

CONTENTION IN CONFSSIONALISM:
TRINITY LUTHERAN OF CRETE LEAVES THE MISSOURI SYNOD

David C. Hussman

Professor E. C. Fredrich
Senior Church History
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I. INTRODUCTION

In the 1970's and 1980's the mission strategies of various church bodies all sound a familiar refrain. Entire programs seem to live or die on the strength of either "location, location, location" or "pastor, pastor, pastor." Such an emphasis reveals the stock people place in so-called outward matters. Perhaps, it fittingly describes the general state of "modern America." However, such an attitude leaves a person wondering whether faith, pure doctrine, confessionalism, or even Scripture has anything to do with a church's success.

In an established congregation that familiar refrain simply becomes "pastor, pastor, pastor." Personalities, idiosyncrasies and even personal politics seem to become the deciding factor in anything the church does. In fact, pastors are often accused of catering to an inner circle of members. No matter how true it may be, it is a sad fact that contributes to many of the congregational struggles which seem so prevalent in modern Lutheranism.

An outsider looking in might want to claim that the same refrain is true in the struggles faced by Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Crete, Illinois. In 1961-1962 that congregation left the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The split and troubles that accompanied that decision might seem to revolve around personalities, if you will, around the "pastor, pastor, pastor." But a careful study of everything that happened in

those crucial years refutes the claim that this particular congregational struggle was centered on personalities. In fact, the exact opposite is true: the pastor and various personalities had as little as possible to do with Trinity congregation leaving the Missouri Synod. Rather Trinity's departure from the troubled Missouri church body can be better understood if it is called a "contention in confessionalism."

II. 1849 - 1949: BUILDING A CONFSSIONAL CONGREGATION

Before we can look at the controversy which led up to and caused Trinity's withdrawal from Missouri, we would be remiss if we didn't briefly look at Trinity's first century as a congregation. In fact, without a proper understanding of Trinity's early history the struggle of the late 1950's and early 1960's is difficult if not impossible to understand.

From the beginning Trinity was inexorably tied to the Missouri Synod. In fact, at every crucial juncture in the congregation's first 100 years a tie to this confessional Synod strengthened Trinity in its work of building a confessional congregation. In fact, Trinity's very beginnings are a result of the Missouri Synod's very beginnings as a Synod in Chicago.

Trinity was founded in 1849 by several Lutheran families who had moved to the Crete area from Chicago. There they had been connected with Rev. Christian A.T. Selle's St. Paul's congregation. Selle's original congregation was the host church for the foundation of the Missouri Synod. That tie between Trinity and Missouri would always be cherished.

In 1849 Selle himself helped to organize the Crete congrega-

tion, which was first named Zion. He even installed the congregation's first pastor, the Rev. Anton Weyel, on October 31, 1849. After only a few months in Crete Weyel accepted a call. The congregation then called Selle and he accepted. He arrived in Crete in September of 1851. The Lord blessed Pastor Selle's work to the point that in 1852 the congregation joined the Missouri Synod. Thus began a special relationship between the Synod and Trinity congregation most of which had been fathered by Reverend Selle.

In 1858 Zion congregation amalgamated with a daughter congregation also in Crete township to form the present Trinity congregation. In the same year Pastor Selle accepted a call to Rock Island, Illinois. But his influence over the congregation's first ten years is important in understanding the congregation's strong ties to the Missouri Synod.

Those ties were furthered strengthened during a congregational battle over the location of the church building. In 1908 a struggle arose in which the refrain "location, location, location" took on a new meaning. (A 1984 church history paper by Michael Hatzung chronicles this event in detail.) This conflict is important to our present topic because we see how the Missouri Synod officials sided with the majority faction which moved Trinity congregation to its present location in the town of Crete proper. The Synod stood behind the majority 100-percent, even to the point of refusing to provide pastoral service to the minority break-away group. As a result that group joined the Wisconsin Synod. The future relationship with Zion of Crete, the break-

away congregation, becomes important after the WELS broke fellowship with Missouri in 1961.

