

Report of the Synodical Conference Interim Committee

(See 1946 Proceedings, page 61)

A. MAJORITY REPORT

The Honorable Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, in convention assembled at Milwaukee, Wis., August 3-6, 1948.

Esteemed Brethren:

At the convention of the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference, August 6-9, 1946, held at St. Matthew's Church, Milwaukee, Wis., the following resolution was adopted:

"WHEREAS, A God-pleasing union of individuals and church bodies is based on unity of doctrine and practice; and

"WHEREAS, The Army and Navy Chaplaincy and other matters relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry, and the Church have been a source of disagreement between the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference for a number of years, threatening true unity among us; and

"WHEREAS, The Holy Spirit alone through His Word can remove these disagreements; therefore be it

Resolved, That an Interim Committee of eight men . . . be chosen by this convention;

"That this committee study, in the light of God's Word, the Army and Navy Chaplaincy question and all other matters relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry, and the Church, where there has been disagreement, with the aim of achieving complete agreement; and

"That this committee report its findings to the next convention of the Synodical Conference with the purpose and the hope that some definite progress be made in strengthening the Synodical Conference in its unity of doctrine and practice."

Pursuant to this resolution, your Interim Committee held no less than six plenary conferences, with from three to five sessions at each meeting. Conscious of the great responsibility resting upon it, your Committee sought to become clear, first of all, on what, exactly, is in controversy within the Synodical Conference.

Disagreement was found to exist on the following questions:

1. What is a Christian congregation?
2. Is the local congregation a specific divine institution, and is it the only divinely instituted unit in the Church?
3. Is a synodical organization divinely instituted, or does it exist purely by human right?
4. Does a synod possess the rights and powers of a congregation, including that of exercising church discipline?
5. Is the office of the public ministry a specific divine institution, distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers?
6. Is the power to call vested solely in the local congregation?
7. May a synod as such, without specific delegation of authority by its constituent congregations, extend calls?
8. Is the placement of chaplains by the Government a usurpation of the prerogatives of the Church and a violation of the principle of separation of Church and State?
9. Does the performance of a chaplain's prescribed duties necessarily involve him in unionistic practices?

In order to arrive at a God-pleasing solution of these problems, your Committee deemed it wise to proceed to a thorough consideration of the underlying principles in the light of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions, to wit:

1. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to synodical organization.
2. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to the office of the ministry.
3. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to the call into the ministry.

4. The doctrine of the Church with special reference to its relation to the State.

Owing to the importance of these matters and the limited time at its disposal, your Committee was able to complete its discussions on the first three items only. It will be seen, therefore, that the question of Army and Navy chaplaincies has not yet been given the study it requires. Your Committee has not finished its assigned task. However, it is your Committee's opinion that its work on the fundamental issues involved will, under the blessing of God, go far toward simplifying and expediting the application of the Scriptural principles to any specific problem.

After several meetings and many hours of prayerful and exhaustive deliberations, an approach to unanimity became apparent. However, while seven of the eight members of the committee found themselves in complete agreement, the eighth member found himself unable to share the convictions of the other seven, and total unanimity could not be attained. The subjoined theses, therefore, represent the conclusions of the overwhelming majority. In order not to coerce any man's conscience and to avoid an indefinite stalemate, your Committee invited the dissenting brother to submit his minority report to the convention. It is, indeed, the fervent prayer of all the members of the committee that the Lord Jesus have mercy upon His Church in these troublous times and by His Spirit guide us into all truth and a complete, Godpleasing unity.

I

A thorough study of the question of Church and Synod on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions compels us to the following conclusions:

- a. That a congregation is a group of professing Christians who by God's command regularly assemble for worship (Col. 3:16) and are united for the purpose of maintaining the ministry of the Word in their midst (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 16:19; Acts.14: 23; Titus 1:5 f.; Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 11: 20 ff.);
- b. That the congregation is the only divinely designated body or unit of the visible Church (1 Cor. 16:19; Matt. 18:17; Acts 20:28);
- c. That the congregation exercises its powers (i. e., calls pastors, uses the Keys, etc.) only by virtue of the believers in it (1 Cor. 3:21; Col. 3:16; Rom. 16:17; Matt. 18:17 f.; John 20:22-23).

