

A STATEMENT "ON DEFINING FELLOWSHIP"

Prepared by Prof. Carl J. Lawrenz

for the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relationships for use in discussions with representatives of the Ev. Lutheran Church - Synod of France and Belgium, the Ev. Lutheran Free Church in East Germany (DDR) and the Free Ev. Lutheran Synod in South Africa by WELS representatives Carl Lawrenz, Siegbert Becker, and Harold Wicke in the summer of 1979.

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ON DEFINING CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Joint proclamation of the Gospel is an expression of fellowship, not because the Gospel is a Means of Grace, but because when I proclaim the Gospel I am expressing my faith, and when I proclaim it with others I am expressing my faith jointly with them.

Joint celebration of the Lord's Supper is an expression of fellowship, not because the Lord's Supper is a Means of Grace, but because in partaking of the Lord's Supper I am also expressing my faith, and by partaking of the Lord's Supper with others I am expressing my faith together with others..

That in proclaiming the Gospel with others I and they are at the same time being edified by the Gospel as a Means of Grace is more important and vital than that in doing so we are jointly expressing our faith. What God in His grace does for me and others through the Means of Grace is always more vital than our joint responses of faith.

That in partaking of the Lord's Supper with others I and they are strengthened in our faith inasmuch as the Lord's Supper is a Means of Grace, is more important and vital than that we are jointly expressing our faith, jointly proclaiming Christ's death. Again, what God does for us is always more vital than what we in faith do in response.

Yet when we are defining an expression of fellowship, it is imperative that we simply define it as a joint expression of faith. To bring in the factor that in some instances we are jointly using a Means of Grace means introducing an irrelevant factor which in itself has nothing to do with the essence of an expression of fellowship and thus leads to unclarity.

When expressions of fellowship are classified as primary if they involve a joint use of the Means of Grace and others as secondary if they do not involve a joint use of the Means of Grace, this also leads to unclarity inasmuch as an irrelevant factor seems to make certain joint actions of faith more of an expression of confessional fellowship than others.

1978

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MEMO

DATE: 6/10/82

TO: _____

FROM: Prof. Carl Lawrenz

This document was used by the Overseas Visitation Committee, Wicke, Becker, and Lawrenz in 1979 in discussions with representatives of the Ev. Lutheran Church- Synod of France and Belgium, The Ev. Lutheran Free Church in East Germany(DDR), and the Ev. Lutheran Synod in South Africa. It had previously been approved by the CICR and our WLS faculty.

At a meeting with the ELS I had passed an initial draft of it ^{on} to President Theo. Aberg, since even he in his otherwise fine Essay on Fellowship had distinguished between pulpit and altar Fellowship as primary- because they involved the means of grace directly- and other forms of confessional fellowship not involving the means of grace directly, like prayer fellowship etc.

Because of his subsequent grave and fatal illness we never got to discuss the document.

C arl Lawrenz.

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