Shortly after this bitter struggle Trinity's pastor, Friedrich Brauer, took a call away from Trinity. The ensuing eight month vacancy was finally filled in April of 1912 when the Rev. Charles A. Waech accepted Trinity's call and arrived in Crete. Pastor Waech was another strong connection to the Missouri Synod. Until accepting the call to Crete he had been president of the Texas district of the Missouri Synod. Under Pastor Waech Trinity continued its growth in both size and confessionalism. In fact, the men who led Trinity's confessional fight had been instructed by Pastor Waech in the rudiments of Christian doctrine through Luther's Catechism.

The work of Trinity's first century came to an end under the leadership of Pastor A.T. Kretzmann. At the end of 1944 Pastor Waech requested to be relieved of the pastorate of an ever-growing Trinity. (In 1948 the congregation listed 720 souls.) Pastor Kretzmann accepted the congregation's call and was installed at Trinity on April 15, 1945. Needless to say, it was a time that was very crucial in Missouri Synod history. Pastor Waech continued serving as Assistant Pastor until 1949 when the congregation gave him the title of "Honorary Pastor."

Pastor Kretzmann continued the work of building a confessional congregation within the Missouri Synod. The pastor himself was another strong relation to the Synod. But before long that relationship took on a new look. The Chicago Statement of 1945 had disturbed the congregation to no end. By 1947 the issue was strong enough to demand the attention of Trinity's

voting assembly. In a special meeting in April of that year the voters approved a special letter to Missouri Synod President J.W. Behnken expressing its concern over "Synod's attitude toward the Statement." Trinity's confessional congregation had been built. Now the time had come to fight a confessional battle.

III. 1949 - 1960: FIGHTING A CONFESSIONAL BATTLE

In the voter's meeting of October 9, 1949 the doctrinal concerns of the last few years took on a new twist. At that meeting Pastor Kretzmann explained that the doctrinal conditions in the Synod were "most unstable, particularly with respect to Synod's continued tolerance of the beliefs and interpretations set forth by the signers of the Statement." (Minutes, 10/9/49) As a result of the discussion the assembly resolved unanimously that Synod pension payments for Pastor Kretzmann be discontinued until such a time as conditions are again doctrinally sound. The reason set forth was that only Synodical pastors were eligible for this fund. Before the meeting was over the congregation also directed that its mission offerings be sent directly to fields in which there were no signers of the Statement. Both resolutions foreshadowed a final decision that wouldn't be made for twelve years.

At this point it is important to remember that Pastor Kretzmann had been in Crete for slightly more than five years. The congregation had not yet had the time to form such a strong attachment to their pastor that would enable them to follow his concerns in contrast to their strong ties to the Missouri Synod.

The leaders of the congregation were men who knew from experience how Missouri had stood behind the congregation in the struggle with Zion. They had been trained by Pastor Waech for almost 40 years. To say that the congregation was only concerned about following its pastor would be to neglect all of the facts. Trinity was a strong Missouri congregation which wanted to do all it could to battle against the inroads of false doctrine. In that sense alone were they in perfect agreement with their "new" pastor.

Trinity's confessional fight turned to a different strategy in 1950. The first of many memorials was sent to the convention of the Missouri Synod. The February 2, 1950 minutes record it in brief,

that we implore Synod to reject and disavow the doctrinal error incorporated in the 'Statement' and that a condition for continued membership in synod requires that the signers of the 'Statement', as well as all other pastors, professors, teachers, and employees of Synod conform to this rejection and henceforth, to cease teaching and preaching them.

That memorial foreshadowed the soon to be begun position of "in statu confessionis." The memorial was accompanied by two others which requested an examination of all statements made by Lutheran Witness and protested the appointment of a "Statement" signer as Synod's fourth vice-president.

