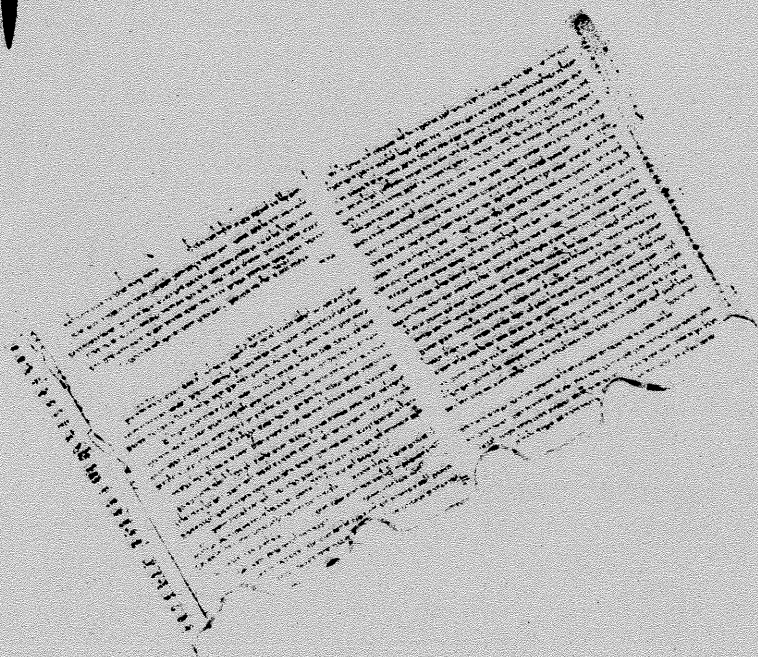


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Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato, Minnesota
October 28 and 29

by
Professor E. C. Fredrich

THE QUEST FOR TRUE LUTHERAN IDENTITY IN AMERICA

Introduction

1. Over a century ago when colloquists of the Missouri and Iowa Synods met in Milwaukee to ascertain how much doctrinal unity prevailed between the two, they touched on the main concept in the theme of this year's Bethany Reformation Lectures, "true Lutheran identity." As might be expected when representatives of two such staunch German Lutheran synods met, there was at the outset an agenda conflict.¹ Missouri desired to begin with millennialism, a doctrine over which it had lost members, among them a district president, to the Iowans.² Iowa was determined to begin with the position regarding the Lutheran Confessions, according to the maxim that when Lutherans contend with Lutherans it is on the basis of the Confessions. This exchange occurred:

Inspector Grossman: You say in the title of your memorandum that you cannot regard the Iowa Synod as a Lutheran synod.

Professor Walther: It doesn't say that you aren't Lutherans but this is stated:
"Declarations of the Iowa Synod Because of Which the Missouri Synod . . . Cannot Regard It as a Lutheran Synod Faithful to the Confessions."³

2. Two days later in the colloquy in the discussion of Sunday, as it related to confessional stance, the point resurfaced in this form:

Professor G. Fritschel: It is my opinion therefore that we will have to find a solution so that we on the one hand do not go too far and on the other certainly do not surrender any of the truth.

Professor Walther: There is a big difference whether I say, "Someone is not a Lutheran" or "Someone is an erring Lutheran." A Lutheran is one who commits himself without reservation to the whole Word of God and to those doctrines which distinguish the Lutheran Church from other churches. If he errs in less principal points, that does not deprive him of his character as a Lutheran. I am fully agreed to recognize as Lutherans those who err in the doctrine of Sunday, but as erring.⁴

3. These references can be utilized for more than the general finding that establishing "true Lutheran identity" was a serious preoccupation already one hundred years ago in those watershed years for all Lutheranism in America. The references also raise for the essayist and his hearers cautions against confusing an identification of error with a sweeping condemnation that denies the claim to Lutheranism and even the existence of saving faith. Distinctions will have to be made between more and less confessionalism, between

errant and reliable Lutheranism, between seekers and finders of fool's gold and the pearl beyond praise or price. Let nothing be read or written into the distinctions beyond what is necessary and intended.

4. Several other preliminary remarks may be in place at the outset to avoid misunderstandings about the theme word quest. It can connote, but for das Ewig-Weibliche. It can connote, but doesn't here, the continuing, as yet unachieved search for a seemingly attainable goal, as in "the quest for the cure of cancer." It can connote, but doesn't here, a quixotic endeavor in which there is more interest shown on the part of those involved in an interesting search than in any possible find, as in "the quest of Coronado's children for desert gold" or "the quest of Reimarus' descendants for a historical Jesus apart from the Christ of faith."⁵

5. The quest being described in these lectures is to be thought of as attainable. True Lutheran identity is no elusive will-o'-the-wisp, no El Dorado beyond the horizon. It is real, as real as anything taught in Scripture. It can be found, it must be found, by following the Bible's own directions.

6. The quest being described in these lectures is to be thought of as previously attained. No thesis is being advanced that suggests an eventual discovery of true Lutheran identity through some Hegelian evolutionary process or some development on the old and new frontiers of America. There has been some true Lutheranism in the Old World and there has been some in the New.

7. The quest being described in these lectures is, at the same time to be thought of as a continuing endeavor. True Lutheran identity can be viewed and reviewed by studying church history. It must also be achieved in the present. Here the old rule

applies that each succeeding generation must for its part relearn and re-earn what the fathers have bequeathed if the inheritance is not to be lost.

8. Today's quest for true Lutheran identity is especially important and meaningful. With the country's bicentennial celebration American Lutheranism has come to a crucial crossroads. A merger of 95% of all Lutherans in American, that a decade ago seemed not at all impossible, is in 1976 viewed askance by more and more of the 95%. During that same decade the Synodical Conference, which for so long had seemed invulnerable to any doctrinal deviation, died after depletion and division in a wrenching identity crisis. That crisis then came home to roost in the Missouri Synod, that for so long had seemed so certain in knowing itself. Whether the eventual Missouri outcome will be large scale break-up or patch-up, in either process pressing identity questions will loom for all involved.
9. A discussion of "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America" obviously calls for a definition at the outset. As has been previously implied, the essayist is firmly convinced that such definition is possible and has actually been supplied and, furthermore, that the definition by word has found expression and embodiment in the history of American Lutheranism.
10. These lectures proceed from the conviction that true Lutheran identity is achieved by a firm commitment in confession and practice to the full inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture and to the Lutheran Confessions as a faithful norma normata. The corollary conviction holds that in history this kind of commitment was achieved in the Synodical Conference that organized in 1872 and ceased to function in the 1960's. Its precious heritage has found haven in remnants clustered around this city and mine.

11. No apology is made for approaching "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America" from these deeply held and far-reaching convictions. If the charge is raised that the study will necessarily be slanted because of them, so be it. The convictions simply cannot be discarded in the interest of an unbiased approach. Every effort will be made to see clearly and judge fairly in describing the quest. How successful the effort is will have to be left to the evaluation of the reactors.

12. The three-part division which the program format suggests will be basically chronological. The first section will reach back to the beginning of Lutheranism in America and trace the quest up to 100 years ago. The second moves the story along 75 years. The third provides a review of the last twenty-five years and attempts a preview of what lies ahead. A skeletal sketch of the three lectures is provided at the outset to aid the hearer's grasp and to delimit the discussion periods.

The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America

Part One: Trailblazers and Trains

- Section 1. Old World Chart and Compass
2. Pathway in Pennsylvania
3. Nonquest of the General Synod
4. Flight from the Blazed Trail
5. Midwest Meanderings

Part Two: Shake-Down and Shape-Up

- Section 6. The Lonely Trail
7. The Broad Way
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Part Three: Losers and Finders

- Section 11. Finders but not Keepers
- 12. Loss of the Middle
- 13. Losers in Lockstep
- 14. Finders and Keepers
- 15. Finders in the Future

LECTURE I

Trailblazers and Trains

Section One: Old World Chart and Compass

13. When the Lutheran immigrants came to this land, they brought along a spiritual heritage from the Old World of one sort or another. They did not come over as have-not Lutherans without any definable identity or confessional commitment of their own, expecting the land to supply them a new and better brand of doctrine and pattern of practice.

14. This is not to deny the modifying effects of the frontier experience in the New World. This is not to overlook the heroic effort made by Palatinates, Salzburgers, Prussians, Haugeans and others to make a clean break with intolerable conditions by the emigration process. This is not to hide from the fact that many nominal Lutherans came to this land with a maximum of economic motives and a minimum of religious concerns. This is rather to assert that "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America" has been channeled and charted to a significant extent by Old World spiritual products and exports.

15. A few of many instances should suffice to make the case for the necessity of maintaining the Old World perspective when viewing New World Lutheranism. Advocates of Pietism among European Lutherans brought definite viewpoints and characteristics when they immigrated to America. Confessional revival among European Lutherans is mirrored in our land. Rival supporters of Grundtvig and Beck in Denmark became in America "Happy Danes" and "Gloomy Danes" and follow separate pathways into the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. There are followers of Hauge in Norway and America. Emissaries of Hermannsburg and Neuendettelsau are not compatible with those of Basel and Barmen. If North Carolina Lutherans by common usage and common consent give their name to a catechism stemming from the old stamping grounds of George Calixtus at Helmstedt, they are also revealing something about their theological stance.⁶

16. At the same time, it should be remembered that Old World ecclesiastical imports were altered in the transplanting process. In some instances the original characteristic was fortified. Haugean lay preaching, for instance, would naturally flourish in sparsely settled areas where the clergy was conspicuous by its absence. Tight clergy control of a highly institutionalized church government, however, would obviously encounter hard sledding in a land of rugged individualists. This is one instance among many, of an important characteristic that suffered deprogramming and dilution in such areas of the New World as St. Louis in the late 1830's and early 1840's and Buffalo in the 1860's. Some religious importations from the Old to the New World were only slightly affected by the long move, if at all. Prominent among them is doctrinal commitment which is always to withstand the ravages of change in time and place.

17. The neighboring state's great historian in an observance of the quadricentennial of this land's discovery--here in Leif Ericson country the

better term might be rediscovery--laid down the influential "frontier hypothesis."⁷ In brief, Turner advocated the view that what was brought into the frontier inevitably underwent modification and Americanization. Even the most committed Turnerite, however, would find it difficult to avoid qualifications and emendations when the master's hypothesis is applied to the religious scene. The religious heritage and the doctrinal deposit is guarded most zealously at home and abroad, in familiar surroundings and in frontier situations.

18. The ultimate effort at religious modification and adaptation and frontierization failed when S. S. Schmucker's "American Lutheranism" as espoused in the Definite Platform was roundly rejected by all but a few small Lutheran synods in the mid 1850's.⁸ Much more space will be devoted to the Definite Platform in the appropriate subsequent section. At this point it is mentioned to underscore the fact, especially for the Turner believers in our midst, that in the religious area of the American scene there was more resistance to the frontier process than in others.

19. These lectures proceed from the premise that the frontier influence, which cannot be denied absolutely in "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America," is not to be overrated at the expense of the immigrant doctrinal and confessional commitment. It has become popular to view and explain developments in the history of Lutheranism in this land from the frontier or sociological or ethnic or economic approach.⁹ The importance of doctrinal commitment and confessional stance is downgraded, whether intentionally or not. The approach is that doctrine didn't matter all that much in America's religious history and if it somehow did, it shouldn't have. This is an approach that these lectures seek to avoid. They assume that

he "Old World Chart and Compass" in theology was a very important factor in the Lutheran story on this continent.

20. Actually, for over a hundred years from the first plantings in New York and on the Delaware until 1748 the major theme is the Old World origin of the isolated and individualistic pockets of Lutheranism in various places along the seaboard. These pockets all assumed and perpetuated the Old World identity. They were extensions and transplants of European Lutheranism without any real New World organization and character.

