

GROWTH OF THE MISSOURI AND WISCONSIN SYNODS

"Is Wisconsin Synod a rural church?"

by

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for

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The California Mission Board Chairman once started out his report to the Arizona- California District Convention by reporting that between himself and his vicar they both had an average amount of hair. The Chairman was bald and the vicar had a lot of hair. Statistics can be deceiving at times. They also can be informative. In my study of the Lutheran churches this year I have learned about the various Lutheran Synods and how they took shape. From the start I was especially interested in the early beginnings of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synod. It especially struck me that although they began at the same time, they are quite a distance apart in numbers.

It is my purpose in this paper to take an overall look at the growth of the two synods. Included in this study is a look into the statement that has often been made, " The Missouri Synod is larger than the Wisconsin Synod because Wisconsin is basically a rural church in the beginning." Is that true? Can that statement be documented?

When I decided to pursue this course of action, I had no idea that it is very hard to find statistics from the early years of our Synod especially. I have included two graphs on overall growth of Missouri and Wisconsin and the early years of Wisconsin and Missouri growth. In making these graphs I found some variance of figures between the different sources. However, it still gives a good indication of growth in both Synods.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE GRAPH STUDY ON GROWTH. It is at first surprizing to find out ~~ahat~~ what we started about the same time as the Missouri Synod yet they increased in congregations, pastors and souls much more rapidly. The biggest difference is in the very first years. After the turn of the century one will find that porportionately we have kept pace with the Missouri Synod to a certain degree. It is especially in the last years that we have incresed in growth while they have decreased.

What are some reasons? In Wenta's evaluations of the Missouri Synod, He attributes their rapid growth to their faith and works. Did the Wisconsin Synod have less faith? or less works? What Wentz says about the faith and works of the Missouri Synod is important in trying to answer this perplexing question. One of the most important factors that I found by studying the s~~at~~istics of the Missouri Synod is the supply of pastors that they poured out every year from the very beginning. The fact that they had two schools of Theology (St. Louis and Springfield) right away. Even after we started our Theological training system in 1863 there doesn't seem to be a big outpouring of pastors. It does make a difference once we got going. One of the main factors in early grwoth had to be an early emphasis on pastoral training. One could also emphasize the various ways that the Missouri Synod used to get out the Gospel. One can not overlook a very early concern for mass media communication. But that is not my emphasis in this paper. Rather I have pursued the angle of urban emphasis. Is this a factor?

CONCLUSIONS ON URBAN-RURAL COMPARISON - It might have been a lot more beneficial if somehow I could have found the same statistics on the Wisconsin Synod as I have recorded on the Missouri Synod. However, I did not find it possible to find them or figure them out. Yet, what I did find does point out that the Missouri has had an ever increasing rate of congregation and souls in the urban areas. In 1926 the Wisconsin Synod was more rural than urban. It would be interesting to find out how we would compare with the Missouri Synod. It just was not possible to find the same type of figures. This is why I made a comparison of the congregations in the metropolitan centers of over 200,000. It was interesting to find the same percentage of congregations in the metropolitan area's. The last figure of comparisons show how much emphasis the Missouri Synod has had on the very big cities. We have not changed in this area either. Although we have increased our emphasis upon the metropolitan areas we are still not heavily concentrated in the major cities of the U. S.