Unfortunately, the 1950 Milwaukee convention refused to take a stance that was satisfactory to either Pastor Kretzmann or Trinity congregation. Pastor Kretzmann prefaced his decision to announce "in statu confessionis" by telling the July voters assembly,

In conformity with my duty as God-appointed overseer

and watchman of this flock, I find it necessary at this time to make a formal statement on the present status of the LCMS, and my relationship toward it. For several years already, church-divisive errors and unionistic practices have been allowed to exist unretracted and without application of Synodical discipline...Unfortunately, at its Milwaukee Convention, Synod even went a step farther by accepting as a doctrinal basis for fellowship with the American Lutheran Church a "Common Confession" which fails to exclude prominent false doctrines openly taught...It is not my intention to take any hasty or ill-advised action, nor would I want this congregation to do so. My own membership in Synod is of necessity at the present time a protesting one in the state of confession...'Such a member must continue to testify in public convention and periodicals against such error'...This time of protest on my part will also be used as a period of careful study of the 'Common Confession' as compared with Scripture on the part of Trinity Congregation.

The congregation took this time of careful study seriously. Many members had little or no idea what the raging controversy was all about. All they knew was that their Synod was fighting false doctrine and it was a serious enough matter to effect them and their pastor. That study was based on the Missouri Synod's traditional Lutheran doctrines as expounded in Luther's Small Catechism.

As that study continued the congregation continued to express its concerns to Synod. And that's when it began to run into Missouri's administrative brick wall. A 1951 letter of concern to President Behnken had been "turned over to proper channels." The constructive criticism on the Common Confession requested by Synod seemed to fall on deaf ears. A 1953 concern over the RSV translation did not seem to have any effect. Such "politics" didn't help the situation in the congregation.

By April of 1954 the congregation had become totally unsatisfied with Synod's handling of a problem that was going on

its tenth birthday. The congregation sent a memorial to the Northern Illinois District convention calling on the District to request that the President of Synod call a special doctrinal convention of the LCMS. It was the congregation's hope that such a convention could accomplish what administrators could not. Unfortunately, the 1954 District convention also took a non-controversial course. It neither approved or disapproved of the memorial, it merely passed it along to the Synod President.

Needless to say, the congregation was unhappy with the District's action. What made the synodical problem more difficult was that Synod only met every third year. As a result, the congregation's only immediate option was to again memorialize the Northern Illinois District in 1955. The 1955 memorial was the congregation's major attempt at receiving a clarification of Missouri's doctrinal position. The memorial alone takes up nine pages of the Convention proceedings. The convention even appointed a special committee, Doctrinal Committee No. 6, to deal with the memorial.

In brief the memorial pitted the doctrinal confessions of Missouri over against known practices taking place in Missouri congregations. The congregation summarizes its approach, "In this memorial, we are calling to the attention of Synod what we are convinced is a factual presentation of what is today public doctrine in the Missouri Synod on a number of doctrinal points."

The memorial goes into specifics in ten areas:

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Orthodoxy | 6) Real Presence |
| 2) Redemption | 7) Adoration of the Sacrament |
| 3) Communion of Saints | 8) Prayers for the dead |
| 4) Millennialism | 9) Joint Prayer |
| 5) Congregational Rights | 10) Anti-christ |

Liberal Missourians were quick to accuse the congregation of looking for a heaven on earth. But the memorial itself answered,

We, the members of Trinity Congregation, are well aware of the fact that there will never be a church body in whose midst false doctrines and practices will not arise. However, when a church body and its responsible officials fail to carry to a conclusion the doctrinal discipline by which unscriptural doctrines are removed from the fellowship, the church body itself becomes responsible for those false teachings.

Trinity added the announcement that if the convention failed to prove that false doctrine did not exist, then it would be bound by God's Word to discontinue its financial support of the Synod.

Unfortunately, the District remained consistent in its dealing with the congregation. It urged the congregation to wait for the proper channels to finish their work. It recommended that everyone work together in a brotherly manner. And it strongly encouraged Trinity to reconsider its decision concerning financial support. Obviously, the floor committee realized it had not done what the congregation asked. Sad to say, the adopted resolution seems to put financial support of Synod ahead of doctrinal concern. (Cf. Proceedings of the 32nd Convention of the N. Illinois District, 1955, pp. 84-94.) Of course, the congregation was unhappy and did feel bound to stop financial support. The church's mission offerings were now distributed directly to conservative, confessional mission needs.