Section Two: Pathway in Pennsylvania

21. The first actual formation of a synod-type organization occurred in Philadelphia on August 26, 1748, when the Pennsylvania Ministerium was formed. Under the leadership of Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg a synod of four regular and two advisory pastors and representatives of some ten congregations gathered in this pioneer organizational endeavor. This of course assumed that the gathering of New York-New Jersey Lutherans in 1735, which Berkenmeyer calls a "synod," was actually a one-shot, ad hoc assembly that did not lead to any subsequent meetings.¹⁰

22. On what confessional pathway did this pioneer Lutheran grouping set out? The Pennsylvania Ministerium operated for years without a formal constitution, but one can ascertain its leanings from the time of the founding on. That founding coincided with the examination and ordination of Candidate John Nicholas Kurtz. This was the confessional pledge that Kurtz gave on that occasion: "To teach in my congregation nothing, whether publicly or privately, but what harmonizes with the Word of God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and, to this end, to study them

diligently."¹¹ At the dedication of St. Michael's Lutheran Church, as Muhlenberg reports to the Halle authorities, the address voiced the intention that in the new church "the Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, according to the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, and the unaltered Augsburg Confession and all the other Symbolical Books should be taught."¹²

23. A somewhat different impression of the theological direction of the Ministerium is obtained when the invitation to the constituent meeting is examined. It was sent out to a select group consisting of such pastors who, among other stipulations, had legitimate calls and were not anti-Pietist.¹³ The concern for good order in the public ministry is commendable; the tendency to Pietism is less than that.

24. This tendency was a marked characteristic of the Pennsylvania patriarch, Muhlenberg, and he put his stamp on the Ministerium he founded and guided so long. Back in Europe Muhlenberg had published on behalf of the Pietist cause. Throughout his long labors on this side of the ocean, centering in Pennsylvania but stretching out to Albany and to Ebenezer, he remained a Pietist at heart, a big heart, so big it frequently beat beyond confessional boundaries and embraced in fellowship those who were Christian but not Lutheran.

25. All credit to Muhlenberg for providing New World Lutheranism with order and organization and planting it in Pennsylvania and beyond. It is to be regretted that the trail he blazed could on occasion merge with that of the Anglicans and the Anglican-Methodist evangelist, George Whitefield. Muhlenberg may have been more confessionally minded than some Lutheran pastors operating on the frontier at that time; he was less so than others, such as the Hamburg-Amsterdam emissary to the New York-Albany field, William Berkenmeyer.

26. The Ministerium, the only one in this country until the New York counterpart was called into being, generally followed Muhlenberg's lead. After his death, there was a marked deterioration. The ravages of war and the inroads of Rationalism took their toll. "Soon after the passing of Father Muhlenberg," writes a competent observer, "the Lutheran Church in America passes into a period marked by confessional laxity, open fraternity, and a spirit of independent thinking."¹⁴

27. The confessional pledges in the constitution of 1781 were omitted in the 1792 revision which does not even mention the Augsburg Confession. By 1823 the Pennsylvania Ministerium was ready to withdraw from the General Synod in the interest, among other motivations, of its self-styled "hearty desire for a union of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in this country."¹⁵

28. The beginning of this sad decline coincides with the death of Muhlenberg. This can lead to the conclusion that he was the strong man who kept the Ministerium on the straight and narrow pathway as long as he lived. When consideration is given to his Pietistic temperament and mode of operation, however, the thought suggests itself that the decline might not have come so soon and gone so deep if the Ministerium's leader had taken a better pathway from the start. In any event the pathway in Pennsylvania went awry. It would take time before there would be a turn for the better. But that is another story to be related in a subsequent section. At this point the first federation of Lutheran synods, the General Synod, commands attention. This it receives under the rubric:

Section Three: The Nonquest of the General Synod

29. From its founding in 1820 until the 1860's the General Synod operated without any definite

confessional requirement in its constitution. Its objective was to gather Lutheran synods under its wing but not to define what the theological stance of the member synods should be. That would be their responsibility and their right.

30. It has been argued that the General Synod rendered a considerable service to the cause of Lutheran identity. At the time of the General Synod's organization, not only true Lutheran identity, but even Lutheran existence was threatened by a host of foes, among them lodgery, rationalism, union with the Reformed, union with all Protestants. The General Synod may be thought of as a rallying point and a refuge for beleaguered and embattled Lutheran groups. Instead of falling divided, they united and stood.

31. They stood and consequently did not advance in "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America." What is true Lutheran identity? This question the early General Synod constitution did not attempt to answer. It is doubtful if the question even occurred to some of the drafters and subscribers.

32. The clearest demonstration of a General Synod answer will have to be sought in the podiums of its Gettysburg Seminary, established in its first decade, and in the pledge of its graduates. That pledge is ringed with exclusions. It is not to the whole Book of Concord but to no more of the Lutheran creeds than the Augustana. It is, however, not to the whole Augustana, but to no more than Articles I-XXI. It is, however, not to all of Articles I-XXI, but to no more than the fundamental doctrines contained therein. It is, however, not to total agreement with these fundamentals, but to no more than substantial agreement with them. This is far from a quia subscription. One wonders if it can even qualify as one of the quatenus variety.

33. If this seems harsh and overdrawn, a look is in place at the model constitution for member bodies in the General Synod, recommended to the area synods by the general body in 1829. The chapters of that document on examination of candidates and ordination word the key question in this way: "Do you believe that the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession? II Timothy 1, 13."¹⁶

34. Eventually S. S. Schmucker, the theological leader of the Seminary and the Synod and a co-drafter of the document just quoted, espoused the so-called "American Lutheranism." With Benjamin Kurtz, operating in Maryland and the Lutheran Observer, and Samuel Sprecher, head of Wittenberg Theological Seminary, Schmucker challenged a rising confessionalism in certain segments of the General Synod in the Definite Platform, which charged the Augustana with five doctrinal errors: approval of the ceremonies of the Mass, private confession and absolution, denial of the Divine obligation of the Christian Sabbath, Baptismal regeneration, the real presence.¹⁷

35. As has been stated, the General Synod overwhelmingly rejected the Definite Platform, except in areas where its drafters were especially influential. Does this prove that the General Synod was more confessional than this writing suggest?

36. It can just as well be argued that Schmucker was representative of the General Synod he knew so well and had helped grow as it was in its early years. Schmucker never really changed his views. He did not suddenly veer left. The General Synod, however, had been veering toward the right direction in "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity." In the middle years of the 1800's Lutheranism in our land, also in the General Synod, improved from the confessional standpoint.

37. What happened? It is our wont to oversimplify and say that someone in St. Louis began to send out a periodical, Der Lutheraner, and invitations to free conferences, and almost overnight the character of Lutheranism in America changed for the better. It is true that under God Walther and others effectively espoused confessional Lutheranism. But that is not the whole story.

38. In these days when so much of Lutheranism in America needs mending and overhaul, we might do well to cast a searching glance at Lutheran developments in the middle third of the previous century. What books were being read in the Midwest and in the East in studies of Lutheran manses? What theological papers were read and heard, discussed and disputed at Lutheran pastoral conferences? Were the impacts from overseas or from the American Midwest the stronger? This reader would very much like to be a hearer at lectures where such questions could be considered in depth by someone with competence. Rather than view today's Lutheran scene as a lost cause and circle the wagons for a last stand with the view, "Once church bodies turn from the truth, they can never recover," we could better look back to an era in Lutheranism in America that showed recovery and endeavor to find the causative factors and the means and tools the Lord of the Church deigned to use for His saving purposes.

39. For our purposes here, however, the foregoing material suggest a new heading for the consideration of these developments:

Section Four: Flight from the Blazed Trail

From the very outset the General Synod stance, or lack of the same, kept numerous Lutheran groupings from joining the venture. In some cases the aloofness was for doctrinal and confessional reasons; in others, the issue was more a matter of policy or polity.

40. New York, the second oldest area body and one of the original planners of the larger venture stood by and did not join until the late 1830's. Its reluctance seems to have been motivated by a fear of losing local control. Its theological position was as lax as that of the General Synod, if not more so.
41. Tennessee, on the other hand, was born in bitter opposition to the General Synod venture. North Carolina Synod men, Henkels and a few others, who objected to General Synod membership, withdrew and in 1820 set up their own German Evangelical Synod of Tennessee. "This event," one historian says, "may be taken as the first organized effort to bring the Lutheran Church back to a confessional consciousness since the days of the Patriarch; it may also be considered as the beginning of the strong wave of confessionalism which was later to sweep over the American Lutheran Church."¹⁸
42. There was considerable Henkel influence in the Ohio Synod, that traces its beginning to 1818. Ohio did not join the General Synod. The distance to the seaboard and the rock curtain in between were certainly factors. Confessional considerations also played a part. For several years Ohio was at the point of joining the General Synod, but when Pennsylvania withdraw in 1823, the daughter synod stayed on the sidelines with the mother synod.
43. This Pennsylvania withdrawal from the General Synod, as has been previously mentioned, was not motivated by a loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions; quite the contrary. What is most remarkable is the change in Pennsylvania that took place in subsequent years. In 1823 it left the General Synod to foster greater union with the Reformed and to avoid being saddled with the expenses of the projected theological seminary. In 1853 it re-entered the General Synod with the famous rider: "Should the General Synod . . . require of our Synod or of

any Synod as a condition of admission or of continuation of membership, assent to anything conflicting with the old and long-established faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, then our delegates are hereby required to protest against such action, to withdraw from its sessions, and to report to this body."¹⁹

44. By 1853 Pennsylvania had become one of the more conservative of the eastern synods. New York had grown stronger through the process of sending from its ranks the men who founded the Hartwick Synod and the Franckean Synod. Influences in this confessional revival were the European developments in the early 1800's and the influx of "Old Lutherans" in the New World. Lutherans were becoming more serious about their identity.

45. Some were moved to resist rather than rejoice. With time on the other side, they called for a halt and a return to the familiar and free pathways of the General Synod. The Definite Platform did not pussyfoot. It went for confessionalism's jugular. Key articles of the Augustana were contested. Lutheran identity was threatened with massive modification, if not outright destruction. Even the infant Wisconsin Synod recognized what was at stake, although at that stage it did not always see confessional issues all that clearly. In its reaction to the Definite Platform it declared that "accepting the so-called Platform amounts to nothing less than a definite suicide of the Lutheran Church."²⁰

46. By a large majority, the various member bodies of the General Synod chose to live. They rejected the Platform emphatically as espousing an alien theology. But unfortunately they did not excise the theology or its propounders. No doctrinal discipline was attempted by the General Synod. When Platform proponents in Maryland rallied around

Kurtz to form a new synod and applied for membership in the General Synod, their Melancthon Synod was received, even though its constitution repeated the Platform's strictures of the Augustana. The convention agitated itself enough over the issue to cast a divided and registered vote but there the matter rested.

47. Out in Illinois, however, Scandinavian Lutherans were disturbed enough to carry out a plan, previously contemplated but now enacted. They withdrew from the Northern Illinois Synod, a General Synod member, to form the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North America in 1860. There was multiple motivations for the withdrawal, to be sure, but the exodus had begun.

48. During the Civil War years Lutherans below the Mason-Dixon Line separated from those above and formed a general body of their own. After bringing Tennessee into the fold in 1886 the group had the name, The United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South. Doctrine was not the issue. The constitution of the new body is in line with the General Synod position. The confessional paragraph emphasizes "fundamental" doctrines and allows "the full and free exercise of private judgment in regard to" several disputed Augustana articles.²¹ By the time Tennessee joined, the confessional plank had been improved by the omission of the qualifications mentioned.²²

49. After the Civil War in 1866-1867 the General Council was formed by adding previously independent bodies to former General Synod bodies that had supported Pennsylvania's protest of the Franckean Synod's membership. On the surface the issue was parliamentary: the seating of Pennsylvania delegates at the 1866 General Synod convention after the 1864 withdrawal of the delegates. But that issue had been raised by the debate over the admission of the free-

wheeling Franckean Synod. Beyond this question loomed the old conflict and cleavage between those who wanted a confessionally defined Lutheran identity and those who were satisfied with a brand name on the product unencumbered by any listing of ingredients.

50. At the outset the General Council seemed to be the answer to the oft-repeated, fervent prayers for a federation of confessionally minded Lutherans. The charter, drafted in the main by Charles Porterfield Krauth, avoids the old "fundamental" and "substantial" qualifications. It "acknowledges the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in its original sense as throughout in conformity with the pure truth."²³

51. At the outset, however, a basic problem presented itself. Would this delineation and delimitation of Lutheran identity translate itself into practice? It wasn't a sinful attitude in conflict with the Eighth Commandment but realistic concerns for brethren and for biblical mandates that prompted hesitation and interrogation. Missouri and her Norwegian ally were absent from the constituent convention. Iowa and Ohio raised "Four Points" and both refrained from joining, although Iowa maintained a fraternal, if not voting, relationship.²⁴

52. The effort to insure that the confessional stand in word be asserted also in deed, that practice match doctrinal position, encountered difficulties. Pastors and congregations accustomed to a lax General Synod way were disinclined to take a firm position immediately. An educative approach, so went the argument, was needed and allowable. Others, especially those who had fought and won in their own battles over the issues, feared that such a policy spelled debilitation immediately and defeat ultimately.