II

Synods and other co-operative organizations (pastoral conferences, mission societies, children's friend societies, etc.) may be formed for the purpose of carrying out certain specific commands of the Lord (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19-20) which the individual congregation, because of human weakness and other limitations, may not be able to carry out by itself (Gal. 6:2). But such organizations are an outgrowth of Christian love and Christian liberty. The work so done is both *divinely appointed and God-pleasing* (Matt. 28:19) so long as it does not violate the authority vested by God in the local congregation (e. g., Matt. 18:17 f.; 1 Pet. 4:15).

Synod is not a congregation as defined in Par. I, but an association of such congregations. Synod, therefore, has and exercises only those rights and powers which are delegated to it by the constituent congregations, which, in turn, possess these rights and powers by virtue of the believers in their midst (1 Cor. 3:21; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Luther, St. L. XV:1096: "The Church would not perish if the same village pastor were bishop, archbishop, and pope, and they (i. e., the congregations) were joined together by a firm concord, as Cyprian says, and as was the custom of the first church."

Walther, *Pastorale*, p. 393: "Since there is in God's Word no command for it, there can be no doubt that a combination of several congregations into one larger church body, e. g., by means of a Synod, . . . is not of divine, but only of human right, and therefore not absolutely necessary."

P. 394: “That a local congregation, in order to have and be able to exercise all church rights, must be united outwardly with other congregations and be with them under one church government, and hence be dependent on other congregations, is an error, on which the papacy is founded.”

P. 395: “The jurisdiction which persons outside the local congregation have over it and its pastors is purely by human right.”

Hoenecke, Ev. Luth. Dogmatik, IV, p. 186: “Matt. 18:17. Here the power of the keys is given to the visible individual congregation (Partikulgemeinde), for when it says: ‘Tell it unto the church,’ I am not directed to the invisible church. No one knows the believers with infallible certainty, and can therefore tell them nothing. We must, therefore, think of the visible individual congregation.”

P. 169: “According to Matt. 18:15 ff. all rights and privileges rest with the congregation, or church.”

Proceedings, 22d Convention, Synodical Conference, New Ulm, Minn., Aug. 19-24, 1908, p. 18: Dr. F. Pieper, essayist: “As already mentioned, it is not divine order that local congregations unite themselves with other local congregations to form larger church bodies, such as our synods are. These alliances (Verbindungen) are a matter of Christian liberty. The local congregation is the only divinely instituted association (Verein) in the Christian Church. All other associations and alliances are a purely human arrangement (nur menschliche Ordnungen). We will not permit the synodical organization to be regarded as a divine order. However, there is yet one thing which is divine order beyond the association within the local congregation: namely this, that we acknowledge and treat as brethren in the faith those Christians who at other places confess the true faith. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:8): ‘Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, *nor of me, His prisoner.*’” Action of the Synodical Conference (cf. *Proceedings*, page 38): “The essay was *accepted*, and the essayist was voted the sincere thanks of the Synodical Conference.”

III

The formation of a congregation or the exercise of its functions does not deprive the individual believer of any of the inherent rights, duties, or privileges of the royal priesthood. However, the Scriptures clearly indicate that these rights may be exercised publicly (i. e., by order and in the name of the congregation, von Gemeinschafts wegen) only by authority of the local congregation (Tit. 1:5; Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 11:24).

While the local congregation may delegate the exercise of some of its functions (or work, e. g., mission work outside its parish, etc.) to such groups as it may designate (e. g., Synod, mission societies, etc.), the exercise of the final step in excommunication can never be so delegated because of the specific command of Christ in Matt. 18:17: “Tell it unto the church” (tee ekklesia, i. e., the local congregation).

IV

God has instituted also the office of the so-called public ministry of the Word. According to Scripture this office is to be clearly distinguished from the general priesthood of all believers:

a. Since no one may execute this office except he have a proper call thereto (cf. Rom. 10:15; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Jer. 23:21).

See *Luther*, St. L. X: 1538 ff.: “Vom Amt des Wortes Gottes.”

b. Since a particular aptitude and an exemplary walk of life is required of the incumbents of this office (1 Cor. 12:29; 1 Pet. 5:3; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-12).

Hoenecke, Ev. Luth. Dogmatik, IV, p. 175 ff.: “Das Lehramt”—the teaching office. Thesis I: “The teaching office, by which we here understand the state of the servants of the Word, the pastors, is of divine institution.”