In 1956 the congregation finally had a Synod convention which it could address. The congregation sent a Memorial to the Synod in convention which urged "Synod to repudiate and reject the "Agreement" made with the signers of A Statement...and to specifically reject the errors in that document." Unfortunately,

the congregation ran into the same brick wall that WELS and ELS were finding. The convention dismissed the Memorial by a simple resolution which resolved no action because the responsible officials had already acted. (1956 Synodical Proceedings, p. 552-553.)

The congregation had trouble understanding how the Synod could dismiss its concerns so easily. The Northern Illinois District didn't make matters any easier. In its 1957 convention it announced its dismay at Trinity's revocation of financial support and resolved to express its disapproval of Trinity's actions. Trinity had protested false doctrine in the most serious way it knew how and in return received a slap on the hand for not supporting the Synod financially. It's no wonder the confessional fight took a turn for the worse.

The closing years of the decade were spent in congregational study. Group meetings were held; pamphlets were distributed. All of which was intended to make the members more aware of where their pastor and church leadership stood on doctrinal matters. In a sense it was the lull before the storm.

The congregation was still hopeful in its quest for pure doctrine in the Missouri Synod. The 1959 San Francisco convention even raised the congregation's hopes that the tide was turning. Pastor Kretzmann noted for the voters that there was now a much greater awareness on the part of the convention delegates that doctrinal conditions in Synod need correction. But the hopes weren't raised too high. The July 12, 1959 voters assembly minutes close by saying, "Whether this will be done

remains to be seen. Let us hope and pray that it will."

In a sense some might feel those prayers went unanswered. In less than a year the congregation was again protesting. Things hadn't changed. Rather it seemed as if they had become worse. Professor Martin Scharlemann was attacking the inspiration of the Bible through the historical-critical method. The congregation couldn't sit by any longer. The time had come for a confessional decision.

IV. 1961 - 1962: MAKING A CONFESSIONAL DECISION

In many ways the confessional struggle of Trinity paralleled the struggle within the Synodical Conference and the Wisconsin Synod. With a few like-minded congregations Trinity was fighting from within what the WELS and the ELS were protesting in the Synodical Conference. To say Trinity was unaware of what those two Synods were doing would not be true. Yet, Trinity was not acting because it was following the lead of these two larger bodies. Trinity has always been conscious of its sovereignty. It would make its own decisions and fight its own battles. But finally, the protesting congregation was linked to the protesting Synods by time.

Trinity had been expressing its concern over Missouri doctrine since 1947. Its leaders and members were grounded in sound Lutheran doctrine. But the time was coming when the state of confession was no longer enough. Trinity realized that. The congregation recognized that the Synodical Conference was about to be torn apart in 1961. As a result A.T. Kretzmann and the congregation leaders realized the time for decision was quickly

approaching. To prepare the congregation Pastor Kretzmann prepared a paper on the doctrine of Church Fellowship. It compared the "Old Missouri/Synodical Conference" viewpoint with that of "New Missouri." It treated the important biblical texts. It set the controversy in its historical background. And it strongly announced that Missouri had become a unionistic church body. The time for a confessional decision had finally arrived.

In a sense we can credit the Wisconsin Synod with forcing Trinity's decision. In a special voters meeting on August 29, 1961, shortly after Wisconsin's decision to suspend fellowship, Pastor Kretzmann announced to the congregation that he was doing the same. In a lengthy opening address Kretzmann chronicled his concern over doctrine and the reasons he had finally arrived at for "severing fellowship." (This was later toned down to suspending fellowship.) In short he said,

The timing of this long-contemplated action on the part of your pastor was indicated to him as a step which could no longer be postponed when the severance of ties of fellowship with the Missouri Synod on the part of two of the four synods of the Synodical Conference had taken place...While this break in fellowship on a larger scale within the Synodical Conference helped to indicate the timing to me, it was not an indication that I had decided to join one of these Synods...I am not asking the congregation now nor at any time in the future discussions of this matter to take action of any kind in the matter of your church fellowship.