53. Soon there were withdrawals. The little Wisconsin Synod was the first to leave and thereby won from the Council a reprimand that spoke of "hasty withdrawal" and "uncharitable assault" on "grounds . . . obscure and dubious."²⁵ Wisconsin did not then and does not now apologize for this action which was consistent with the fellowship principles taught in Scripture. Illinois and Minnesota soon followed Wisconsin's lead and Michigan did the same some years later.²⁶

54. Despite fellowship declarations at Akron and Galesburg and in Krauth's 105 Theses the General Council remained irresolute on the issues. By 1917 it was ready to reunite with the General Synod and United Southern Lutherans. The summary evaluation must be that the notable endeavor to realize true Lutheran identity manifested in the half century existence of the General Council did not achieve the goal because of an inability to match in matters of fellowship actual practice with stated intent. In all of the history of Lutheranism in America the General Council story must rank as the second most tragic chapter in "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America." Great promises and prospects failed of realization because a theoretical identity was not achieved in actuality, in practice.

Section Five: Midwest Meanderings

55. Meanwhile there were notable happenings on the American Lutheran scene across the mountains in the heartland. A summary sketch will have to suffice. If Scandinavian Lutherans, especially the Norwegian variety, are given minimum attention, it will not be for lack of admiration and appreciation, but rather for prudent respect for the proverbs that warn against "carrying coals to Newcastle or owls to Athens" and that caution that there are situations

where the appearance of wisdom can only be achieved by keeping the mouth shut.

56. Numerous groups of Lutheran immigrants dotted the plains by the middle of the previous century and a variety of synods soon sprang into existence, all with their own sense of Lutheran identity. The famed Loehe Sendlinge traveled fast and far and made Lutheran church history as they went. First they entered the Ohio Synod and aided its confessional development, but not sufficiently for their own satisfaction. Under Sihler's leadership they withdrew in the interest of confessional Lutheranism and the German language.²⁷ Other Loehe men held membership in Schmid's Michigan Synod for a brief time in the 1840's but soon withdrew because of disagreement with Schmid's fellowship practices.

57. The two disassociated groups were soon linking with other strongly confessional Lutherans in the Midwest, the Saxons who had been shepherded to Missouri by Stephan in 1839. The result was the Missouri Synod's founding in 1847. Over half the original Missouri clergy roster was made up of Loehe emissaries.

58. Loehe men were also the founders of the Iowa Synod. Up in Michigan's Saginaw Valley and its Franken colonies a doctrinal dispute over church and ministry with the Missouri pastor at Saginaw caused Grossmann and Deindoerfer to set out for an area where there was no Missouri influence. They found it in Iowa and there laid the foundations for their synod.

59. The Missouri Synod, with its Lutheraner and Lehre und Wehre publications and with Walther, Wyneken, and Sihler providing the leadership, soon made its presence felt as an outstanding spokesman for the cause of Lutheran confessionalism, a spokesman who also scrupulously practiced what was preached.

The brief period of uncertainty after Stephan's fall was soon replaced by a strong sense of Lutheran identity and Lutheran mission that helped build Missouri into the largest and the strongest of Lutheran synods.

60. Grabau and his "Old Lutheran" Prussians challenged Missouri for a time, pitting an exaggerated form of centralized government and synodical discipline against the Missouri emphasis on the importance of the individual congregation. By 1866 much of Buffalo had either gone independent under the von Rohrs or had joined Missouri.

61. Both Missouri and Buffalo had holdings in Wisconsin and could not help but resent the emergence of a Wisconsin Synod there, as though they weren't properly representing Lutheranism in that state. That is just what three Barmen missionaries, Muehlhaeuser, Weinmann, and Wrede thought and that is why they formed their own group. They wanted to establish an identity that was not "Old Lutheran" but still truly Lutheran. Missouri was quick to apply the scornful epithet, "New Lutheran," with the implication that the upstart synod was willing to sell Lutheran confessionalism down the river.²⁸

62. At least three distinct ecclesiastical groupings and theological tendencies began to take shape among the Norwegian immigrants. There were the conservative and confessional founders of the Norwegian Synod. There were the spiritual descendants of Hauge, with Eielsen attempting to provide a modicum of leadership. There were also others associated with Danes and Swedes in the Scandinavian Augustana Synod formed in 1860.

63. From 1870 on the Augustana Synod was Swedish. The Norwegians and Danes, originally in the body, formed a Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod and a Norwegian-Danish Conference, differing chiefly

over structure. It should be mentioned that the Danes also had groupings of their own, as did the Finns.

64. Also to be found in the Midwest were numerous other Lutheran synods set up by General Synod or General Council people and pastors. They naturally followed the theological position of the founders and in most cases joined one of the federations.

65. Soon Minnesota and Michigan appeared in the names of Lutheran synods. Schmid's first "Michigan Synod" venture, as was mentioned, failed when Loehe men withdrew. In 1860 he tried again and this time, with the help of able and staunch men like Klingmann and Eberhardt, a lasting organization was achieved. In that same year "Father" Heyer, joined by five other pastors, formed the Minnesota Synod.

66. The multiplicity of synods in the Midwest and the fact that they varied widely from one another in theological tendency and confessional stance made for identity and identification problems. Some clarification was supplied in 1872 when six of the synods federated to form the Synodical Conference.

67. In the aftermath of the "Definite Platform" debate, free conferences in support of the Augsburg Confession brought leading men of Missouri and Ohio together. In the 1866-1867 watershed years for the Lutheranism of this land Missouri and its ally, the Norwegian Synod, and Ohio stood aside when the General Council was formed. They were soon joined by Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota, who had held brief membership in the Council but had withdrawn when its fellowship principles and practices proved faulty. The result was the formation of the most confessional of all larger Lutheran groupings, the Synodical Conference.

68. In the Conference true Lutheran identity was realized. The founders themselves made their declaration and gave their definition in the Denkschrift that set down the reasons for establishing another larger association of Lutherans alongside the three already in existence. The main thinking of the Denkschrift has been summarized in these three points:

1. The founders of the Synodical Conference were intent on preserving the Lutheran Confessions as a living force in the church.
2. They insisted that the church must hold to all doctrines of Scripture.
3. They recognized that Scripture determines fellowship practices.²⁹

69. One cannot, however, assume that this 1872 happening ends the story suggested by the theme. Here was a large Lutheran body committed to biblical doctrine and practice. The Synodical Conference was large, embracing almost 200,000 members. The other three federations together mustered only about 250,000. These, however, did not share the Lutheran identity view of the Synodical Conference and soon, very soon, the Conference would have identity problems of its own. Ahead was the era described in

LECTURE II

Shake-Down and Shape-Up

70. The era runs from 1872 through the 1930's. During the first dozen years of that era the Synodical Conference lost a good chunk of its membership in a bitter doctrinal dispute. This matter receives attention in:

Section Six: The Lonely Trail

Despite its stated aim of "the consolidation of all Lutheran synods of America into a single faithful, devout American Lutheran Church," the Synodical Conference did not grow by drawing other bodies into the federation.³⁰ It added the Slovak Synod in 1908 but had lost Ohio in 1881. It added the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1920 but had lost the Norwegian Synod in 1883. In both cases there was considerable shrinkage in quantity. The growth of the Synodical Conference from almost 200,000 in 1872 to almost 1,750,000 in 1960 was by and large a growth of its original member bodies, chiefly Missouri.

71. The first Synodical Conference decade was stormy, almost as stormy as its last in the 1950's and early 1960's. The first cause for agitation was the endeavor, also stipulated in the original constitution, "to fix the limits of the synods according to territorial boundaries, provided that language does not separate them."³¹ This so-called "state synod" plan pitted the smaller synods, especially Wisconsin against the larger, especially Missouri. For a time the conflict was real and earnest but since doctrine was directly involved, the disagreement did not disturb the Conference's confessional integrity and identity.

72. In fact, when the best construction is put on this pet proposal of Missouri for "state synod" structure, it can be seen as consistent with basic Synodical Conference and Missouri concerns. A unified theological seminary, especially with Dr. Walther at the helm, would certainly serve the interest of doctrinal unity. It can be noted that this part of the plan met with the approval of the Wisconsin Synod, which actually

moved its seminary operation to the St. Louis campus during most of the 1870's.

73. Moreover, at least in Walther's view, "state synod" structure would insure that conflicts between neighboring parishes could be dealt with promptly and efficiently without erupting into bitter and enduring intersynodical cases. Such concerns were very real for Dr. Walther and for the Synodical Conference. The goal was that purity of doctrine should be accompanied by clean practice and ought not remain merely a matter of word and theory. All were in agreement that this was a worthy goal and an essential ingredient in a true Lutheran identity. That is why disagreement over aspects and timing of the "state synod" plan did not threaten the Conference's unity.

74. The imminent dispute over election and conversion was an altogether different matter. When Walther's Western District paper in 1877 limiting election causation to God's mercy and Christ's merit and rejecting intuitu fidei was challenged by a few Missouri men, it was against a background of election polemics in the periodicals of the early 1870's.³² The early strife subsided but when the issue was revived in 1877, lines were immediately drawn that reached beyond Missouri boundaries.

75. In pastoral meetings and in the 1881 synodical convention Missouri took its stand with Walther and Scripture with but a minimum of dissent.³³ Since this stand involved not regarding those as brethren who regarded Missouri's doctrine as Calvinistic, the Ohio Synod was forced to act. Espousing intuitu fidei, Ohio at its special convention in 1881 withdrew from the Synodical Conference, even though it declared that it did not deem "the difference which has thus far manifested itself in our synod in

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reference to the doctrine of election to be of a church-dividing character."³⁴

76. The Synodical Conference, however, viewed the difference in doctrine as church-dividing. When F. A. Schmidt, a leading Walther opponent, appeared as a Norwegian delegate at the 1882 Synodical Conference, he was denied a seat on the grounds that he had by his doctrinal charges in periodicals and by his hostile invasion of parishes broken the bond of fellowship. Schmidt had supporters in his own Norwegian Synod and serious conflict was looming. In that situation, the Norwegian Synod requested a release from the Synodical Conference. The hope was that it would be easier to settle the doctrinal controversy without organizational ties to the Conference and Missouri. It did not work out that way. Schmidt's supporters were soon forming an Anti-Missouri Brotherhood. The eventual outcome is part of the story of a subsequent section.

77. Despite the loss of two of the larger members the Synodical Conference was in one respect stronger in 1885 than previously. The unity of faith was welded in the heat of conflict. Wisconsin and Minnesota in a joint 1882 convention at LaCrosse confessed themselves in agreement with the Bible doctrine of Walther and were determined to join with Missouri in an endeavor to win others to the Lutheran identity the Synodical Conference espoused.

78. A concerted effort was made in the first decade of the present century to repair the divisions in the Lutheran Zion in America, especially in the matter of conversion and election. A number of Intersynodical Conferences were held between 1902 and 1906 in which spokesmen from the various synods voiced their stand. No agreements were reached. In fact, new differences regarding

Scripture interpretation and the analogy of faith and also prayer fellowship were uncovered.³⁵ Compromising the differences would have been easy, but true unity was the goal and therefore the conferences failed to produce concrete results. New attempts along similar lines would be made in the next decades, as a subsequent section will describe.

79. As the new century began, the Synodical Conference entered it with its concept of true Lutheran identity unchanged and undiminished, even though the number of proponents of that concept had unfortunately dwindled. In the meantime others were following other pathways into the new era. Among them were the founders of the United Lutheran Church in America. Attention turns to them and their path in

Section Seven: The Broad Way

80. Fifty years after the General Synod split three ways into a remnant of the original body, the General Council, and the Southern grouping, the three bodies rejoined forces in the United Lutheran Church in America. Deep revisions were quite easily repaired. The Southern rift might be expected to mend itself in time since it was actually not of doctrinal origin. The General Synod-General Council cleavage, however, was a different matter. As has been noted, it touched on fundamental issues relating to Lutheran identity. How was the deep difference that manifested itself in the 1860's transformed into union in 1917-1918? The road to reunion was "The Broad Way."