P. 179: Thesis II: “No one may become a public servant of the Word in any other way than by an outward, legitimate call.”

Smalcald Articles, *Triglot*, p. 525: “The churches are in duty bound before God, according to divine law, to ordain for themselves pastors and ministers.”

P. 507: “Again the Council of Nicea determined that bishops should be elected by their own churches, in the presence of some neighboring bishop or several.”

V

The calling of ministers of the Word is the obligation and sole right of the local congregation (Acts 1:15-26; Acts 14:23). Smalcald Articles, *Triglot*, p. 523: “Therefore it is necessary for the Church (German: die Kirchen. plural, i. e., local congregations) to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers.” . . . “Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists.”

- A. The obligation to call rests upon the congregation
 - a. by the express will of God that congregations should maintain the ministry of the Word in their midst (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Eph. 4:11) ;
 - b. by the implied will of God which is evident from the description the Bible furnishes of a Christian congregation and the office of the ministry (1 Cor. 3:21-23; 1 Cor. 4:1-3; Rom. 10:15; Acts 13:2; 14:26; 1 Cori. 9:14)
 - c. by the command of Jesus to preach the Gospel (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15).
- B. The authority and validity of the call stems
 - a. from the universal priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:21-23);
 - b. from the divine institution of the ministry (Acts 20:28; Rom. 1:1-5; Galatians 1; Eph. 4:8; Rom. 15:15-16; 1 Cor. 9:14, 16; Jer. 3:15; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2).
- C. In order to expedite the work of the Church, the congregation may delegate its authority and power to call (Acts 13:2). This includes the calling of pastors, missionaries, professors, teachers, etc., who are gifts of God to the Church. When this is done, it is solely by Christian liberty and in accordance with the law of love.
- D. The call may be terminated any time that God removes the gift, or the field, or when the qualifications demanded are no longer met (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 1:7; 5:22; 3.1-15).

Luther, St. L. V: 1037: “Although we are all priests, it does not follow that we all can or should preach or teach and rule. Rather must several be separated and elected out of the entire group to whom such office is entrusted. And he who discharges such office is now not a priest because of his office (as all the others are), but a servant of all the others. And if he is no longer able or willing to preach and serve, he steps back into the common crowd, turns the office over to some one else, and is nothing else than every ordinary Christian. Behold, thus must the office of the ministry or service be separated from the common priesthood of all baptized Christians. For such office is no more than a public service which is committed to one by the whole congregation, all of whom are priests together.”

Respectfully submitted by the Interim Committee

REV. H. A. THEISTE (Norw.)
REV. J. J. PELIKAN, SR. (SIOV.)
REV. A. F. WESTENDORF (Wis.)
REV. THEO. F. NICKEL (MO.)
MR. A. J. SCIIWANTES (Wis.)
MR. J. G. KIRSCH (Mo.)
per REV. H. J. A. BOUMAN (Mo.)
Chairnian

Dissenting: REV. H. H. ECKERT (Wis.)

B. MINORITY REPORT

The Honorable Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, in convention assembled at Milwaukee, Wis., August 3-6, 1948.

DEAR BROTHERS IN CHRIST:

I. The minority of the Interim Committee has the following to report as the findings, of the minority in the matter of Church and Ministry:

1. There are two marked differences in the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference in the matter of Church and Ministry.

A. These are not differences in doctrine as such.

- a. In the circles of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference there is agreement that the Church is the body of the believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, the communion of saints.
- b. In the circles of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference there is agreement that it is God's will and order that there be groups of believers (local congregations) who gather around the Word and who make preaching of the Word their chief concern, and that such groups of believers, churches, are divine institutions, not only as a creative act of the Holy Spirit, but also by the Lord's command to gather, Heb. 10:25.
- c. In the circles of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference there is agreement that the Lord has given to the Church, the believers, the ministry of the Word.
- d. In the circles of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference there is agreement that the Public Ministry, the Holy Ministry, exists within the Church according to the will and order of God, that it is of divine nature, divine institution, not mere human arrangement, or a matter of mere human expediency.