As is obvious in this excerpt, Pastor Kretzmann went out of his way to emphasize that this decision was his personal one and that he didn't want the congregation to even consider following his action without much further study. It was an action dictated by his conscience. If the congregation decided to follow, they would have to make that decision themselves based solely on God's

Word.

It is important to realize that at this meeting Pastor Kretzmann only announced his intention. The official suspension of fellowship was still to come. As far as the congregation is concerned, we have already seen how the troubles in Missouri had been one of its main concerns for the last fourteen years. Study had gone on throughout that period. However, it wasn't a study that had been taken seriously by all the members of the congregation. The matter no longer affected only the voting assembly; now every member had an important stake in what was happening.

At the August meeting in which Pastor Kretzmann announced his impending suspension of fellowship, the voters quickly scheduled several congregational meetings. On September 7th and 8th, all communicant members were invited to hear the reasons for the pastor's convictions. September 11th was scheduled as a third open meeting. The officials of the Northern Illinois District were invited to participate in that discussion. In a sense the voting assembly was setting up a trial in which both the pastor and the District would be able to present the arguments for their case with the congregation sitting as the jury.

Throughout the entire discussion again and again we find reference not to personalities or to the pastor but to doctrine, the confessions, and Scripture. Before that same August 29th meeting was adjourned a letter from the seven-member school faculty was brought to the voters' attention. After noting the obvious the letter read,

It is our firm and unanimous conviction that every effort should be made to prevail upon Pastor Kretzmann to reconsider, and to retain his present status in the Missouri Synod...It is likewise our united opinion that the best interests of the whole church of Christ and of Trinity Congregation would most satisfactorily be served in a God-pleasing manner, by Trinity's retaining its affiliation with the Missouri Synod.

We feel duty and conscience bound to let it be known immediately before any decisions are in the process of being made, that if Trinity Congregation should decide to sever its affiliation with the Missouri Synod, we, as one complete unit or body, will elect to remain with the Missouri Synod.

In a sense the letter was unexpected. Trinity had stood united in its fight over doctrine. The teachers that were called were made perfectly aware of the congregation's protesting position in the Synod. But now, when many Trinity members first learned of the pastor's actions, the entire faculty was "threatening" to walk out if Trinity followed its pastor's lead. In hindsight we can see that this letter is the beginning of the denouement of Trinity's relationship with the Missouri Synod.

Again, it might seem that a true personality conflict had been set up. There would naturally be the pastor's faction and in opposition a faculty faction. But that never really happened. In essence the two sides boiled down to the best way to protest doctrine, in other words, to be confessional. The one group (call it the pastor's group if you want) felt the time had come to take the greatest step of protest in suspending fellowship. The other group agreed that false doctrine still needed to be fought; they only wanted to do it from inside their beloved Synod. At this early time both groups were relatively small, the majority of the congregation being undecided as which avenue was the best to pursue. The indecision was what the coming days of

study were meant to solve.

The first opportunity for such study was at the open congregational meetings of September 7th and 8th. They had been set up to allow members the chance to hear first hand the pastor's reasons for ending his fellowship with Missouri. Pastor Kretzmann prepared a ten-page paper entitled "What Convinced Me That I Must Sever Fellowship With The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod As A Corporate Body." The paper had two main parts: 1) a study of Romans 16:17 with its traditional, Synodical Conference interpretation. 2) Three reasons that he considered LCMS a false or heterodox church. Those reasons were:

The First reason for this conviction is Missouri's present unscriptural way of dealing, in convention assembled, with false teachings and teachers in its midst...The Second reason is that the Missouri Synod no longer holds that the full command: "Avoid them" in Romans 16:17 must be applied against all false churches and their adherents...The Third reason is that, in convention assembled in 1950, 1953, 1956, and 1959, the Missouri Synod has made itself responsible for, and thus made room for, a doctrinally wrong interpretation of Romans 16:17, whereby Scriptural basis for the teaching of Church-fellowship is removed.

That paper succinctly summarized the pastor's reasons in a way that the congregation could easily follow. Another important help was that Pastor Kretzmann quoted profusely from Missouri's own doctrinal statement and even its version of Luther's Catechism. The members could plainly see the pastor's agreement with the principles they had learned and pledged themselves to.