81. At the York Convention in 1864 the General Synod was galvanized by the withdrawal of the Pennsylvania delegation to take the first steps to a constitutional confessional pledge. This

involved granting to the Augustana a "correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines."³⁶ In 1895 this was improved to the point that the Augustana was declared to be throughout in perfect consistency with the Word. In 1901 a repudiation of the distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals in Augustana doctrines was resolved.

82. These convention declarations were formalized in the 1913 constitutional change that in the confessional paragraph declared the Augustana to be 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 was given an "especially commends" rating as a book of instruction.³⁷

83. While the General Synod was strengthening its confessional position, the General Council was weakening its practice. The indecision of the early years had gradually developed into a settled position, just as the original bolters had feared. By the mid 1880's even the Michigan Synod was disillusioned. When the Council met at Monroe in 1884, prominent members preached in Presbyterian pulpits in spite of the Krauth commentary on the Akron-Galesburg Rule that "'interdenominational' exchange of pulpits . . . were regarded as pre-eminently the cases which need to be guarded against."³⁸ Michigan protests went unheeded and the body finally left the General Council.³⁹

84. The General Council's half century of history bears eloquent testimony to the need of conforming practice to doctrine. Its doctrinal position was sound and strong in 1867 but its practice was weak. By 1917 it was ready for reunion with the General Synod in spite of obstacles that would have been deemed insurmountable in 1867.

85. At the last General Council convention one voice was raised in serious objection to the reunion with the General Synod.⁴⁰ It was that of the advisory delegate of the Iowa Synod, the Council friend and associate but non-member for fifty years--in itself a classic example of malpractice in the area of Lutheran practice.⁴¹ In a moving speech Dr. Reu acknowledged the outstanding contributions of the Council in English language, mission, and deaconess work. Then he sounded a warning that seemed to be hearkening to the old "Four Points." He urged that the Council not become more deeply involved with loose altar and pulpit fellowship and with loose lodge practice.⁴² In a situation where the old and unsatisfactory Akron-Galesburg Rule was no longer even in the picture, Reu's exhortation was not likely to win friends and influence people there. The reply was a reference to the constitutional confessional pledge but did not deal with the matter at hand, practice consistent with the pledge. Reu's ringing confession may have fallen on deaf ears at the final General Council session but it was heard out in Ohio and there sounded the note of potential union.

86. The new church body, the ULCA, was consequently born, not of unity of doctrine and practice, but of the spirit of earlier and wartime cooperation, of the desire for bigger mergers, of the willingness to overlook serious difference, in short, of the journey of "The Broad Way."

Section Eight: The Crossroads of Cooperation

87. All observers of the origins of the ULCA and the background of its formation agree that cooperation in joint ventures played a vital role in bringing the three bodies together. Among such ventures were production of a common liturgy,

intersynodical conferences, publication efforts, transsynodical societies. The view was that there were degrees in the unity of faith and that a greater or lesser degree was needed for certain endeavors, depending on how much "externals" and how much "internals" were involved. Such cooperation would, at the least, induce a climate favorable to union and merger.

88. World War I and the entrance of our country in 1917 automatically boosted such cooperation. Cooperative activities multiplied, as did the number of participants. The wartime National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare grew from seven to twelve participants. The Synodical Conference was not among the twelve, although it did maintain an "external cooperation."⁴³

89. Even before World War I ended, the movement to perpetuate the emergency cooperation was under way. By September 6, 1918, the National Lutheran Council was in being as the permanent agency to unite Lutherans in deed, if not in creed.

90. One of the first results of the wartime cooperation was to bring to the surface basic differences in doctrine and practice that needed attention and discussion. The differences all related to Lutheran identity. One basic question was: How much unity is needed for Lutheran fellowship? Another was: Which "external" activities can be engaged in without creating a Lutheran identity crisis?

91. Discussions were required. They led to the 1919 "Chicago Theses," basically the formulation of Pres. Stub of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.⁴⁴ These theses in turn were the seed document for the "Minneapolis Theses" that provided the platform for the formation of the American Lutheran Conference. Disapproval of the "Chicago

Theses" by the ULCA led to the Knubel-Jacobs "The Essentials of the Catholic Spirit of the Church."⁴⁵ This in its turn was the seed document for the ULCA's "Washington Declaration" of 1920. It called for maximum cooperation without "The surrender of our interpretation of the Gospel, the denial of conviction, or the suppression of our testimony"

92. Those in the gathering who are in the essayist's age bracket can recall from personal experience a renewal of the debate about "Cooperation in Externals" in the conflicts that preceded the dissolution of the Synodical Conference.⁴⁶ Perhaps they share the essayist's view that all concerned might benefit from a thorough study of "cooperation" and "externals." The snowball effects of the cooperation have tended to blur the sharper demarcation lines of earlier days. Time for this topic will obviously have to be limited in these lectures.

93. The chief point of concern is that the wrong turn at "The Crossroads of Cooperation," whether followed at phlegmatic or pell-mell pace, cannot help but shape the view of Lutheran identity. The point may not bother followers of "The Broad Way" but it must be a vital consideration for those less interested in a maximum of cooperation and more interested in a maximum of doctrinal unity. At this point there is an automatic transition to

Section Nine: The Cutoff of Compromise

94. The first major Lutheran union in this century was not the ULCA. The dubious honor belongs to Norwegian Lutherans who in June 1917 brought the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Hauge Synod, and the Norwegian Synod together into the

Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, later the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Within a year a tiny protesting minority had formed the body that is the sponsor of this school and this gathering. No extensive discourse is needed; let one point suffice.

95. The protest was directed at the patent compromise of the two contesting positions on conversion and election in the "Madison Settlement." What had thrown the fathers into conflict and division was deemed by the sons negotiable and compromiseable and footnotable.⁴⁷ Lutheran identity was pictured to resemble Janus, at least in respect to conversion and election. Those who viewed that identity in the light of the single eye had to take a dim view of the whole proceedings. Their protests were followed by nonparticipation, the nonparticipation by new organization, the new organization by Synodical Conference membership. On the whole pathway there was good traveling and good travel companionship, much better than on "The Cutoff of Compromise."

96. In those same years compromise thwarted a notable effort to enlarge the sway of the Synodical Conference position on Lutheran identity. The effort, represented by the "Intersynodical Theses" or "Chicago Theses," failed and consequently is mentioned in only a brief paragraph or an obscure footnote of most accounts.⁴⁸ For those who cherish the Synodical Conference and its position the episode is notable and unforgettable, tragic but also instructive. There is in the background of the story an area angle of interest.

97. Sixty-one years ago and thirty-three miles north of here in the town of Gaylord, Lutheran pastors in the area of various synods met at the invitation of the Synodical Conference Mixed

Conference. The idea was to observe the upcoming quadricentennial of the Reformation by discussing doctrinal differences. It was agreed that the "Madison Settlement" should be critiqued and rewritten. The effort led to a brief statement on conversion and election in which pastors from the Ohio, Missouri, and Minnesota Synods agreed. When this statement was completed at Arlington on September 15, 1915, the little group rose as one man to sing Nun danket alle Gott and to pray Vater unser. The participant who describes the happening hastens to add--as a good Synodical Conference man--that on all other occasions worship fellowship was avoided so others might not be offended.⁴⁹

98. These "Sibley County Theses" were widely distributed, then discussed at a series of well-attended Twin Cities meetings, and reworked into the "St. Paul Theses," subsequently subscribed to by 555 Lutheran pastors. What began at the grassroots became an intersynodical concern. Representatives of Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, Missouri, and Joint Wisconsin worked on doctrinal statements on all matters in dispute among Lutherans. In final form, the "Chicago-Intersynodical Theses," were presented to the concerned bodies in 1928.⁵⁰ In its 1929 River Forest convention Missouri summarily rejected the results and that ended the matter, dooming to failure a real endeavor in "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America."

99. Don't blame Missouri too much! There were unclarities and ambiguities in several wordings. Two Ohio representatives footnoted their continuing tolerance of intuitu fidei. Most of all, it was known that Ohio and Iowa men had found it possible to agree with the Synodical Conference conversion-election position and also with that of the opponents. While Chicago discussions were proceeding, Pres. Hein and other Ohio men along

with Iowa and Buffalo men, met with representatives of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Minneapolis on November 18, 1925 and reached agreement.

100. Somewhere there was compromise afoot. The Synodical Conference supported the position of its Norwegians; the large Norwegian body opposed it. Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo were finding it possible to agree with both. Don't blame Missouri for thwarting the "Chicago-Intersynodical Theses" effort at River Forest in 1929. What was so nobly begun in 1915 just thirty-three miles north of here was cut off by compromise about seventy-seven miles north of here in 1925.

101. Some years ago this lecturer used to travel regularly between New Ulm and Arlington. He never passed through the little towns of Winthrop and Gaylord without gratefully recalling men and events of an earlier era. Those were good men and good days when at the grassroots concerted efforts were made on behalf of true Lutheran identity and at the same time the consciences of others were respected. That was before "The Cutoff of Compromise" and "The Middle Path" became the popular route of the Lutheran scene in this land.

Section Ten: The Middle Path

102. In the 1920's the major development on the Lutheran scene in America was the emergence of an easily discernible and definable middle party. It occupied the path between that on the left which was the haunt of the newly born ULCA and that on the right which the Synodical Conference followed. On "The Middle Path" were the original American Lutheran Church, an Ohio-Iowa-Buffalo merger achieved in 1930 and the American Lutheran Conference, a federation of the ALC and four Scandinavian bodies. Augustana, the NLCA

or ELC, the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Free Church.

103. In the formation of the old ALC the Buffalo role was minimal; chief interest centers on Ohio-Iowa relations. Over a half century of ups and downs in these relations precede the 1930 merger. Common opposition to Missouri in the conversion-election conflicts was a bond. There were, however, rubs, such as the Klindworth case.⁵¹ When Iowa's relations with the General Council ended, Ohio resolved in 1918 "that such fraternal relations now exist between us and the Iowa Synod as necessarily imply the mutual recognition of pulpit and altar fellowship."⁵² Merger efforts began automatically and immediately. It took twelve years, however, before they were consummated. The sticking point was an inspiration controversy that erupted despite the fellowship status.

104. Ohio favored the statement of the Chicago-Intersynodical Theses 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."⁵³ A segment of Iowa, headed by Dr. Reu, objected because it felt that such a statement did not deal adequately with difficulties in contemporary Bible versions. Reduced to the essence, the conflict revolved around the one word inerrant, actually the location of the word in the key sentence. Ohio insisted: The Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired and inerrant Word of God and accepts these Books as the only source, norm and guide of faith and life. Iowa would agree if inerrant were moved from the position in which it modified Word of God to one in which it modified source, norm and guide of faith.

105. When no single solution to the dilemma could be found, an out was found in the technique of footnoting one version with the other in an

Appendix to the satisfaction of both sides. Iowa's wording was included in the text of the constitution; Ohio's in the Appendix provided the "official interpretation."⁵⁴ In view of subsequent developments, one wishes that there had been a clear-cut victory for Bible inerrancy when the original ALC was founded.⁵⁵

106. The founding was barely completed when the new body federated with four Scandinavian bodies in the American Lutheran Conference. A recent history of U. S. Lutheranism flatly declares: "That the American Lutheran Conference possessed the character of a defensive alliance particularly over against the United Lutheran Church can hardly be denied."⁵⁶ The same sympathetic writer speaks of "idealists who wanted to see the conference as a step along the road to ultimate Lutheran union."

107. In both the original American Lutheran Church and in the American Lutheran Conference there can be discerned a preoccupation with its middle position between ULCA Lutheran identity and Synodical Conference Lutheran identity. This could show itself as a "defensive" posture when the ULCA theology seemed to threaten. On other occasions it could be a concern to provide a bridge between those to the left and those to the right by one means or another.

