention, the second in its short history. The "Call" read:

Resolved That the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) call upon all Lutheran church bodies in North America to join us in making a formal commitment to organic church union in a form in which Lutheran life and mission may be consolidated at all levels.¹¹⁵

Not bad for a church body only eighteen months old! Here is a program that really promises, “Tomorrow the world.” More on this merger matter will be forthcoming in the last section of Part Five. At this point we pause to take stock of the current

III. View Beyond Our Borders

The writing began with a statistical description of United States Lutheranism at the turn of the century. It will be recalled that the figures ran to some one and two-thirds million communicants served by over 6700 pastors and grouped into 11, 123 congregations and 61 synods.¹¹⁶

An up-date of the figures, supplied by the 1983 statistics of the LCUSA Research and Information center, shows over six and one-third million communicants served by over 25,000 pastors and grouped into some 18,000 congregations and 19 synods. The large increase in communicants and pastors testifies to healthy growth which has, however, in recent years changed into decline. The relatively small increase in congregations, from about 11,000 to only over 18,500 suggests that today’s Lutheran congregations are much larger than their 1900 counterparts, averaging about 350 communicants while the 1900 average was under 150 communicants. That should be a comfort and an encouragement for those worrying about the present potential for synodical and mission offerings.

What is of greatest concern for us is, however, the significant drop in the number of synods from 61 to 19. We have frequently referred to mergers that have decreased that number. It might be well to take time at this point to sketch briefly the remaining synods.

The Lutheran Nineteen

There are the three large bodies, each with over 2 million in baptized membership, totaling just under 8 million or 93 % of the 8.5 million United States Lutherans.¹¹⁷ The LCA is the largest body with almost 3 million baptized members. Missouri has 2.6 million and the ALC almost 2.4 million members.

There are only two of the other sixteen Lutheran synods with membership totals that are in six figures. One is the Wisconsin Synod with over 404,000 members and the other is the recently formed Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches with 110,000. Only one of the other fourteen has a membership total that reaches 20,000. Each of these fourteen will for purpose of identification be given a brief description.

1. Largest of the thirteen is the Evangelical Lutheran Synod with 20,556 members. The ELS was formed in 1917-1918 in protest to the big Norwegian merger in 1917. It shares membership with Wisconsin in the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum.
2. The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations was formed by Lutheran Free Church members who resisted the ALC merger completed in 1960. It has over 17,000 baptized members gathered into 148 congregations served by 74 pastors. The full clergy roster has 97 names. There is an Association seminary in the Twin Cities. Former Lutheran Free church congregations, after unsatisfactory experiences inside

- the ALC, have a way of drifting into the Association. One can assume there will be stepped-up growth when the proposed merger becomes a reality.
3. The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, a federation of congregations since 1957 organized in 1976 as a centralized church body, is what its name implies. These 14,160 Latvians prefer to keep their 62 congregations and 48 pastors out of other church bodies in the interest of national roots.
 4. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren has 10,478 members in 109 congregations. This is the Norwegian Lutheran body that formed in 1900 out of withdrawers from the United Norwegian Lutheran Church under Knut O. Lundeberg and out of some independent congregations. Their strict and methodistic regulation of the sanctification of the members is a characteristic of the body. It has remained aloof because of the desire to keep its standards uncontaminated.
 5. The Church of the Lutheran Confession has 8,898 baptized members in 66 congregations served by 51 pastors. The full clergy roster totals 71. Its origin and stance need not be described here. Part Four has supplied some detail.
 6. Next is the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church with 23 congregations and 7,655 members. This body stands alone in the interest of its national origin. It was reorganized in Sweden in 1944.
 7. The Apostolic Lutheran Church of America is a Finnish body with 3581 baptized members in 49 congregations, according to latest statistics. This church body formed in 1928 as a fellowship of independent congregations rather than as a synod. Its roots lie in the Laestadian movement back in the old country that emphasized revivalism and lay preaching.
 8. In this ranking by size the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation, formed in 1964, might be assumed to have the next spot. Statistics, however, indicate that no recent reports have been received from the body. It is also known that the LCR has in recent years been plagued by internal dissension and withdrawals. Although the school at Shepherd, Michigan has been closed, the LCR tries to carry on the effort to perpetuate what it views as the "orthodox" Missouri position. The latest official roster has 8 clergy names and 14 member congregations.
 9. The Conservative Lutheran Association is the recently formed grouping of conservative ALC congregations unwilling to maintain membership in that body. Central Church in Tacoma and Faith Lutheran Seminary there serve as rallying points. The body has 228 baptized members in 6 congregations served by 7 pastors. Growth is expected to step up as 1988 draws closer.
 10. The Protéstant Conference reports its membership at 960 in 6 congregations served by 6 of the 9 men on the clergy roster. It is still publishing *Faith - Life*, which first appeared in 1928.
 11. There is an International Lutheran Fellowship that has 4 congregations with 423 members served by 4 of its 6 pastors. Little is known about this church body.
 12. The Concordia Lutheran Conference, a break-away from the Orthodox Lutheran grouping of Missouri protesters, reports 6 congregations with 359 members and 7 pastors.
 13. A few years ago a small body was formed out on the West Coast. It has 4 congregations grouped in the Evangelical Lutheran Federation shortened appropriately by the body itself to ELF, the "Elf Synod." Its chief interest seems to be