Unknown to any members of Trinity they would be called to account for that doctrine sooner than anyone expected. On September 6th Pastor Oswald A. Waech, a son of the congregation and its Honorary Pastor Waech, who was the LCMS' Secretary of

Evangelism, had addressed a letter to the Church Council with copies sent to other members of the congregation. The letter caused quite an uproar among those who received it. The Council itself decided to withhold the letter at present because of the accusations it made.

The letter started with an emotional appeal to Trinity's strong ties with Missouri. It followed with some disinformation about Wisconsin's suspension of fellowship to lead people to think that it wasn't such a clear cut division. To top matters off it concluded with a sarcastic plea to the members:

I do question your wisdom in following (your pastor's) erring conscience in this important matter. Trinity has been a member of the Missouri Synod for 112 years. What a tragedy if now, on the basis of misleading information, it should sever its affiliation with that church body which has always taught salvation by grace, by faith, and by the Blood of Jesus...Let Pastor Kretzmann resign his office, but let Trinity congregation remain loyal and faithful to the Bible and to the confessions as confessed by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

The letter arrived just as the congregation had heard the pastor's own reasons for deciding to sever fellowship. He had shown them again and again how this action was in line with the doctrines of Scripture and the confessions. The congregation itself had made no decision to follow its pastor. It had done nothing official which might have tipped its hand in either direction. But this letter intimated that the congregation was endangering itself by even hearing its pastor's arguments. In a sense the letter called Pastor Kretzmann a liar who was providing the congregation with misleading information. The plea to remain loyal to the Bible and confessions "as confessed by the LCMS" was

what really hit home. The question was finally brought out into the open, "What was the Missouri Synod confessing?"

The attempt to keep the controversy confined to a few failed on the night of September 11th. That was the night of the third scheduled congregational meeting. The meeting had been turned into a debate between Pastor Kretzmann and Dr. Theodore F. Nickel, the President of the Northern Illinois District. The meeting was recorded and a transcript was made available to the congregation. From that transcript we see that Dr. Nickel followed the same strategy, if you will, that Pastor O. Waech had used. He started with an emotional appeal that if the congregation followed its pastor they wouldn't be able to commune with their Honorary Pastor. He talked of the "misunderstanding" with Wisconsin and the Norwegians. And then to "prove" that the pastor was in error he read the Waech letter to the whole congregation.

The discussion that night never did get down to the real business of considering the pastor's reasons from both sides. The voting assembly minutes reveal that members were more confused after the meeting than they were before. To top it all off not only did the faculty disagree with the pastor, but so did their Honorary Pastor and his son. The Waech letter was especially unsettling. To try and clear the matter up, the congregation invited Oswald Waech to another open meeting on September 24th. He was asked to present his reasons for considering the pastor in error. Further discussions with Synodical officials were also planned for the middle of October. The voters also initiated a search to check on the availability

of a teaching staff or pastor should replacement of either one be necessary. The voters were preparing for the worst.

At the September 24th open meeting the worst materialized. Pastor Oswald Waech came to the meeting with a seven-page paper on "Erring Conscience." The paper surprised the entire congregation. Pastor Waech clearly confessed his adherence to the New Missouri position on Church-fellowship. The paper made the issue unmistakably clear. The Missouri Synod had changed; would Trinity change with her?

It became obvious at that same meeting that there was a division in the congregation. To a degree these factions can again be separated by the people advocating the two positions-- Pastor Kretzmann on the side of Old Missouri, C.A. and Oswald Waech and the faculty on the side of New Missouri. However, it wasn't a division based upon relationships and the taking of sides with friends. Rather the division was over the doctrine of fellowship. If at this point it had boiled down to a personality struggle, Pastor Kretzmann would have probably lost. Much of the so-called congregational allegiance would have gone to the faculty and the Waechs. But that didn't happen. Instead, the Church Council called special meetings for September 29th and October 1st.

In a letter to the congregation the council spoke of its concern for the congregation as a whole.