B. They are differences in application.

- a. Some restrict the concept of a divinely instituted church local (the Church of Christ as it appears on earth—ekklesia, Matthew 18) to the local congregation and consider all gatherings of believers, groups of Christians beyond the local congregation, such as synods, conferences, etc., a purely human arrangement.
- b. Others find in the descriptive name of church (ekklesia, they who are called out) a term which applies with equal propriety to the various groupings into which the Holy Spirit has gathered His believers, local congregations as well as larger groups.
- c. Some restrict the idea of a divinely instituted ministry to the pastorate of a local congregation and consider such offices as teachers, professors, synodical officials, etc., branches of this office without a specific command of God, established in Christian liberty.
- d. Others see in "ministry" a comprehensive term which covers the various special offices with which the ascended Lord has endowed His Church.

2. The Interim Committee has reached no unanimous agreement in these two marked differences, so that differences of application exist within the committee.

A. The majority, seven members, restricts the concept of a divinely instituted church local, "ekklesia, Matthew 18," to the local congregation and insists that the local congregation is the only divinely designated group of the so-called "visible church" with the right and privilege to carry out, perform, all functions of the Church.

B. The minority, one member, holds that no group of believers within the "visible church," has been specifically and specially designated as "ekklesia, Matthew 18," with the sole right and privilege of all the functions of the Church, to the exclusion of all other gatherings, but that the Lord gave the right and privilege of all the functions of the Church to the *Church*. Every individual believer as a priest and member of the *Una Sancta* has the right and privilege of all the functions of the Church, and the duty to exercise them. However, he may not violate the right of other Christians—(public ministry, the doctrine of the call, God's law of order, and the law of love). Furthermore, all groups of believers gathered in Jesus' name, that is, gathered by the Holy Spirit through the Word, around the Word, jointly to preach the Word, as part and parcel of the *Una Sancta*,

have the right and privilege of all the functions of the Church and the duty to exercise them through the public ministry wherever they do not sin against the doctrine of the call, the Lord's law of order, and the law of love in the public administration of the keys.

- a. The reasons the minority disagrees with the majority are:
 - aa. The Scriptures nowhere contain a special word of institution for the local congregation, nor do they record an instance where Christ performed such an institution, nor do they even contain a reference to such an instance. The local congregation, therefore, on the basis of God's Word cannot be taught as being the only form of gathering divinely instituted, an establishment of God by *special* divine institution. Walther's word written in connection with ordination (*Walther and The Church*, page 76) applies here as well as in the case of ordination: "Whatever cannot be proved by God's Word as having been instituted by God cannot without idolatry be declared to be, and accepted as an establishment of God Himself."
 - bb. The Scriptures nowhere contain a clear word of God which makes any special *form* of gathering mandatory or obligatory. They simply command gathering, Heb. 10:25. To disregard this fact in connection with the local congregation leads to going beyond the Scriptures.
 - cc. The Scriptures recognize local congregations at work as the church at work, but nowhere do they designate the local congregation alone as being the church local, "ekklesia, Matthew 18," or restrict the church local, "ekklesia, Matthew 18," to the local congregation. What the Scriptures do not do, we have no right to do.
 - dd. To agree with the majority, the minority would have to read into Matthew 18 what otherwise is not found in the Scriptures, and then by means of deductions arrive at conclusions and maintain of these conclusions that they are Scriptural truth. This the minority cannot do.
- b. The position of the minority does not
 - aa. make the minority a *Hoeflingianer*. Hoefling, a German theologian, taught that local congregations are mere human institution and arrangement, that all that calls them into existence is "Beduerfnis" on the part of the believer to do his work. Believers find that a certain need to carry on their work rings them together; so they gather because of this need, and for no other reason, and this leads to local congregations. This is not Scriptural. This is not the position of the minority. Local congregations, though not divine by *special* institution, truly are of divine institution, for they are not a mere product of human need. They exist by a creative act of the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Word. They also are a living of the Lord's command to gather, Heb.10:25. They are the Lord at work, their divinity being derived from the Lord's presence among His believers. When the local congregation administers the keys in our life, it is as if the Lord deals with us Himself.
 - bb. take anything from the local congregation that is the local congregation's, but it refuses to give to the local congregation alone what has not been given to it alone in the Scriptures. In so doing, the local congregation loses none of its sovereignty. The local congregation is king in its field with only the King of Kings above it. Following God's will and order and Word, observing the doctrine of the call, the local congregation will assume the function of Matthew 18 in practically every disciplinary case, not because it alone is the Church Local, but because practically every case of Matthew 18 will fall into the field or realm of this King.
 - cc. give license to a disorderly practicing of Matthew 18 within the Church and will lead to no disorder if God's Word is observed by all groups in the practicing of Matthew 18.