conservative Lutheranism. The ELF recently rejected Faith Lutheran Seminary because of what it termed a “soft” lodge position.

14. Eielsen Synod, more precisely the Evangelical Church in America, still seems to be functioning and perpetuating the lay-preaching tradition Eielsen brought to this country early in the previous century. Two congregations and 50 members remain according to last reports.

Independents round out the Lutheran family. They include 11 pastors, 9 congregations and 4,569 members. It is obvious that there are large congregations among the independents; the average congregational size is over 500. There are various reasons for the desire to shun larger affiliation and to remain independent.

In these thumbnail sketches of the 19 Lutheran groupings the view from our borders has been pinpointed on distinct and often small church bodies. Now, in summary, the concern is a larger look and a wider vista. Perhaps the most striking feature of such a view beyond our borders is

The Vanishing Middle

Previously the point was made that what used to be considered until quite recently the middle position of United States Lutheranism, the position held by the ALC and its antecedent bodies, had in fact, so far as theological position is concerned, moved to the left LCA position. The middle will vanish even more from our view in the next decade. Some sort of federated or merged union of the LCA, the ALC and the AELC is almost a foregone conclusion. The target date is 1988.

With the AELC providing the impetus, a Committee on Lutheran Unity has been formed out of 7 ALC, 7 LCA and 2 AELC representatives, with consultative participation for two Canadian bodies. Several meetings have been held and certain specific proposals have emerged.

The plan was to have national conventions of the LCA, ALC, and AELC in simultaneous 1982 meetings declare a willingness to merge. That happened.

In the interim years various structural options are to be given consideration and study by congregations, intersynodical area gatherings, conferences, districts and synods.

Six structural options received varying degrees of support. They are:

1. Merge into a single national body with geographic components;
2. Transform existing churches into non-geographic synods within a single entity;
3. Create some four to eight regional entities;
4. Create some sixty or more geographical entities;
5. Establish a federation of existing churches;
6. Retain the present structure with increasing cooperation.

Whatever structure choice wins out, whether one of the six or some new scheme, the prospect is that there will be some sort of lumping on the left. Whatever the structure, the least confessional and least conservative Lutheranism will dominate a grouping of well over 5 million members. What used to be Lutheranism's middle will have vanished in a deplorable drift in the wrong direction.¹¹⁹

What is the view toward the middle? Is there a middle? Answers involve the solution of

The Missouri Riddle

Conservative voices in Missouri would object to the suggestion that their synod occupies the middle ground. They would insist there has been a return to the right, to the ranks of staunchly confessional Lutherans. Missouri dissidents of earlier decades will agree that it is not in the middle but will place it to the left, not to the right.

Not all the results are in yet. Fellowship with ALC has been voided. Much lost ground in Missouri has been regained. Historical-critical interpretation no longer rules at the St. Louis Concordia. Out in the field many of the worst misleaders have vacated their posts. On campus after campus faculty changes for the better have been made. These are improvements one could hardly have hoped for a decade ago.