We are convinced that there is sufficient evidence to show that if the discussions of this matter which are before our Congregation are continued for any length of time, serious harm will be done to our Congregation...Though we must not violate the laws of christian love nor ask people to make serious decisions in these

matters without having had sufficient opportunity to reach definite conclusions with regard to them, yet it is apparent that it will be for the benefit of Trinity Congregation that a decision on the basic issue confronting us is reached as soon as this can be done.

Some might argue that the Council rushed the issue. It had not even been a month since the pastor officially announced his intentions. But that's not the whole truth. Trinity had in fact studied this entire matter ever since 1947. But they had always held back because they never knew for sure the Missouri Synod's position. Now they knew. Dr. Nickel hadn't denied the pastor's reasons. Pastor Waech had appealed to emotions and spoke of an erring conscience. But both admitted to a different doctrine of fellowship in the Missouri Synod. The congregation itself was divided. If it failed to act, and act soon, the congregation itself could be destroyed.

The September 29th meeting again centered on a discussion of doctrine and also the pastor's reasons for leaving the Synod. After studying all of Friday night, a vote was finally taken on Sunday afternoon, October 1st. By a 62-26 count the congregation rejected the doctrine as presented in Pastor Oswald Waech's paper on church fellowship. Immediately, a motion was made to stay with Missouri to better fight that false doctrine. It was tabled and the meeting recessed for dinner.

When the meeting reconvened in the evening the motion to stay with Missouri was never taken off the table. Instead a resolution was offered to withdraw from the LCMS. Afraid that they were moving too quickly, the voters agreed to delay their decision until the regular November voters meeting. That would give the pastor, faculty, and members an entire month to cool

down and further study the pertinent Scripture texts. But in view of the decision on the doctrine itself, all meetings with Synodical officials were cancelled. In a sense the die was cast.

In hindsight it is easy to see how the Lord was controlling the events at Trinity. He wanted the final decision put off no longer. The very next day Pastor Kretzmann received a Call from an ELS congregation in Boston. Before he could decide, the pastor considered it necessary to know where the congregation stood in the doctrinal matters which were at issue. A meeting was scheduled for October 13th. At that meeting the voters reaffirmed the congregation's protesting resolutions to Synod. Pastor Kretzmann then announced that he had officially suspended fellowship with the Missouri Synod on that very day. The voter's responded by further defining the congregation's protesting stance and without dissent asked Pastor Kretzmann to return the call.

The actions of the October 13th meeting were unacceptable to the school faculty. The teachers were in total disagreement with the voters' actions. The faculty went so far as to prepare a resolution which would assure them of the right to hold their personal beliefs, still teach at Trinity, but worship and commune in other Missouri churches. The faculty must have known how the Board of Education would respond. Yet, the individual members wanted to continue teaching at Trinity, a school several had been at for many years. The Board immediately requested another voters' meeting for October 20th.

At that meeting the teachers were asked where they stood.

All seven expressed agreement with the pastor's basic doctrinal position but they could not accept the terms of the protesting position declared on October 13th. Also they did not reject the false teaching which the congregation had already rejected. As a result a motion was made to terminate the calls and contracts of the entire faculty immediately so that congregational unity could be achieved. The motion passed on 52 favorable votes. (106 voting members had answered the role call. It seems not all voted on the motion.)

The voters had acted in the best interests of the entire congregation. Unity was achieved, of course, at a high price. The school continued uninterrupted through the foresight of the Board. Through arrangements with the ELS emergency teachers were provided until permanent teachers could be called. The N. Illinois District looked on the action of the October 20th meeting as the congregation's official suspension of fellowship. Obviously, the congregation had not yet taken that step but in the opinion of the officials, they had done everything but announce an official suspension with the Missouri Synod.

On October 23rd the District served the congregation notice that if it retained Pastor Kretzmann after its November 5th voters' meeting, the congregation would be expelled from Synod for being a Missouri Synod church without a minister who was Missouri Synod. In so doing the District officials bypassed Synodical by-laws. Perhaps, it is easy to understand why--they were fed up with Trinity. Until now Trinity had refused to do anything more than protest. It seems the officials wanted to force Trinity's hand. But the voters would allow no such thing.