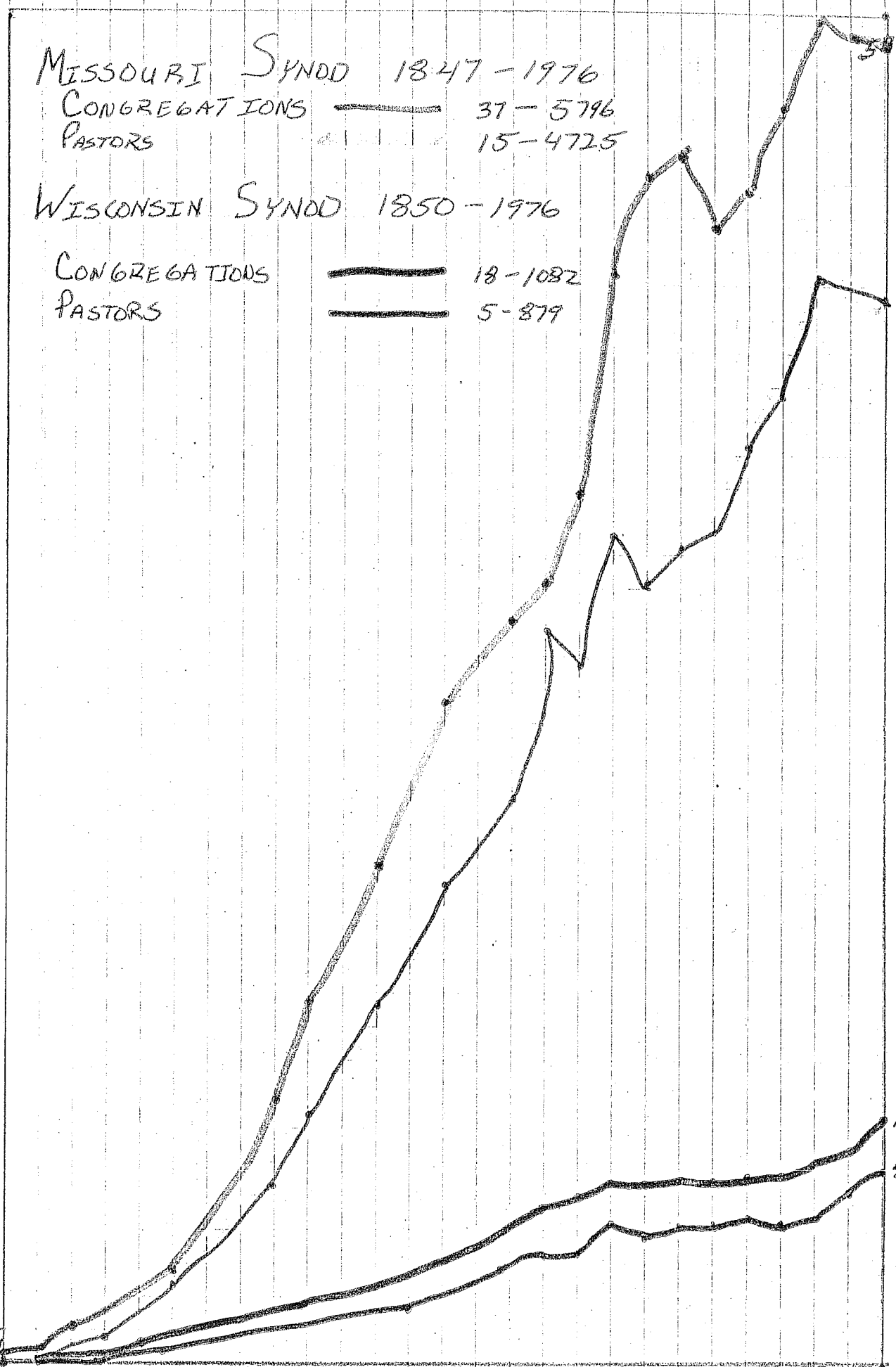
In conclusion I have found that it can be said that the Missouri Synod definitely had a much greater emphasis upon the bigger cities. We are beginning to get the hint. I have found this study rather revealing and rewarding. I hope others will too.

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MISSOURI SYNOD 1847-1976
 CONGREGATIONS ——— 37-5796
 PASTORS ——— 15-4725

WISCONSIN SYNOD 1850-1976
 CONGREGATIONS ——— 18-1082
 PASTORS ——— 5-879

1847 '51 '61 '71 '81 '91 1901 '11 '21 '26 '31 '36 '41 '46 '51 '56 '61 '66 '71 '76