The person who wants to place Missouri to the right of the middle or even in the middle, however, will have to reckon with other less favorable events and circumstance. Only a few instances of many can find room. If fellowship is the key issue and Missouri is supposed to be improving and returning, how is it that recently a Missouri spokesman could suggest that ways and means may have to be found to give expression in worship “to varying levels of agreement in the confession of the faith?”¹²⁰

If there is a great conservative groundswell in Missouri, spearheaded by a mystic Springwayne theology that was only forced underground temporarily, how is it that with all the regrets and repentance for more recent wrongs there is a strange silence about pre-1961 aberrations?

If seminaries and seminary teachers can reasonably hope to inculcate a theological stance of some kind, what assurance is there that no enduring harm has been done to the Missouri public ministry by years of misdirection at worker-training schools? Only a small segment of those so mistrained have become emigrants or exiles and only a much smaller segment of those that remained have ever suffered disciplinary action.

If some 2000 congregations could be once claimed for the “moderate” cause and only one in eight has joined the AELC, where are the seven?

If the former scapegoat in the Missouri broils was Martin Scharlemann and if he had to serve as public exhibit of Missouri’s orthodox doctrinal discipline, how could he become a chief spokesman of a restored Missouri while insisting that he has not changed positions one bit?

The situation as of the moment will not bear the interpretation that Missouri has found its way back to the theological pathways once followed by the Synodical Conference. Actually, if it were not for the fact that so much of Lutheranism in our land has veered so far to the left, one would even have reason to pause before granting Missouri a middle position. It achieves that almost by default. What used to be the middle in better days would view today’s Missouri to its left. The four score years of this century, humanly speaking, have been a disaster for the cause of confessional, conservative Lutheranism that holds to all of Scripture and to all the doctrine of the Confessions. So much ground has been lost that - to employ the Donne imagery - “if a clod be washed away by the sea” our ground “is the less.” The question suggests itself- Just what are the

IV. Prospects of Confessional Lutheranism

in the two decades left for this century, if they are actually left? There remain only

Remnants of the Synodical Conference

Two synods, our small WELS and the even smaller ELS, were virtually forced to destroy the Synodical Conference to keep its heritage of confessional Lutheranism alive. That is a Lutheranism which stands uncompromisingly for the total inspiration and inerrancy and

authority of the Scriptures, which pledges itself unreservedly to the Lutheran Confessions as a faithful exposition of the Scriptures, and which matches that stand and pledge with appropriate fellowship principles and practices.

At this late date in the history of the shaping of United States Lutheranism in this century, we and some others have become in the mysterious alembic of God's purposes keepers of the flame. Whether we like it or not we are to espouse the cause of confessional Lutheranism as a force in the shaping of United States Lutheranism in this decade and the decades ahead. We are to do that in our own capacities as pastors and teachers and evangelists and writers and whatever else we find ourselves doing professionally.

Who will help us? There are allies in the synod in fellowship and in partnership with us in the goodly heritage. There are also

Potential Allies

in groups not in fellowship with us but who share to a greater or lesser degree our confessional theological bent.

Many are to be found in those groupings that formed in opposition to the trends that were tearing apart the Synodical Conference. There are many still in the Missouri Synod for one reason or another. There are others also somehow in membership with less confessional bodies but endeavoring to maintain, or assert a conservative stance. In all such instances fellowship cannot actively and practically be practiced but no abnegation of shared principles ought ever be envisioned.

What actually should we be doing and avoiding along these lines? A complete answer would require the addition of a lengthy Part Six. A partial but significant answer is suggested by the concluding paragraphs under the title,

Celebrating Anniversaries of the Confessions

Five such anniversaries were observed in recent years. We could well take the opportunities they provided to promote the cause of the confessional Lutheranism they and we profess. Sometimes our best answers to the question about the press of the present and the prospects of the future lie in the look to the past. That is what makes church history the dean and the queen of theological disciplines.

In any forum and by any logic the Lutheran Confessions, the Book of Concord, which observed its 450th birthday on June 25, 1980, ought to have and hold prime place in the shaping of United States Lutheranism in this or any century. Let us stand firm on and for the Confessions. The good results will be forthcoming. In even less propitious times the Confessions were a tool of the Spirit in winning for the confessional cause a Hengstenberg, a Sihler, a Walther. More espousal of the Confessions and there will be written a new and surprising chapter in the Twentieth Century Shaping of the United States Lutheranism.