When the officials showed up unannounced at the November 5th meeting, the congregation kindly asked them to set up another meeting in accord with the congregation's resolutions on dealing with Synod. (These resolutions prohibited Synodical and District officials from coming to any meeting they wished unannounced. They were required to provide due notice of the time and subject that they wanted to address the congregation.) The District officials left in a huff. As far as they were concerned, Trinity was no longer a member of the District. In a sense the voters had made the final confessional decision in an indirect way, simply by refusing to let the District officials speak.

Trinity itself didn't think that the District could expel them that easily. In fact, Trinity still considered itself a protesting member of the Missouri Synod until after the 1962 Cleveland Convention. The rest of 1961 and first half of 1962 was spent in legal discussions of the Synodical and District by-laws. Appeals were sent to the Synodical Board of Appeals. But none seemed to have been answered.

The congregation itself continued its extensive study of the fellowship issue. The decisions had been made. Now the congregation was dealing with fallout of those decisions. The congregation emphasized to all members that they had not yet left the Synod of their own accord. But many members felt they couldn't wait any longer. By the end of February, 1962 about 200 communicants had resigned or transferred from Trinity. In its March 4th, 1962 voters meeting the congregation decided, "That we, for the time being, abide by the official notice which the

Praesidium caused to appear on page 22 in the November 28, 1961 issue of the Lutheran Witness." That notice had suspended them from Synodical membership.

After the 1962 Cleveland convention the congregation again devoted itself to a thorough study on Missouri doctrine. Since the convention again failed to reject the many false teachings advocated in its midst, Trinity took the official step of suspending fellowship with the Missouri Synod as a corporate body. That decision still was not an easy one to reach. Finally, on September 9, 1962 the congregation declared itself independent. The resolution was passed without dissenting vote. Trinity had made its confessional decision official.

V. CONCLUSION

The story doesn't end in 1962. For almost four years the congregation remained independent. But that independence was a struggle. The battle had scarred all concerned. Pastor Kretzmann's health became a worry. The survival of the school was constantly questioned. Even though the congregation was still over 700 communicants strong, there were doubts about its ability to remain independent. Teachers and assistant pastors were hard to come by. There was always the dim hope of returning to Missouri but it would have to be on confessional grounds.

Finally, the wisdom of remaining independent was questioned. A study of the doctrine of church and ministry was begun. The purpose was to begin affiliating with the ELS, WELS, or the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation. Pastor Kretzmann again prepared a doctrinal paper for the congregation. As a result of

that study Pastor Kretzmann joined the Wisconsin Synod as an individual on November 7, 1965. After a further study on Church and Ministry the congregation followed suit in May of 1966 by a vote of 40 to 32. (The 32 had voted to join the ELS.) For the first time ever Trinity was a member of a Synod other than Missouri. The contention in confessionalism had come to a close.

The purpose of this paper has been to show how difficult that struggle really was. Contrary to the opinion of many LCMS officials the struggle was not a result of personalities. Trinity had been too founded in the Missouri way of life to leave it for a pastor with a strong personality. Trinity left for one reason and one reason alone: doctrine. The vast majority of the congregation was convinced that Missouri had lost pure doctrine. Their battle was nothing but a "contention in confessionalism." Hindsight has proved them right.

But Trinity has never reveled in that fact. To this day a concern for the Missouri Synod and what goes on in it is still very much in evidence. In doctrine Trinity will always be an "Old Missouri" congregation. The only difference is that Trinity is now affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod which shares that strong Lutheran doctrine. I for one am very thankful for that!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Parts II + III:

The early history of the congregation was taken from anniversary booklets for the 75th, 100th, and 125th anniversaries of Trinity congregation.

The book The Lutheran Trail by Louis J. Schwartzkopf (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950) also contains the history of the Northern Illinois District.

Part IV:

The bulk of the material used comes from Trinity itself, especially helpful are the Minutes of the Voters Meetings, Pastor Kretzmann's papers, letters, and historical summaries.

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