II. The minority of the Interim Committee suggests the following to the Honorable Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference:

1. The suggestions:

A. That it request both the majority and the minority of the Interim Committee each to place a copy of an essay into the hands of all conferences in the Synodical Conference no later than Dec. 1, 1948, in which each presents its findings in the matter of Church and Ministry.

B. That it urge all conferences to study these essays and above all restudy the doctrine of the Church and Ministry in mixed conferences during the course of the next two years and report their findings to the Synodical Conference two years hence.

2. The reasons for these suggestions:

A. The differences in application are not strictly along synodical lines and cannot be dealt with as such by the Synodical Conference as yet.

B. A thorough study of the findings of the majority and minority can not be made at the Synodical Conference for lack of time.

C. To take action at the present time would only be injurious to the body.

D. A thorough study of Church and Ministry by all conferences will be wholesome to all Synods and to the Synodical Conference in general.

Respectfully submitted,

HAROLD H. ECKERT

REPORT OF THE FLOOR COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIM COMMITTEE REPORT

(*Committee:* Pastors Henry O. Theiss, Karl Ehlers, Prof. H. L. Hardt, Pastor Gerald Hoenecke, Prof. E. Kowalke, Pastors F. E. Stern, L. Tessmer; Mr. Walter Bunge.)

WHEREAS, The Interim Committee reports that it has not been able to complete its work; be it
Resolved

1. That we commend our committee members for their diligent efforts to attain full harmony;
2. That our committee be requested to continue to function till our next convention and that the Presidents of our constituent Synods be encouraged to appoint additional, advisory representatives to attend their meetings;
3. That the committee shall endeavor to complete its work by the next convention;
4. That individuals and groups of our Synods be urged prayerfully to restudy the doctrine of the Church, in order to obtain the true Scriptural answer to the questions raised in the reports.

Action by the convention: The convention *adopted* the report.

In a later session the Wisconsin Synod's Standing Committee on Church Union (the Rev. John Brenner, President, and Prof. E. Reim, Secretary) presented the following declaration to the convention:

In view of the position into which our Wisconsin Synod has been placed by the surprisingly speedy acceptance of the resolutions pertaining to the report of the so-called Interim Committee, particularly also by the subsequent refusal of the convention to reconsider these resolutions; and

In view of the grave implications of the particular problems which had been assigned to this Interim Committee,

We find ourselves constrained to make the following declaration in behalf of our Wisconsin Synod:

1. We hold that in matters of such importance our Synod should have had the right to name its own representatives, and to name them by any method which in its own judgment it may deem advisable.
2. In order to prevent further delay in this important matter we accept the provisions made by the resolution of the convention for the appointing of advisory members who are to appear before this committee, provided it be clearly understood that these advisory members shall be admitted to all, even to the executive sessions of this Interim Committee.

Action by the convention: The convention adopted the resolution to refer this declaration to the Intersynodical Relations Committee with power to act.

Report of the Synodical Conference's Interim Committee

Since the last convention of the Synodical Conference your Interim Committee had one meeting of two days and once more gave earnest consideration to its assignment. As a result of its deliberations, the Interim Committee begs leave to submit the following report and recommendations:

I. WHEREAS, Your Interim Committee has made a thorough study of the doctrine of the Church and Ministry; and

WHEREAS, Your Committee has come to the conclusion that the Theses on Church and Ministry, as adopted by the St. Louis and Thiensville faculties at Thiensville, Wis., April 16, 1932, correctly express the Scriptural principle of this doctrine; therefore,

We submit these Theses (as appended, the original German with an English translation) to the Synodical Conference for adoption; and

II. WHEREAS, These Theses are the product of previous studies by faculties of theological seminaries within the Synodical Conference, therefore,

We respectfully suggest that any questions arising from the application of the principles expressed therein be submitted to the faculties of the theological seminaries within the Synodical Conference, acting jointly; and

III. Since your Committee has been unable to take up the further question assigned to it, i. e., the chaplaincy, your Committee feels that this matter could be taken care of by the Committee on Intersynodical Relations.