1. John H. Tietjen, *Which Way to Christian Unity?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).
2. It is in Chapter 3, "The General Council: The Way of Confessional Subscription," where Tietjen describes his pet federation. The pages are 39-57 in the book previously cited.
3. *Proceedings of the General Council, 1867, p 20.*

4. The Rev. Prof. H.E. Jacobs, "The General Council" in the Lutheran Publication Society's *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States* (Philadelphia, 3rd ed., 1902), p 94.
5. Theodore Schmauck, *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as Embodying the Evangelical Confessions of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1911), p 890.
6. E. Clifford Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970* (Minneapolis, 1972).
7. The last words are a quotation from a review of Nelson's book in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, LXIX (October 1973), p 296.
8. *Lutheran World Almanac for 1921*, p 564.
9. J. Lenker, *Die Lutherische Kirche der Welt* (Sunbury, Pennsylvania, 1901), p 5.
10. E. Clifford Nelson, *The Union Movement Among Norwegian-American Lutherans from 1880-1917* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979). The formation of the United Norwegian Church is described on pp 184-401.
11. Sverdrup's significant place in Lutheranism in America is being given special attention by Dr. James Hamre of Waldorf College. A major writing of his on Sverdrup will, it is hoped, soon be published.
12. Details on this subject will be supplied in the first part of the second chapter of this writing.
13. A more extensive treatment of this development can be found in the publication of an earlier lecture series at Mequon. See E.C. Fredrich, "Wisconsin's First Federation Memberships" in the 1976 lectures on Wisconsin's Interchurch Relations," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* LXXIII (October 1976), 280-286.
14. *The Second General Conference of Lutherans in America* (Newberry, S.C.: Lutheran Publication Board, 1904), p 11.
15. In the work cited in the previous note this essay and the reactions are found on pp 222-223.
16. Both this and the next quotation are found on p 225 of the work cited in note 14.
17. Both quotes are from the work cited in note 14, the first on p 224, the second on p 227.
18. This is from pp 227-228 in the citation in note 14.
19. This is found on p 230 of the work cited in note 14.
20. A more extensive treatment of these Free Conferences occurs in E.C. Fredrich's "Wisconsin's Interchurch Relations in the First Third of this Century," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, LXXIV (January 1977), 36-39.
21. See Fred W. Meuser, *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church* (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1958), p 93. Hereafter cited in subsequent chapters as Meuser, *Formation of the ALC*.
22. *Proceedings of the General Synod, 1895*, p 63.
23. An example is Professor J.A. Singmaster, "The Confessional History of the Lutheran Church" in the *Lutheran Quarterly* XL, April, pp 160-173.
24. Reference here is made to the early withdrawals of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois from the General Council. The Missouri and Norwegian Synods had not even joined because of this factor.
25. A. R. Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955) p 267.