108. By the 1940's the future of Lutheranism in this land, on the basis of the prevailing situation, be presumed to be one in which there would be some convergence from the left and from the right toward the middle. Lutheran identity would in the process be reshaped to conform to the conception of the American Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference. At least that was the hope of those bodies. This is not, however,

the way things turned out. The actual outcome is portrayed in

LECTURE III

Losers and Finders

109. This begins with the most tragic episode in the history of Lutheranism in this land, the startling change in the Missouri Synod that began to be discernible in 1938 and that continued apace for at least three decades. This is the subject of

Section Eleven: Finders but not Keepers

110. Only seven years intervene between the writing of the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod and the death of Dr. F. Pieper in 1931 and the union resolutions of Missouri's 1938 convention.⁵⁷ The positions taken, however, are miles apart on the roadway of "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America." In 1938 Missouri's 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."⁵⁸ The reason for the "future" qualification is spelled out in sections dealing with the necessity of seeking full agreement in disputed doctrines, of harmonizing practice with doctrine, and of obtaining the approval of sister synods.

111. There was consternation in Missouri's sister synods, especially when the ALC convention in the same year declared the Brief Statement "viewed in the light of" its Declaration not in

contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses and asserted that it was "firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines."⁵⁹ Protests against the union resolutions were voiced in many areas of the Synodical Conference.⁶⁰ Demands for a single union document were heeded. This single document brought out by Missouri and ALC representatives in 1944, the "Doctrinal Affirmation," pleased neither the ALC nor Missouri nor sister synods. It is not even included in Wolf's Documents.⁶¹ It amounted to no more than a proving ground and practice round for preparation of the Common Confession.⁶²

112. This document was not acceptable to Missouri's sister synods as a settlement of doctrinal difference separating the bodies involved in the drafting. The formation of the second ALC rendered it irrelevant. In 1956 Missouri had to admit that the Common Confession could not serve as a "functioning union document" but still acclaimed it as a "significant historic statement."⁶³ This not altogether satisfactory solution of the Common Confession problem at least aided in keeping the Synodical Conference functioning for a few more years.

113. In 1955 the Evangelical Lutheran Synod suspended fellowship with Missouri but continued to participate in Synodical Conference affairs.⁶⁴ In the same year Wisconsin all but did the same. It "held in abeyance" for a year a final vote on a break resolution.⁶⁵ In 1956 Wisconsin continued this policy.

114. It should be mentioned that other differences had arisen between the "new" Missouri and other Synodical Conference synods. The list is lengthy and includes such items as scouting, military chaplaincy, cooperation in externals, joint

prayer. It is, however, not possible to spell out in detail the differences and disputes. They were all forms of unionism, i.e., joint church work or worship in the absence of unity of doctrine, forbidden in Romans 16, 17, and other passages.

115. The "joint prayer" issue merits attention because of the role it played in the break-up of the Synodical Conference. It was a cause for the Norwegian suspension of fellowship in 1955, a harbinger of the Missouri "Theology of Fellowship" that induced the Wisconsin suspension of fellowship in 1961, and a shift in the Missouri view of Lutheran identity. Back in 1944 at Saginaw, Missouri undertook the ill-conceived effort to draw a distinction between "joint prayer" and "prayer fellowship."⁶⁶ The Norwegians aptly asserted that "this distinction cannot be supported on the basis of Scripture and opens the door to further unionistic practices."⁶⁷ Wisconsin's "unit concept of fellowship" also clashed with the Missouri position.⁶⁸

116. The parting of the ways between Missouri and Wisconsin came in 1961. Soon the Synodical Conference was no more. Its end came because Missouri had turned from the Synodical Conference position that true Lutheran identity involved faithfulness to Scripture and Confessions in doctrine and practice. Missouri injected the unionistic element and the "joint prayer" error into the picture of Lutheran identity. The result was a caricature of the true variety, demonstrating distortion in both the doctrine and the practice profile. Missouri failed to keep what it once had.

117. Almost immediately a serious problem regarding Scripture began to surface in Missouri. Certain theological leaders advocated historical critical interpretations. The ensuing strife led

to the revolt at the St. Louis Concordia and the founding of the rival Seminex. A new church body is in the process of formation to serve those who resist and reject the efforts to restore Missouri to its former stand on Scripture. The confused fellowship situation, in which Missouri involved itself by Lutheran Council membership and ALC fellowship, complicates the problem and places additional obstacles between Missouri and true Lutheran identity.

118. Not all the results are in yet. Some have been favorable. Much lost ground at the St. Louis Concordia has been regained, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Historical-critical Bible interpretation has been evicted. In the field the worst misleaders have been checked or have vacated their posts. On campus after campus there has been some reassertion of doctrinal discipline. These and similar developments are all to the good.

119. No one knows yet, however, how much enduring harm has been done to the public ministry of Missouri by years of mistreating at key worker-training schools. The most depressing factor of all is the total lack of any sign that the official fellowship position of Missouri, which more than anything else disrupted the Synodical Conference, has undergone any change for the better. In fact, such items as LCUSA membership, "Mission Affirmations," and ALC fellowship indicate the opposite.⁶⁹ Missouri in a redivivus Synodical Conference is a consummation devoutly to be wished, but that is an article of hope and charity, rather than of fact and reality.

Section Twelve: Loss of the Middle

120. A release of the Religious News Service

dated 9-27-76 spells out in unmistakable terms a development that can be termed "The Loss of the Middle." The release reports an address of the head of the American Lutheran Church, President David Preus, to the recent Inter-Lutheran Forum. Among other things, President Preus is quoted as saying, "One of the less theological matters Lutherans have to do with is the inerrancy of Scriptures" and "Inerrancy is a slippery word."⁷⁰

121. The October 11, 1976 Christian News carries a letter in which President D. Preus spells out his objections to inerrancy more fully. He writes:

The idea that declaring the Scriptures "inerrant" helps matters among Christians simply does not wash. All it does is to 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.⁷¹

122. As has been noted, the original ALC was born only after an extended battle over the proper placement of the term inerrancy in the constitution. In prolonged discussions with the ULCA, the ALC sought to get a commitment to the term inerrancy.⁷² The best it could achieve was the "errorless unbreakable whole" of the "Pittsburgh Agreement," but even that was farther than the ULCA really wanted to go. Only all-out effort by the ALC achieved that much. The very constitution of the present ALC speaks of the "inerrant Word of God"

as "the only infallible authority."⁷³ Unfortunately, official commentary offered in 1966 explains that the inerrancy "does not apply to the text but to the truths revealed for our faith, doctrine and life."⁷⁴

123. Now at this late date the head of the ALC wants to rid himself of concerns about the term inerrancy. This is what the ULCA sought to do formally in its 1938 "Baltimore Declaration" with its distinction between Word and Scripture but had already been doing informally for several decades.⁷⁵ The ultracentric position has not moved toward the center in this matter. The movement has been in the other direction.

124. The consistent position of the ULCA, continued by the LCA, that a pledge of 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 modern aberration and that practice must conform to the theological position.⁷⁶ Bodies now merged into the ALC have a long tradition of insisting that there be more evidence of agreement than assent to Scripture and Confessions before fellowship can be declared. The tradition seems to have lost its hold.

125. The major charge against "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" raised by President D. Preus revolves around the position that a pledge to the Lutheran Confessions is sufficient to establish Lutheran credentials. He writes:

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 the differences that exist within the LCMS are not destructive of a confessional unity among Lutherans.⁷⁷

126. This is the language and the thrust of the ULCA's 1934 "Savannah Declaration" that apart from the Confessions "no other standards or tests of Lutheranism" are to be set up.⁷⁸ The ALC, which has indicated that it desires fellowship with all Lutherans who accept the historic Lutheran Confessions as norma normata, has seemingly ceased to emphasize additional concerns for doctrine and practice once manifested on "The Middle Path."

127. True Lutherans, of course, uphold the Lutheran Confessions and eagerly make their quia pledge to them. That is the very reason they will not accept as valid a formal subscription that is vitiated by false doctrine and false practice. In such instances they do not acknowledge the charge that they are thereby "narrowing the Confessions" or establishing tests that are not truly Lutheran. They regret that the ULCA position has gained more adherents by "The Loss of the Middle."

128. The matter just treated leads automatically into

Section Thirteen: Losers in Lockstep

The drift from the middle and the lure of the area beyond has created a situation in which two major Lutheran bodies, once clearly demarcated, are in close agreement on all major issues that have to do with the essentials of denominational identity. The basic positions of the LCA and ALC are for all practical purposes indistinguishable.

To apply the saying of a tired politician in another context, "There's not a dime's worth of difference between them."

129. This point is made by the parties concerned.

The LCA and the ALC are in fellowship and enjoy the relationship. Just recently in the Twin Cities the unification of the ALC's Luther Seminary and the LCA's Northwestern could be celebrated. President D. Preus has said, "Unity in faith and doctrine in the LCA is overwhelmingly accepted by ALC people."⁸⁰

130. The point is demonstrated by the reaction of both bodies to the Missouri disturbances at this time. Missouri dissenters are encouraged by both ALC and LCA. Almost identical statements are made by the presidents and the seminaries and the publications and the conventions of the two bodies:

131. The point can be made by referring to wrong doctrinal positions. The matter of Scripture and Confessions has been dealt with previously. It is obvious that the LCA and the ALC have the same stand on distaff ordination. This is but one of numerous other examples.

132. The point is evidenced by similar positions regarding larger associations. Both bodies are members of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. Some of "the dime's worth of difference" is to be found in this area. The LCA, but not the ALC, is a member of the National Council of Churches.

133. The point is corroborated by an emphasis shared by both bodies on social concerns. The specific answer to a single issue may not always be the same, although even there one can discern much agreement. The readiness and eagerness of both the

ALC and the LCA, however, to speak out on any and all social concerns is obvious to anyone who has read reports of their major conventions.

134. Five paragraphs have begun with the words "This point" That is enough to weary both hearer-reader and writer-reader, although there is abundant material for more "This point . . ." paragraphs. Two summary statements should be included, however, before closing the subject.

135. The shared positions of the ALC and LCA are also shared by Missouri dissidents in almost all respects. The willingness of both the ALC and the LCA to endorse their endeavors already forces this conclusion. It is reinforced by almost every declaration on those issues traceable to the leaders and gatherings and periodicals and publications of these Missouri dissidents. Documentation could easily be supplied but would not actually serve any real purpose. The situation is so inflexible that one can hardly determine what leader and gathering and periodical and publication, that seems official today, will retain that status tomorrow.

136. It should also be crystal clear to all that the unacceptable views on true Lutheran identity have pretty well crystalized and hardened. The implications should not be missed. In better days in the past, one could hope that a middle position might well serve to ameliorate an ultra-centrist position. Those days seem gone forever. The unsatisfactory middle position has become even more unsatisfactory by its drift in the wrong direction. Off in that area the lax, the General Synod, the ULCA, the LCA position is dominant. The domination, it should be realized, is exercised over a majority and perhaps more. The question is:

ho is to challenge this majority, but erroneous, view of Lutheran identity? The answer is supplied by

Section Fourteen: Finders and Keepers

137. The matter could be summed up by quoting what the old Quaker said to his wife as an expression of his dissatisfaction with the prevailing state of affairs. The Quaker said, "Everybody in the world is queer but thee and me and sometimes I have my doubts about thee." Summing up what is wrong on the quest for true Lutheran identity in our land at this time, your guest lecturer turns to his hosts and says, "Everybody in the land is wrong but thee and me." The rest of the quotation is not applicable.

138. The ELS in this matter, like Caesar's wife but not the Quaker's wife, is above suspicion. The ELS has paid its dues. Way back in 1917 it stood against the first of the Lutheran mergers on the American scene in this century that played their part in blurring and distorting true Lutheran identity. The pathway wasn't easy then and it hasn't been easy since. There are a few who appreciate and approve of the ecclesiastical odyssey of those whom some disparagingly refer to as the "little Norwegian Synod." There are a few who are certain that good fellowship, the best spiritual fellowship, comes in small packages. There are a few who deem it honor and privilege to join ELS as "Finders and Keepers" in "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America."

139. Whether we like it or not, the heritage of the Synodical Conference has been bequeathed to two small synods that virtually had to destroy the Conference by their withdrawals in order to keep that heritage alive. The Synodical Conference's

definition and realization of true Lutheran identity is ours. By way of review and summary, 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.

140. Finders are to be keepers also. To elaborate fully on the "how" of that keeping would require at least three more lectures. A brief summary must suffice.