Rev. H. J. A. BOUMAN (Mo.), *Chairman*

REV. HAROLD H. ECKERT (Wis.),
Secretary

REV. H. A. THEISTE (Norw.)

REV. A. F. WESTENDORF (Wis.)

REV. J. J. PELIKAN, SR. (Slov.)

REV. THEO. NICKEL (MO.)

MR. JOHN KIRSCH (Mo.)

Mr. A. J. SCHWANTES (Wis.)

Sätze

angenommen am 16. April 1932 in Thiensville, Wis., von der Fakultät des dortigen Seminars und Vertretern der St. Louiser Fakultät und den Präses der Synoden von Wisconsin and Missouri.

1. Es ist Gottes Wille and Ordnung, wie wir aus der Heiligen Schrift erkennen, daß Christen, die zusammen wohnen, auch äußerlich in Verbindung treten, um gemeinschaftlich die Pflichten ihres geistlichen Priestertums auszuüben.

2. Es ist, wie wir aus der Heiligen Schrift erkennen, ferner Gottes Wille und Ordnung, daß solche christliche Ortsgemeinden Hirten und Lehrer haben, die von Gemeinschaft wegen das Amt des Wortes in ihrer Mitte ausrichten.

3. Es ist auch Gottes Wille and Ordnung, wie wir aus der Heiligen Schrift erkennen, daß christliche Ortsgemeinden ihre Glaubenseinigkeit mit andern Gemeinden zum Ausdruck bringen und die Reichgottesarbeit auch außerhalb ihres eigenen Kreises mit ihnen gemeinschaftlich verrichten, etwa wie das bei uns in der freien Form der Synode geschieht.

4. Weil jeder Christ die Schlüssel des Himmelreichs besitzt, so gilt ein von einem einzelnen oder auch mehreren Christen in irgendwelcher Zusammensetzung nach Gottes Wort ausgesprochenes Urteil auch im Himmel. Doch ist es, wie wir aus der Heiligen Schrift erkennen, Gottes Wille and Ordnung, daß ein Vorgehen gegen einen sündigenden Bruder nicht als zum Abschluß gekommen angesehen werde, bis seine Ortsgemeinde gehandelt hat. Die Zucht der Lokalgemeinde and die Synodalzucht können, wenn es recht zugeht, nicht in

Konflikt miteinander geraten, weil die Lokalgemeinde von der Lokalgemeinde and nicht von der Synode, und die Synode von der Synode and nicht von der Lokalgemeinde ausschließt.

Anmerkung. Den von der Ortsgemeinde vollzogenen Ausschluß.

nennen wir kirchlichem Sprachgebrauch gemäß Bann.

Ordnung—order (established on existing state of things).

Translation of Thiensville Theses

Statements adopted by the faculty of the Thiensville Seminary and representatives of the faculty of the St. Louis Seminary and the Presidents of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods at Thiensville, Wis., April 16, 1932.

I. As we know from Scripture, it is God's will and regulation that Christians who reside in the same area also establish an external connection in order to exercise jointly the obligations of their spiritual priesthood.

II. As we know from Scripture, it is furthermore God's will and regulation that such Christian local congregations have shepherds and teachers, who in the name and on behalf of the congregation carry out the duties of the ministry of the Word in their midst.

III. As we know from Scripture, it is also God's will and regulation that Christian local congregations give expression to their unity of faith with other congregations and carry on jointly with them the work of the Kingdom of God, as is done among us in the unprescribed form of a Synod.

IV. Because every Christian possesses the keys of the kingdom of heaven, every judgment pronounced in agreement with God's Word by an individual Christian or by more Christians in any kind of combination, is valid also in heaven. But, as we know from Scripture, it is God's will and regulation that proceedings against a brother who has sinned shall not be considered completed until his local congregation has acted. Congregational discipline and synodical discipline, if everything is done properly, cannot cause a conflict, since the local congregation excludes from the local congregation and not from the Synod, and Synod excludes from Synod and not from the local congregation.

NOTE.—In accordance with ecclesiastical usage we call the exclusion executed by a congregation excommunication (ban).