5796

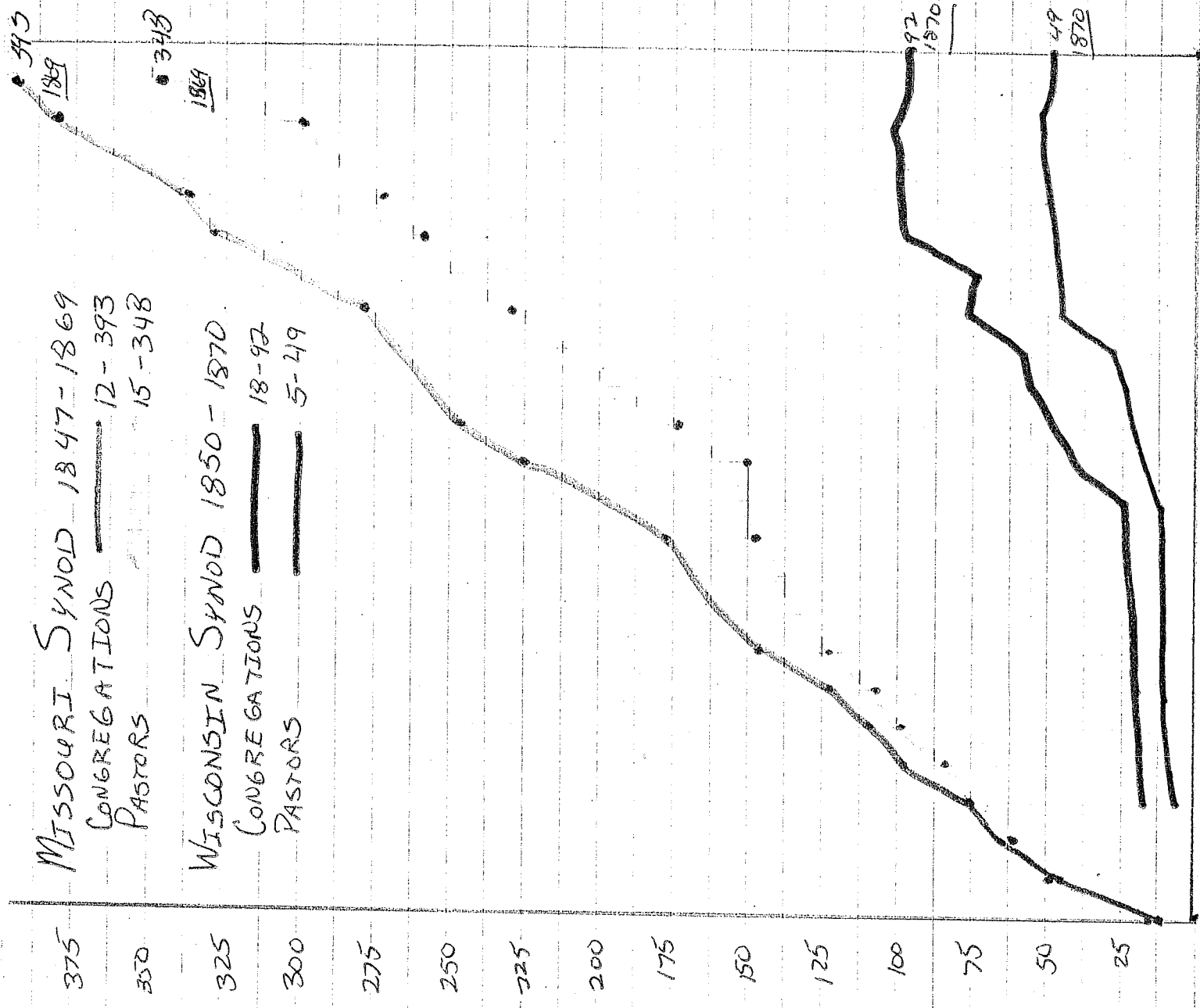
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MISSOURI SYNOD 1847-1869
 CONGREGATIONS ——— 12-393
 PASTORS ——— 15-348

WISCONSIN SYNOD 1850-1870
 CONGREGATIONS ——— 18-97
 PASTORS ——— 5-49



1847 1848 1849 1850 1851 1852 1853 1854 1855 1856 1857 1858 1859 1860 1861 1862 1863 1864 1865 1866 1867 1868 1869 1870

COMPARISON OF INCREASE IN SOULS IN THE MISSOURI AND WISCONSIN SYNODS

	Missouri - Souls - Increase		Wisconsin - Souls - Increase	
1847	4,099	-----		
1857	20,501	400%		
1867	73,106	257%		
1877	122,177	67%		
1887	459,376	276%		
1897	685,334	49%		
1907	838,646	22%		
1917	1,001,380	19%		
1927	1,106,745	11%	211,058	-----
1937	1,322,466	20%	263,080	24%
1947	1,679,337	24%	285,068	8%
1957	2,351,805	43%	342,993	20%
1967	2,759,308	14%	371,048	8%
1977	2,681,620	-3%	402,573	8%

URBAN - RURAL STATISTICS

A city is considered urban when there are 2,500 or more or more than 10,000 in a township.

	Missouri		Wisconsin	
	rural	urban	rural	urban
1926	45%	55%	53%	47%
1955	27%	73%		
1961	24%	76%		
1968	23.7%	76.3%		

STATIONS WHO ARE URBAN OR RURAL

	MISSOURI			
	rural	urban		
1947	58%	42%		
1955	45%	55%		
1961	40.5%	59.5%		
1968	37.8%	62.2%		

CONGREGATIONS IN METROPOLITAN CITIES OVER 200,000

	MISSOURI		WISCONSIN	
	Count	%	Count	%
1970	922 of 5689	16%	154 of 967	16%
1978			212 of 1135	18.6%

In 1970 - Congregations in the top ten cities in the U. S.

MISSOURI	WISCONSIN
193	8