141. True Lutheran identity will only be kept in America's third century if the deviant variety is recognized and resisted. The brand of Lutheranism that features laxity in doctrine and practice has become dominant among two of every three Lutherans in this land. Future events may force the ratio higher. Much ground has been lost in the present century. No more can be surrendered without ultimate risk.

142. Refuge and strength will be found in the saving Word. Reductionism, historical-critical interpretation, and all other faulty approaches to the Scriptures need to be summarily rejected. The authoritative, inspired, inerrant Bible is the prized possession of the true Lutheran. By it he keeps his identity.

143. The true Lutheran identifies himself also by a complete commitment to the Lutheran Confessions which rises above the level of a formal pledge and becomes a vital force in the life of faith for the believer and for his church. Lip service to the Confessions comes easy, but it is quite meaningless to affirm the Confessions to be a faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the

Word when the Word is so interpreted that doubt is cast on what the Word teaches. The confessionalism by which true Lutheran identity is kept is made of sterner stuff.

144. Finally, that identity is kept by adhering to the fellowship principles and practices that Scripture and Confessions advocate. These can be briefly summed up in the principle that unity of faith is the prerequisite for the practice of fellowship. These days the call is frequently heard that the outnumbered conservative Lutherans in the various church bodies should realign themselves, pool their efforts and forget their doctrinal differences. That is a Fundamentalist approach but not one that is Lutheran. It points to a pathway that leads directly and immediately away from true Lutheran identity. It cannot lead to more finders on the quest.

Section Fifteen: Finders in the Future

145. Can one expect that there will be more finders in the days ahead? There will be some--not many perhaps, but some. They will emerge in the various groupings encouraged by a good confession in word and deed. A most likely place to look for them is the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

146. The struggle there, bitter and depressing as it is, is also serving to direct and deepen concern for Scripture and Confessions and for authentic Lutheran identity and stance. If ecclesiastical politics do not get in the way, if these concerns are based on and guided by the Word, good can be expected. Improvement has already been seen in such areas as the training of the public ministry and the interpretation of Scripture. As the former sister synod in these matters turns back to the old Synodical Conference way, so may

it return also to the Conference's fellowship position. A reactor sounded that note at the 1973 Bethany Reformation Lectures.⁸¹ It bears repeating. A good position on Scripture and a good fellowship position go together. You can't have the one without the other. You need them both for true Lutheran identity.

147. What service can the few finders offer that there might be more "Finders in the Future"? The service will not consist in playing church politics or in creating entangling and unholy alliances or in employing high-pressure proselytizing tactics. The service will surely include the good confession that provides the guiding word of admonition and encouragement as occasion affords and also supplies the elaboration in useful publication. For the most part, however, the service involves the primary responsibility of maintaining in the years ahead, in spite of all odds, true Lutheran identity. The rest can and will then follow.

148. Shakespeare's garrulous old man summed up the identity matter in the maxim, "This above all: to thine own self by true." The savior's inspired old man said it much better in Rev. 3,11: "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

END NOTES for

THE QUEST FOR TRUE LUTHERAN IDENTITY IN AMERICA

1. Johann P. Beyer, Stenographisch aufgezeichnetes Colloquium . . (Chicago, 1868), pp 1-26.
Hereafter cited as Beyer, Colloquium.
2. The district president in question was George Schieferdecker, first head of Missouri's Western District. He joined Iowa in 1859 and rejoined Missouri in 1875-1876.
3. Beyer, Colloquium, p 15.
4. Beyer, Colloquium, pp 90-91.
5. The references are to J. Frank Dobie's Coronado's Children (New York, 1931) and A. Grove Day's Coronado's Quest (Berkley, 1940) and to the Albert Schweitzer book The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York, 1948), originally titled Von Reimarus zu Wrede.
6. The rationalistic Helmstaedtischer Katechismus der Christlicher Religionsunterricht nach Anleitung der Heiligen Schrift was commonly referred to as the North Carolina Catechism.
7. The reference is to Turner's 1893 essay delivered to the American Historical Society, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."
8. Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinary, for Evangelical Lutheran District Synods; Constructed in Accordance with the Principles of the General Synod. (Philadelphia, 1855).

9. A case in point is the recent The Lutherans in North America edited by E. Clifford Nelson and published by Fortress Press in 1975. Its approach is clearly described and denounced by C. George Fry in an excellent review article, "The Crisis in Lutheran Historiography" in the June 1976 Springfielder.
10. The Albany Protocol: Wilhelm Christoph Berkenmeyer's Chronicle of Lutheran Affairs in New York Colony, 1731-1750, edited by John P. Dern, Ann Arbor, 1971, discusses this gathering on pp 82-90.
11. Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States - Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748 to 1821 (Philadelphia, 1898), p 21.
12. The full report from which the quotation is taken is found on pp 7-8 of the work cited in Note 11.
13. Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia, 1966), p 25. Hereafter cited as Wolf, Documents.
14. Vergilius Ferm, The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology (New York, 1927), pp 18-19. Hereafter cited as Ferm, Crisis.
15. Wolf, Documents, p 82.
16. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Fifth General Synod of the Ev. Luth. Church, In the United States, Convened at Hagerstown, Maryland, October 1829, pp 38-39. Hereafter cited as General Synod Proceedings.

17. Page 5 of the document cited in Note 8 contains this listing.
18. Ferm, Crisis, p 64.
19. Minutes of the 106 Annual Session of the German Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and the Adjacent States. . .Reading. . . Pennsylvania. . .1852 (Sumnytown, Pennsylvania, 1853), p 18. Hereafter cited as Pennsylvania Proceedings.
20. Wisconsin Proceedings, 1856, final paragraph. The early Wisconsin Proceedings, from 1849-1857, are available in a photostatic reproduction of a printing of the original manuscripts in Volume XXXIX of Northwestern College's Black and Red and are published in one volume with the Proceedings of 1858-1869.
21. Wolf, Documents, p 123.
22. Wolf, Documents, p 132.
23. General Council Proceedings, 1866, pp 20-26 contains the constitution in which is embodied Krauth's "Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity."
24. The "Four Points" of Ohio and Iowa were not identical. There was agreement on three issues: lodgery, altar fellowship, and pulpit fellowship. Iowa would obviously not join Ohio in its other concern, millennialism. Its other point dealt with synod power.
25. Proceedings, 1869, pp 32-34.

26. The Illinois and Minnesota withdrawals came in 1871, Michigan's was not completed until the late 1880's.
27. Sihler's published explanation actually mentions the changes at the theological seminary as the main cause of the secession.
28. Der Lutheraner applies the "New Lutheran" term in XVI (Dec. 27, 1859), p 78.
29. Armin W. Schuetze, "Lessons from the Past," Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, LXIX (January 1972), pp 3-12.
30. Wolf, Documents, p 196.
31. Wolf, Documents, p 196.
32. The first articles appeared in a periodical without specific synodical ties put out by Brobst and titled Theologische Monatshefte. Incidentally, a footnote in a Fritschel article on interest charging touched off the original dispute.
33. The key document is Missouri's 1881 "Thirteen Theses." Wolf, Documents, supplies a translation on pp 199-203.
34. C. V. Sheatsley's History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States (Columbus, Ohio, 1919) offers a detailed description on pp 172-184.
35. Excellent coverage of the 1903-1904 meetings is supplied in a series of articles by Nicum of the General Council. Der Lutherische Herold is the periodical in which the articles appear.

36. Wolf, Documents, p 246.
37. Wolf, Documents, p 267.
38. Wolf, Documents, p 173.
39. There is an interesting account of this episode in Henry E. Horn, ed., Memoirs of Henry Eyster Jacob (Published by ed., 1974), II 276-277.
40. The Augustana Synod withdrew from the General Council to escape the merger consequences. The Council, however, saw in the action no "differences in faith and practice."
cf Wolf, Documents, p 281.
41. Iowa never joined the General Council but consistently sent delegates to conventions and enjoyed the privilege of voice, if not vote.
42. Obviously Reu would not press the other "Point," millennialism.
43. Wolf, Documents, p 294.
44. Wolf, Documents, pp 298-301.
45. This document is reproduced in Proceedings of the National Lutheran Council, 1920, pp 2-17.
46. In the series of polemical tracts issued by Wisconsin's Conference of Presidents in the 1950's, number 8 dealt with "Cooperation in Externals." It aptly describes the difficulties and dangers involved.
47. The reference is, of course, to the Austin developments.

48. In Synodical Conference circles the statements were usually referred to as "Chicago Theses" because that is where the drafting meetings were customarily held. Other church bodies, who have in their heritage the 1919 "Chicago Theses," avoid confusion by the "Intersynodical Theses" designation.
49. This writer is P. Schlemmer whose "Die jetzigen Einigungsbestrebungen in der lutherischen Kirche" appears in Proceedings of the Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Synod, 1920, on pp 18-62.
50. Theologische Quartalschrift (now Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly) XXVI (1929), 250-273 and XXV (1928) 266-288 reproduce the final drafts. Wolf, Documents, excerpts them on pp 361-369.
51. F. Meuser, The Formation of the American Lutheran Church (Columbus, Ohio, 1958), on pp 84-85 supplies details. An Iowa view can be found in G. Fritschel, Geschichte der Lutherischen Kirche in America (Guetersloh, 1896) pp 251-254.
52. Proceedings, 1918, p 150.
53. Note 50 supplies the location.
54. Wolf, Documents, pp 336 and 338.
55. Dr. Reu's stand can be summed up as the personal belief that the Bible contained no errors but also as an insistence that inerrancy of everything in the Bible not be made a confessional issue in view of the lack of a clear Scripture passage affirming total inerrancy.

56. E. Clifford Nelson, Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970 (Minneapolis, 1972), p 80. On the previous page is found the next quotation.
57. The full title is Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis, 1932). The resolutions on ALC union are found in Missouri Proceedings, 1938, pp 231-233.
58. The previous note supplies the location.
59. ALC Proceedings, 1938, pp 7-11.
60. For a typical reaction see Proceedings, 1939, pp 59-61.
61. The deliberate omission is explained in a footnote in Wolf, Documents, p 381.
62. Wolf, Documents present important sections of the Common Confession on pp 408-428.
63. Missouri Proceedings, 1956, pp 491-492.
64. ELS Proceedings, 1955, pp 43-46. The ELS designation is of course an anachronism.
65. Wisconsin Proceedings, 1955, pp 85-88.
66. Missouri Proceedings, 1944, p 245.
67. Note 64 provides the location.
68. Synodical Conference Proceedings, 1960 contain Wisconsin's "Statement on Fellowship," as well as those of the three other synods, following p 160.

69. The 1965 "Mission Affirmations" are evaluated and found wanting in the Wisconsin Reports and Memorials, 1971, pp 122-123. A summary sentence reads: "It is with deep regret that we note this growing unclarity in our former sister synod regarding the Savior's simple injunction to preach the Gospel to every creature."
70. News Now reports the item on pp 6-7 of its II, 18 summary for September 16-30, 1976.
71. Christian News, October 11, 1976, p 5.
72. The Lutherans in America (cf Note 56) recounts the events on pp 467-471.
73. Wolf, Documents, p 379.
74. These are words of Dr. F. A. Schiotz, former ALC president in the essay "The Church's Confessional Stand Relative to the Scriptures."
75. Wolf, Documents, pp 357-359.
76. The 1934 "Savannah Declaration," which Wolf's Documents presents on pp 355-357, spells out this position. For a rejoinder one could refer to Wisconsin Proceedings, 1935, pp 107-108.
77. The April 20, 1976 Lutheran Standard carries Pres. D. Preus's open letter to the LCMS on pp 12-13. The July 1976 Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly reproduces the letter and adds comments on pp 220-221.
78. Wolf, Documents, p 356.

79. Lutheran Standard, November 4, 1975, p 16.
80. News Now II, 4, p 2.
81. The reference is to the statement, printed in the theological journal of the ELS, that was presented by Prof. Lawrenz in 1973 and is found in Lutheran Synod Quarterly XIV (Special-Fall 1972), 53-58.

REACTORS' REMARKS

Reactor: Dr. Eugene F. Klug

There is something very good and Luther-like in assembling here for observance of the Reformation. In his "Sermon on Keeping Children in School," Luther observed with his usual canny good insight and down-to-earth sort of wit: "In a good building we must have not only hewn facings, but also backing stones." (WML 4, 153) As participants in this Reformation lecture series you, the audience, are playing an important role as "backing stones," without which the "hewn facings," or speakers, could not very well carry on.