26. T.A. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill* (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Co., 1968). The pertinent material is found on pp 44-81.
27. See Note 10 for the Nelson book. The matter under discussion is treated in the chapter, "Achieving Unity: 1912-1917," pp 521-618.
28. The January 1880 launching of Schmidt's *Altes und Neues* contributed largely to making the election controversy as divisive as it was.
29. See the Nelson book cited in note 27 for details on pp 425-426.
30. Again see Nelson's book for details on p 465. Hereafter the citations will simply be "Nelson" with the location.
31. Nelson, p 511.
32. Nelson, p 517.
33. Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis put out the book. It also put out a translation by Dau with the title, *Conversion and Election. A Plea for a United Lutheranism in America*, in the same year, 1913.
34. Obviously such a viewpoint will not find its place on the record. *Lutheran Herald VIII* (Sept. 4, 1913) reflects on the "family" disagreement on pp 837-838.
35. See Pieper's writing referred to in Note 33, p 25 of the original.
36. *ULCA Minutes, 1918*, p. 37. The Schmauck report, running over five crowded pages, will be drawn on heavily in this section, "Pathways to Reunion."
37. See the first part of the third section of the first section of this writing.
38. Note 36 supplies the general location. The specific page number is 38.
39. Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia, 1966), p 75. Hereafter cited as Wolf, *Documents*.
40. Wolf, *Documents*, p. 267.
41. See location in Note 36, p 39.
42. As in Note 41, p 39.
43. Proposers of the resolution later explained that "unification" was thought of as actual merger.
44. *ULCA Minutes, 1918*, p 39.
45. *Kirchenblatt*, LXI (December 7, 1918), p 434.
46. M. Reu's *Die Vereinigung des Generalkonzils mit der Generalsynode in Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, XL (November, 1917) pp 516-526. The actual address in English is reprinted on pp 523-526.
47. A notable exception is Robert Fischer, "The Healing of the Schism Between the General Synod and the General Council: Sources for a Reevaluation" in *Lutheran Theological Seminary Fall Bulletin*, 1968, pp 32-41.
48. *Minutes of the Ninth Biennial Convention of the United Lutheran Church in America*, 1934, p 416.
49. See the last part of the second section of the previous lecture.
50. *Joint Synod of Wisconsin Proceedings*, 1913, pp 48-49.
51. See E. Clifford Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970* (Minneapolis, 1972), p 23. The Knubel-Jacobs paper eventually became the ULCA's "Washington Declaration" in 1920.
52. Fred W. Meuser, *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church* (Columbus, Ohio, 1958). Hereafter cited as Meuser, *Formation*.

53. The article by Gohdes appears in *Theologische Zeitblaetter - Theological Magazine*, XLIV (1920), p 412.
54. Meuser, *Formation*, p 174.
55. Meuser, *Formation*, p 176.
56. This quotation from the article mentioned occurs on p 202 of *Theologische Zeitblaetter-Theological Magazine* (1918). An equivalent English title of the article would be, "What Task Does the Reformation Heritage Bequeath Us in Our Times?"
57. Reu published his Eisenach testimony in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, XLVII (1923), pp 649-653. A *Quarterly* discussion can be found in XXI, pp 233-245 and XXII, pp 23-50; 108-140; 161-181.
58. See the previous section, p 35-36.
59. Note 57 supplies the general location. This comment is found on p 651.
60. M. Reu, *Zurn Unterschied in der Theologie und Airchlichen Praxis zwischen deutschen und amerikanishen Lutherturn*, *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, XLVIII (1924), p 218.
61. *Quarterly*, XXVI (1929), p 267.
62. Meuser, *Formation*, p 182.
63. Meuser, *Formation*, p 184.
64. This excerpt from Reu's letter to Hein dated May 28, 1926, is quoted by Meuser in *Formation* on p 186.
65. Meuser, *Formation*, p 207.
66. Wolf, *Documents*, p 142.
67. Bodensieck's article, "Some Comments" appears in Volume XXI (1929) of *Lutheran Herald*. The quotation is found on p 202.
68. Meuser, *Formation*, p 228.
69. References are to Schiotz's address, "The Church's Confessional Stand Relative to the Scriptures" delivered twice in June 1966, once at Tacoma and once at Minneapolis. The printing of the essay in pamphlet form was ordered by the ALC Office of Public Relations. Copies were sent to all ALC pastors. See p 7 for the matters discussed.
70. *Journal of Theology of the American Lutheran Conference*, VI (1941), p 24.
71. The United Danish body is described in the first of these lectures, p 10.
72. E. Clifford Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970* (Minneapolis, 1972), p 80. On the previous page is found the next quotation.
73. The essayist developed this line of thought also in his 1976 Bethany Reformation Lectures which are printed in *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, XVII, I-Special (Fall 1976) pp 1-58.
74. A participant, P. Schlemmer, describes the event in *Die jetzigen Einigungs Bestrebungen in der lutherischen Kirche*, a district essay that appears in *Minnesota District Proceedings 1920*, pp 18-62.
75. John P. Koehler, *Die Synodalconferenz in der Geschichte der amerikanisch - lutherischen Kirche*, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, XIX (July, 1922), p 180.
76. The writing cited in Note 73 has a brief discussion on pp 33-34. *Missouri Proceedings, 1929*, describes the official action on pp 110- 112.
77. *Minutes of the Ninth Biennial Convention of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1934*, p 416.