"The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America" is a topic well chosen in this year of our country's bicentennial. Our nation's urgent need as a people hangs, or depends, on such quest. Why? "The brutal fact is that in this Christian country not one person in a hundred has the faintest notion what the Church teaches about God or man or society or the person of Jesus Christ." That observation by Dorothy Sayers may, according to some, evince uncalled-for pessimism and cynicism. But it is probably not far from the truth, sad though it be. All the more reason for Lutherans to be concerned about the treasure which they carry about in earthen vessels; the excellency of the power is of God, not of us; and it is our task ever to be witnessing of Him "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness: and who now "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor 4,6f.)

The essay by Prof. Fredrich has penetrated the historical curtain which shrouds Lutheran history in America in a masterful sort of way. With deft strokes of the brush he has painted the picture for us of the Lutheran story in America. It was not to be an exhaustive treatment. There would not have been enough time for that. Nonetheless he succeeded in touching the significant events, men, and documents that shaped things for our Lutheran church today. Not only did it survive in this new land but it was able also to preserve and further the pure Word of the Lord in the lives of those with whom it had to do. In short, there is much to commend the essay.

Naturally not everything could be given its due in so short a space. Thus, for example, the unequalled influence of Walther could only be lightly ventilated. Yet it is to this diminutive figure that conservative Lutheran theology in America traces its source for the most part. In order really to understand what was taking place in Confessional Lutheran theology in the early days of our respective synods' history, it is necessary to give more than passing notice to the man and his influence. The story of the Lutheraner is a thing in itself. So also the four free conferences (1856-1859), for which Walther was the spearhead and guiding light. Not only were they of great moment in spawning a conservative, Confessional movement that led to the founding of the General Council in reaction to the free-wheeling General Synod, but they also were a definite stroke for doctrinal purity and consistent Lutheran practice in our synods. They served to put starch into the backbone of Lutherans everywhere who were asking questions like, Who was a true Lutheran? What did it mean to be a Lutheran according to the mind and intent of the Lutheran Confessions? What kind of Forschung, or quest, was necessary for achieving a God-pleasing fellowship?

In the aftermath of and through the free conferences Walther expressed a principle, which became a working rule for conservative Lutherans thereafter, namely, that organization, fellowship, union, merger, etc., ought in every case follow, not precede, the quest and discovery of genuine doctrinal unity and consistent churchly practice. One might rightly speculate what might have happened, if men like Walther, Sihler, Wyneken, and their counterparts from the General Council, Krauth, Krotel, Schaefer, et al., would have been able to pursue the quest for Lutheran unity a little longer on the basis of the free conferences. Perhaps the eventual drift of the General Council back towards the doctrinally spineless General Synod (eventual ULC, then LCA) could have been prevented. But Krauth was impatient and frankly stated that "in a free Conference we may discuss questions, but we decide nothing definitely, and bind nothing... Let those of us who are prepared, unite in an organization and invite our brethren of the Missouri and Norwegian Synods to come to us for a free conference on the points not settled." (Ad, Spaeth, Charles Porterfield Krauth, New York, 1898, Vol. 2, 175.)

But perhaps even more important is the question of resources for true Lutheran identity and integrity. If our forefathers had determined that the major issue they faced, not only for themselves, not only for the Lutheran church, but also for the Christian Gospel itself, was the answer to the question, What does it take, if we really want to remain Lutheran? then the question posed by the essayist is in large measure the fulcrum of our quest, namely, "What books were being read in the Midwest and in the East in studies of Lutheran manses?" What Solomon says about a man's spiritual condition and life, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he," applies as well

to the ingredients which make up a man's theology.

There is no mystery to what our forefathers were devouring avidly in their studies. In the first place they had taken to heart the admonition and precept of the Reformers, that to lose the languages (Hebrew and Greek) was to lose the Word of God itself. Assiduously, therefore, they studied the text of Holy Writ. Side by side came their devotion to Luther's writings, along with his heirs, Chemnitz, Gerhard, Calov, Quenstedt, et al. But the concentration was on Luther. Walther was a first-rate student and scholar of Luther's works. Writing to his valued friend, Dr. Wilhelm Sihler, January 2, 1885, Walther bared his soul as regards the difficult previous five years and what it was that helped him (and his co-workers) find their bearing point in this new land: "By the disclosure of the Stephanite deception we were driven into the writings of Luther. These, besides God's Word, all of us have studied, almost exclusively, and we believe that under the Spirit's guidance we have now become properly enlightened through this matchless bequest." (Walther Speaks to the Church, C. S. Meyer, ed., Concordia, St. Louis, 1973, 16.) What they were after was "a thorough reformation in doctrine and practice" (Ibid.), but up till then they were floundering. Just think, for a moment, of the terrible dilemma facing them on the doctrine of the church, once the initial collapse had taken place around their first leader, Stephan! In preparing for the Altenburg Debate with Marbach Walther "boned up" (so did Marbach) by reading Luther. Treatises like Luther's advice to the Bohemian brethren "Concerning the Ministry" (1523), and the brilliant "On the Councils and the Church" (1539), also the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (1520), to mention but a few, gave Walther the guidance he needed to formulate his own remarkable classic theses on the church and

the ministry. They have stood for all time as a basic primer in Lutheran theology among us.

Theirs was no dilettantish sort of pecking at Luther's works. That would hardly explain the depth and breadth of their theological competence. Like Chemnitz in the generation after Luther, a man largely self-taught in theology by Biblical study and assiduous combing of Luther's writings, Walther & Co. were involved in the same quest. They learned how to distinguish properly between Law and Gospel, justification and sanctification, theologia crucis and theologia gloriae, from first-hand reading of works of Luther, like the Galatian Commentary, the Heidelberg Theses, the Disputation on Justification, etc. From the Bondage of the Will they learned how to express themselves correctly on the matter of the human will; but that was not all, for here was the most brilliant piece written on the doctrine of man, on the doctrine of justification sola gratia, on the distinction between Deus absconditus and Deus revelatus, on the authority and clarity of the inspired Scriptural Word, etc. From Luther's profound - and probably least known (except to the framers of the Formula of Concord who used it more than any other treatise to guide them) - "Great Confession," or Confession on the Lord's Supper (1528), they learned to distinguish accurately and Scripturally the Lutheran doctrine on the Lord's Supper from that of the Crypto-Calvinists; not to mention the absolutely brilliant Christology of Luther in this perhaps most dialectically sharp of his theological works. There was little they missed, including the voluminous and Christ-centered commentaries of Luther, especially on the Old Testament, as well as the thousands of sermons, letters, table talk, etc. The spirit of Luther, a man who literally lived out of the content of the Bible, was a spirit they eagerly inhaled.

We have not even mentioned the great Reformation pieces which swirled around the career of the Reformer, as he pleaded his cause for the Gospel against the apostate and sectarian Church of Rome. Our fathers did not limit themselves to the Catechisms, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles. But like the confessors at the time of the Formula of Concord, a document which brought the quest for true Lutheran identity to a successful conclusion in 1577, they plowed deeply and thoroughly through all of Luther's writings. If it is impossible to explain the Formula of Concord without men like Chemnitz and Adreae, great students of the Scriptures and of Luther, it is equally impossible for you and me to understand today the nature of true Lutheran identity without reference to our founding fathers and their deliberate "driven-ness" into the writings of Luther. Need it be stated, then, that if we truly intend to be Lutheran in this day, a day which has witnessed the disclosure and the deception of liberalism among us, particularly higher critical methodology in Biblical theology, then our refrain must necessarily sound like this: "We were driven into the writings of Luther." When we have exhausted that field, then these lectures may well have reached their terminus!

Walther's great contribution on the question of true Lutheran identity probably reached a zenith in his deservedly famous essay, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church and True Visible Church of God on Earth," presented to the synod in 1866 and published that same year. This was the crucial time when the General Council was just beginning to feel its way somewhat uncertainly. It was also just a few half dozen years before the founding of the Synodical Conference. These famous theses of Walther articulated for all time what belongs to the true nature of the Lutheran church:

1) that she recognize that Christ's church is "the total of all that truly believe in Christ" (Thesis I); 2) that its presence is spotted or known through the notae purae, "the pure preaching of God's Word and the unadulterated administration of the holy Sacraments" (Thesis II); 3) that where the fundamentals of God's Word are present, not only believers but also congregations, or churches, may be said to exist, though these become sectarian and schismatic when they obstinately persist in false teaching (Theses III-V); 4) that it is "schismatic" and "separatistic" to destroy the unity of the church over "non-fundamental errors, or personalities, or ceremonies, or wicked life" (Thesis VI); 5) that the Lutheran church can lay claim to being the true visible church of God on earth, not because it itself is the one, holy Christian church and alone possess the saving Gospel, but because it has the "pure marks" in unadulterated faithfulness" (Theses XI & XII); 6) that the Lutheran church recognizes "the written Word of the apostles and prophets as the only and perfect source, rule, norm, and judge of all teaching," and that it has inherent clearness, is self-interpreting, not subject to human interpretation, evidencing its own intended sense through the literal, contextual setting, in keeping with the analogy of faith, or clear verses pertaining thereto (Theses XIII-XVI); 7) that the Lutheran church "accepts the whole written Word of God as God's Word," and on the basis of that Word distinguishes sharply between Law and Gospel, between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines, as well as open questions, or matters that are free, that is, adiaphora (Theses XVII & XVIII); 8) that the Lutheran church holds "the teaching contained in its Symbols (to be) the pure truth of God because it agrees with the written Word of God in all points" (Thesis XXI); 9) that the

Lutheran church not only confesses this position but makes it a matter of its publica doctrina in preaching and practice (Thesis XXIII); and 10) that the Lutheran church, therefore, seeks and "holds fellowship in confession and charity with all at one with it in faith," in accord with "the essential marks of the church." (Theses XXIV & XXV).

It is on the basis of these criteria that Theo. Engelder, in his splendid opening chapter to the textbook, Popular Symbolics, pleads a most convincing case for the Lutheran church loyal to the Scriptures and the Confessions. She is "the Bible Church;" she is "the Gospel Church;" it is she that possesses genuine apostolicity, true catholicity, actual ecumenicity. Her concern for pure doctrine is neither stilted, arbitrary, nor unloving, but motivated by loyalty to her Lord and His Word. She is a confessing church; but she is also a confessional church; to be known not merely by mouthing of proper phrases but by putting her money where her mouth is, that is, de facto upholding of her profession of faith. She stands by the position that in all her doctrines the Scriptures are the norm (formal principle), teaching doctrines that are all bound together by Scripture's own golden thread, as Luther called the article on justification (material principle). She bends neither towards unionism, the implacable foe of the truth and compromiser with error, nor towards separatism, which is sinful, divisive, and fed by unbrotherly pride. "The time for breaking off fraternal relations with those also who err in non-fundamental doctrines," warned Walther, "arrives then only when they stubbornly refuse to accept the convincing testimony of Scripture." (Lehre u. Wehre 14, 109; cf. AC VII; Apol. III, 112; VII & VIII, 49; FC Epit., X,7)

On what has been stated so far I would submit that there has been no criticism of the essay

(Prof. Fredrich's), nor was any intended; nor probably have there been any objections to what I have said. Yet I don't believe that you invited me here merely for the purpose of agreeing with a good historical review of the difficulties that have split the Synodical Conference and driven the ELS, the WELS, and the LCMS asunder. I would like to address some of these matters now in particular; some on which I concur, others on which I demur.

I can find little to criticize in the author's tracing of the beginnings and the substance of Missouri's troubles in the last 30 or 40 years. I, too, believe that in 1938, at St. Louis, the convention set the Missouri Synod on a course which was destined to spring loose innumerable boulders on the path for the years ahead. Missouri began to work with formulas and documents of agreement and fellowship in a way that often suggested a drunken captain on the poop deck, with the mizzen sail out full, and the ship meanwhile cutting a zigzag course at full tilt. The analogy may not be entirely apt, or correct. On the one hand, there probably were those who knew exactly where they wanted to go and deliberately took Missouri for a ride; on the other hand, most who were along on this dizzying ride, were still Lutherans of the Walther stripe, convinced that they must seek the peace and true unity of the faith with all who held and confessed the marks of the church truly, at the same time that they avoided the shoals of doctrinal impurity and churchly practice which were out of tune with the Word of God. Those of us who have lived through this period are well aware of the struggle involved in getting the helm back out of the hands of those who intended to remake Missouri in the likeness not of Walther, but of Schmucker. It has not been easy, and the task is not yet done, nor

the sailing smooth. But when, if ever, has the sailing been smooth for Christ's church? When has contending for the faith ever been easy?

Watching Missouri's gyrations from the shore, the ELS suspended fellowship with Missouri in 1955. Wisconsin waited a few years, but then also withdrew its hand in 1961. The Synodical Conference was kaput. Far be it from me to say that these decisions were not the result of great inner struggle and outward tensions. Undoubtedly there was more than one cause celebre in the minds of the dissenting bodies, on the grounds of which they felt compelled to sever relations and fellowship. We who have contended for Missouri's historic stance are grateful that most of the overseas sister churches have still stood by us.

But certain basic questions remain, and remain unanswered, to my mind. The essayist has quite properly raised these questions (par. 90): How much unity is needed for Lutheran fellowship? and which "external" activities can be engaged in without creating a Lutheran identity crisis? The fact that Missouri held on to the "Common Confession" as a "significant historic statement," but with no bearing on fellowship, is cited as an initial ground for the severing of fellowship. Other "differences" are then cited, such as "scouting, military chaplaincy, cooperation in externals, joint prayer." (par. 114) "Soon the Synodical Conference was no more. Its end came because Missouri had turned from the Synodical Conference position that true Lutheran identity involves faithfulness to Scripture and Confessions in doctrine and practice. Missouri injected the unionistic element and the 'joint prayer' error into the picture of Lutheran identity.... Almost immediately a serious problem regarding Scripture began to surface in Missouri," specifically in the

"historical critical interpretations." (par. 116, 117) Also mentioned is the fellowship pact of Missouri with the ALC and membership in LCUSA. "The most depressing factor of all," according to the essayist, "is the total lack of any sign that the fellowship position of Missouri, which more than anything else disrupted the Synodical Conference, has undergone any change for the better." (par. 119)

Far be it from me to minimize these issues - and whatever others may lie on back burners somewhere - in the minds of Missouri's erstwhile brethren in fellowship. That there have been unionistic deviations undoubtedly is true. Admittedly, there are certain inherent dangers for a Confessional church involving itself with the Scouting movement. Those of us who have worked with them know, however, that it is possible to conduct Scouting in one's own congregation without unionistic compromise. That there are risks involved in the military chaplaincy arrangement, as it is constituted by our nation in cooperation with the churches of our land, I also fully agree. I have dealt with them firsthand and I have written about them at length. Moreover, I concur with the opinion that, if it were possible, an arrangement which left the churches and the military completely separate would be the most desirable; but to this point I do not see how it would be feasible. Meanwhile, therefore, there must be some critical interacting; critical in the sense of avoiding all compromise; interacting, in order that our military men and women might be served by their church. Risks that are taken need not mean or lead to compromise. The church has always lived with risks, and must continue to do so, if it is not to be completely immobile and unfaithful to the mandate which sends it into all the world. (Matt. 28, 19)

The matter of cooperation in externals is virtually self-vindicating. There is no great problem here - and there has not been for conscientious Lutherans all through history - as long as no compromise of the faith is involved. That such spirit of compromise has been present at times and on specific occasions, I would be the last to deny. In a church body as widely spread as Missouri there are bound to be violations and unionistic practices. But this has never been Missouri's deliberate intent or design. The lodges have remained a besetting problem in this area, as Lutheran members, wittingly or unwittingly, have been drawn into syncretistic fellowship and wrongful prayer fellowship. This problem, however, is not unique to Missouri alone among the former members of the Synodical Conference.

I quite agree that the distinction between "prayer fellowship" and "joint prayer" is hardly viable. It has continued to receive serious study in Missouri. Meanwhile, however, there undoubtedly will arise occasions when Missouri participants, for example, in dialogues designed to discover whether sufficient basis for fellowship exists or might be achieved, will face the question of "prayer fellowship." It is a moot point, I believe, whether each such instance is overtly to be classified as unionistic. That would only follow, it seems to me, if and when the doctrinal issues themselves which are at the vortex of the divisions are ignored or denied. A case in point is the second Lutheran-Reformed dialogue series. Through Missouri's insistence the Leuenberg Concord was shown to be totally inadequate; and again through Missouri's insistence the discussions centered on historic, basic differences, specifically the Sacraments; and the end result was that the evidence was brought that a sufficient basis for fellowship did not exist

between the Lutherans and the Reformed, indeed not between Missouri and the other Lutheran participants (LCA & ALC) either for that matter. Perhaps a legitimate question may arise in some minds, whether such dialogues should at all take place. If there is a skirting of the basic issues, I quite agree. To large measure that is what in my judgment is a serious weakness in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogues; they have never gotten to the issues that really historically divided the churches at the time of the Reformation; and they probably never will. Much the same probably can be said of what has been going on in the Episcopalian-Lutheran dialogues. My point is that compromise and unionistic sin need not eo ipso be implicit in these happenings.

The question is, does all such participation automatically involve unionism? If so, then by all means it must be avoided. But then one must also recognize that the opportunity of the kind of witness our Lord expects of us is also voided. I believe Walther was always ready to take certain risks, where testimony to the truth was involved; though he was just as ready to withdraw the hand of fellowship where violations of pure doctrine - and practice - were stubbornly persisted in. But with his sound understanding of the doctrine of the church, the last thing he wanted to be known as was a separatist; and he realized, as he stated to Sihler, that "a certain fear of organizations such as this is prevalent here." He was referring to his own St. Louis situation. In spite of the opposition, he held out for the position that "an external union of the orthodox Lutheran clerics and their congregations" was necessary if "the unity of the Spirit and purity in doctrine (were to) be preserved." (Op. cit., 17) He always deplored unionism; but much as he deplored it, on the matter of churchly practice he always understood

that a certain amount of variance would exist; and he was content to live with that as long as it left unhindered the edification of the church and emanated from Confessional loyalty and faithfulness. (Op. cit., 18) Forever and a day, he was committed to the principle that love for and the attaining of unity must arise "from love of the truth," as he wrote to Heinrich Schwan (later Missouri's president), June 29, 1867. Never did he stand for the way that supposedly led from peace and then to truth, as little as Luther ever did. That was a fiction of the Devil. "Unity in doctrine," is our Lutheran church's greatest treasure, he wrote to Friedrich Brunn, in 1866, as the latter struggled for the same principle against tremendous odds in Germany. (Op. cit., 23) But with his total commitment to truth, purity in doctrine, and consistency of practice, came also Walther's existential way of living with charity and patience over against brethren in whom he saw a godly intent to be concerned for the quest of the truth and true Lutheran identity. Even in a church body which was once orthodox and now struggles with untruth and heresy, does one let them go? he asked pointedly. "One abandons a sinking ship, not a leaky one," he confided to Brunn, in 1870, basing his answer on what he called the spirit of the Smalcald Articles. (Op. cit., 24)

It is not my purpose to say whether you have more leaks than we have. We would not progress very far in our quest for Lutheran identity and God-pleasing unity, if we did that. The Lord knows there are instances of fault on all sides. Higher criticism is not unique to Missouri, as the essayist would seem to imply. There were those in high places in Wisconsin who dabbled with "several Isaiahs" long before it became an issue in Missouri. The same holds true on a question like Jonah's historicity - fact or fable?

It seems to me we need each other at this critical time in history, when the assault on God's Word and God's truth has been so overt and so violent. I quite agree that there must be renewed attestation of the Holy Scripture's inspiration, authority, clarity, sufficiency, inerrancy. I have written at length on the subject in comparing Luther and Chemnitz (cj. FROM LUTHER TO CHEMNITZ ON SCRIPTURE AND THE WORD, Eerdmans, 1971). Too, I agree that we must pledge with our hearts, not only with mouths, our intent to be Lutheran according to the Confessions. Moreover, that we ought to clarify the whole matter of proper fellowship practices! I believe Missouri's document on "ecumenism" is a beginning towards correcting some of the fuzziness in our "Theology of Fellowship" document. Missouri's stand for the truth, against tremendous odds (ecclesiastical and secular), at New Orleans (1973) and at Anaheim (1975), is unparalleled in recent history.

But where do we go from here? How can a conference like this serve our churches in their quest? There are the three points which the essayist has singled out for hope in the future. I cannot agree that it would be "Fundamentalist" for Lutherans in America to seek realignment, pool their efforts, and forget their differences. That would only be true, if indeed they sought fellowship on a basis other than doctrinal unity, or unity of faith. In fact, I believe there is a greater danger of being Fundamentalist if we do not add to these three criteria the one which after all stands in the center for Lutherans, the article on justification, Article IV of the Augstana. The true glory of this article, as the Augsburg Confession states, is that all who are Christians believe it. If the goal of true identity and unity is to be reached, that we all "embrace and adhere to a single, true religion

and live together in unity and in one fellowship and church, even as we are all enlisted under one Christ," then everything depends, as Luther stated in the Smalcald Articles, on whether this article on justification "be given up or compromised." Here still is the "hinge" on which everything turns, as Luther so eloquently showed to the world in his masterful defense of God's truth against Erasmus and against every other humanistic reduction of the theologia crucis into theologia gloriae.

When Luther at the end of his life, in the last words ever written by his hand, pleaded, "Bend low in reverence before its footprints! We are beggars! That is true!" he articulated for all time the high reverence that Christian believers must have for Holy Scripture, to which he was referring. But even Fundamentalists might say that. What neither Rome, nor the sectarians for that matter, have ever gotten straight is the distinction between theologia crucis and theologia gloriae. It is this which concerns Luther so deeply in his debate with Erasmus and all sophists in religion, ancient or modern, for the precious Gospel is at stake. He would not surrender a single point of doctrine, for fear of what might happen to God's truth concerning sinners' justification sola gratia/fide. Hence his dictum, with which we all want to live, work, and preach: Unum praedica, sapientiam crucis. "Take away assertions," especially on that article, "and you take away Christianity." (Bondage of the Will, Packer-Johnston trans., Revell, 1957, 67.)

Reactor: Prof. Glenn Reichwald

Prof. Fredrich had a most difficult assignment and carried it out very well. As a Fort Wayne professor recently said, a good historian must be a scientist to ferret out facts, an artist to paint them into a picture, a theologian to pass moral judgments, and a judge to praise or condemn actions. To this, this reactor must add an additional office -- that of prophet. While history does not repeat itself, certainly comparisons and applications must be made to today. At another conference of historians which this reactor attended recently, a reactor in one of the panels stated that too many scholarly historians are peasants. They plow their own fields and never look beyond the fences. He said that others are like astronauts; they go so far out into space that the lines of definition are blurred and disappear. This reactor feels that Prof. Fredrich, on the whole, avoided both of these very real dangers in handling his very broad subject.

This paper was rather controversial when it looked at the past and also the present. But that is the true Lutheran way. In a denomination that asks for antithesis in its doctrinal statements, value judgments in history should not irritate. Rather they are points which should make us think. In looking at this essay there obviously are points of disagreement on terminology, on timing, and on the tack to be taken in certain situations, but the basic points are undebatable. Certainly the purpose of this essay was not to tear down fences, but to remind us why they are there.

The essays showed that the problems within the Lutheran Church are more than sociological,

merely the results of external circumstances, and that it takes more than a label to make a person a 100% Lutheran.

But two questions come to mind from reading this essay. The first question is "why." Why did so many let their heritage slip from them or fail to rise to the level they might have? What can we learn from the past for our guidance today? But a study shows also that the spirits of Melancthon, Calixtus, Spencer and Francke, and others are still around us.

The second question that must be answered relates to the present situation among the former members of the Synodical Conference. To make it very concrete, how would the doctrinal committees of the ELS and the WELS and the individual members of those synods answer the LCMS if that synod were to approach them with the question, "What must the LCMS do qualitatively and quantitatively to regain fellowship with the ELS and the WELS?" This reactor felt that the essayist, Prof. Fredrich, was very gloomy about that prospect. (See par. 119) Or does he see actions within the LCMS simply paralleling events which occurred within the General Council?

One final thought! The story of the Lutheran Church in our land is often the story of "what might have been." But this should not make us gloomy. Rather, it should make us very thankful for the heritage which we are privileged to have today. But let us remember that there is also a tomorrow.