78. A dusty *Time* religion feature of that day, October 25, 1940, played up Knubel's remark that ULCA "gulping" was involved in accepting even this weak statement that was, however, too strong for that church body.
79. *Missouri Proceeding, 1938*, pp 231-233, supplies the whole report.
80. *ALC Proceedings, 1938*, pp 7-11.
81. *Documents*, p 381.
82. *Missouri Proceedings, 1956*, pp 505 and 492.
83. *Wisconsin Proceedings, 1935*, p 16.
84. *Wisconsin Proceedings, 1935*, pp 107-108. Other quotations in the near vicinity are also to be found in this location.
85. *Synodical Conference Proceedings, 1882*, pp 38.
86. J. Behnken, *This I Recall* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p 167.
87. M. Reu, *Muessen die Verhandlungen mit Missouri nun aujhoeren? in Kirchliche Zeitschrift, LXV* (October 1941), p 596.
88. H.C. Alleman, *The Old Testament - A Study* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1935).
89. The next part of this writing elaborates on this subject on pp 14.
90. *ALC Reports and Actions, 1968*, pp 92-93, 461.
91. The latest LCUSA statistics supply the figures. They are for 1983 and are reproduced in *Lutheran Forum, Reformation 1984*, p 33.
92. *Wolf, Documents*, p 356.
93. F. A. Schiotz, "The Church's Confessional Stand Relative to the Scriptures," a pamphlet prepared for distribution by Office of Public Relations, The American Lutheran Church in 1966. Subsequently references will be Schiotz, *Essays* with page location.
94. Schiotz, *Essays*, pp 6-7.
95. E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp 499-500.
96. *Wolf, Documents*, pp 555, 557, 569-571.
97. *Wolf Documents*, pp 554-556.
98. The Wiederaenders statement was made already in a 1963 paper to Missouri's Council of Presidents and seminary faculties. See the 7.24.74 - 9 release from the Missouri Public Relations Department.
99. This objection to unionism was strongly formalized in the 1955 Synod resolutions on the issue. See *Wisconsin Proceedings, 1955*, p 78 and 86.
100. For documentation for this and the next sentence see *Wisconsin Proceedings, 1961*, pp 197-200 and *Synodical Conference Proceedings, 1961*, p 15.
101. Dr. Behnken's last efforts were to address to the St. Louis Seminary faculty pointed questions on inerrancy views.
102. *Convention Workbook, LCMS, 1965*, p 118.
103. *Wolf, Documents*, pp 622-623.
104. *LCMS Proceedings 1967*, pp 102-103 and *ALC Reports and Actions, 1968*, pp 636-638.
105. Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977).
106. Frederick W. Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1977).
107. See the previous section for detail.

108. *Christian Century*, May 11, 1960, pp 574-576, The article is titled "A.L.C, ELC, U.E.L.C-T.A.L.C!"
109. See Part Four for the documentation
110. *Christian News*, Oct. 11, 1976, p 5.
111. *Wolf, Documents*, pp 357-359.
112. *Wolf, Documents*, pp 355-357.
113. The April 20, 1976, *Lutheran Standard* carries the Preus open letter to the LCMS on pp 12-13. The July 1976, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* reproduces the letter with comment on pp 220-221.
114. See the July 1977 *Quarterly*, p 258, for quotations of this May 10, 1977, release of the LCUSA News Bureau.
115. The AELC resolution is quoted in the July 1978 *Quarterly*, p 222.
116. See Part One for additional information.
117. The 1983 statistics of the LCUSA supply the figures. See *Lutheran Forum*, Reformation 1984, p 33.
118. See LCUSA News Bureau Releases - 79-3; 79-23; 79-39.
119. Reports of the first proposals of the twenty-one member Task Force on Theology of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church can be found in *Lutheran*, XXI (April 20, 1983), pp 33-34 and *Lutheran Standard*, XXIII (April 15, 1983), p 29-30.
120. The reference is to Samuel H. Nafzger's "The LCMS and Joint Worship Services" in *Lutheran Witness* CIII (June 1983), p 208.