

# St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

*"A Statement of our Reasons for  
Separating Ourselves from  
the Wisconsin Synod and  
the Synodical Conference."*

Austin, Minnesota

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The preservation of the Word of God in its truth and purity has required courage, sacrifice and struggle ever since God gave the Gospel promise to man after the Fall into sin. The greatest days in the history of the Church are written in the struggle of men for the truth against the unbelief and indifference of men. The strong Church is the Church that holds God's Word and the truth it brings more precious than anything else in the world. When that truth is not held dear, when compromise replaces conviction, the Church grows weak and its blessed work impaired.

It is true that at times in history the number of faithful became pitifully few. But the stature of those faithful souls is the greater because of the faithful confession of their faith. Take, for example, the days of Noah. Against the sin and indifference of that generation that "preacher of righteousness" continued to proclaim in all faithfulness the promise of God in the Savior. In the days of the prophet Elijah there was only one voice publicly heard that testified against the shameful idolatry of those days. Listen to that prophet as he spoke during a moment of human weakness, "I have been very jealous (concerned for the right) for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant (the promise of a Savior), thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." (1 Kings 19, 10). But God comforted Elijah with the assurance that his faithfulness was not in vain; for He said, "Yet have I left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." (1 Kings 19, 18). Let these few examples from the Old Testament serve us as representative of many that could be cited.

Let us now direct our attention to the Lord Jesus. In the beginning of His public ministry He received wide acclaim and many followed Him. Yet, when He showed that He was unwilling either to yield to the selfish interests of the people or to compromise with the false religious teachings of that day, His popularity began to wane rapidly. Not only was His steadfastness opposed, but it led to the shouts of the masses before Pilate's porch, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him." The Lord was unwilling to compromise a single truth that He had come to bring. And thankful we should be; for if He had, there would now be no hope of salvation for us.

Our Lord has also plainly told us that "the disciple is not above His master." (Matthew 10, 24). In sending out His disciples for work in His Church, Jesus held out to them no pleasant prospect. He said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles..... And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that shall endure to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 10, 16-18; 21-22). The prospect of physical suffering for the name, that is, the Word of the Lord Jesus certainly sheds light on another Word of Jesus, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up His cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall

lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?". (Matthew 16, 24-26). Jesus does hold out the prospect for better days, but not in this world. That would come in the world beyond; for He continues the above quotation, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works." (Matthew 16, 27).

But physical persecutions were not to be the only reaction to a faithful witness to the Word. Faithfulness to the Word of God would also require a constant watchfulness and warfare against false doctrine in the New Testament Church. Jesus warns, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matthew 7, 15). The greatness of this danger He clearly announced, when He warned, "For false Christ's and false prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things." (Mark 13, 22-23). As the end of the world draws nearer, the problem of false doctrine was to grow. God says through Paul, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly (clearly and definitely) that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron." (1 Timothy 4, 1-2). Furthermore, in the last days it will be more difficult to withstand the false prophets and the flood of false doctrines, because of the willingness, yes, because of the eagerness of men to listen to it. God says, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4, 3-4). Men will want preachers who tell them what they want to hear, and not what they need to hear. Thus they will be turned from the truth--and believe fables.

That which has been foretold of God in prophecy is coming to pass in our generation. In the questions that we will study together in the light of God's Word each of us will be called upon to make a decision. That decision does not, at present, involve physical persecution. But it will require personal courage and sacrifice to take our place on the side of the truth against the rising tide of false doctrine. The decision that we make will affect our individual spiritual life, the future of the pure Word of God among us and our children, and the course of the truth in our land and in the world.

But let us not imagine that God is expecting the unusual of us in our generation. God says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange (unusual) thing happened unto you." (1 Peter 4, 12). Every age has its own tests and trials.

Let us not become down-hearted and discouraged at the prospect that faces us. Rather let us consider ourselves blessed that God has given us the opportunity to do this small thing for Him, Who has done all things for us. The blessing of God is promised to the faithful in their difficulties, trials and tribulations. And the study of the Word of God that the present situation forces upon us can only serve to deepen and strengthen our faith.

Let no one be misled into believing that the issue before us is so deep and difficult that only the learned theologians can grasp it. The Word of God is clear.

If only we become as little children, open our hearts to the precious Word of God and let God speak to us, the Holy Spirit will give us understanding. The knowledge of the truth and the understanding of it are not the product of superior intellect, but are precious gifts of God.

Let us make our own the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesians, namely, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Jesus Christ): the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of His mighty power." (Ephesians 1, 17-19).

Because he was the oracle (voice) of God, Paul could say, "Consider what I say; and the Lord (will) give thee understanding." (2 Timothy 2, 7). Here then, is a promise from God Himself. With this assurance let us prayerfully listen to His Word and we will be led to the right and God-pleasing decision in the issue before us.

We shall study the following points in this and following meetings:

- I. The doctrine of the Church and fellowship;
- II. The application of the above doctrine to the departure from the truth by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod;
- III. Whether the Wisconsin Synod has remained faithful to the truth in the application of the above doctrine.
- IV. The decision that lies before us and what it involves.

The following should be noted before we begin the studies outlined above:

1) In determining the Scriptural correctness of the church bodies involved, our decision must be made on the basis of the official positions and official actions of the bodies. In judging Synods, or, for that matter, congregations, there is no other possible or fair way to judge than on the basis of the confession of their official positions and actions.

2) While every member of the congregation must be informed (for which reason these open meetings are being held) God has so ordained that the men of the congregation through the Voter's Assembly will render the decision that will determine the position of this local congregation in this issue.

# I. T H E   D O C T R I N E   O F   T H E   C H U R C H A N D   F E L L O W S H I P .

In the Third Article of the Apostles Creed we confess, "I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints." Here we have a definition of the Church.

The Holy Christian Church has as its members saints. Who are the saints? The saints are those that have been sanctified. To sanctify means to make holy. The saints are therefore those who have been made holy.

The Bible knows of only one way for a man to be sanctified, that is, to be cleansed and made holy. Since "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3, 23), only those are saints who have the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins comes to the sinner through faith in the redeeming work of Christ on the cross. "In Whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1, 7). "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified (pronounced innocent by God) by faith." (Romans 3, 28). The saints, the members of the Holy Christian Church, are therefore all those who despair of all righteousness and hope of forgiveness in themselves and trust alone in the merit and righteousness of Christ for forgiveness and salvation. This is also, of course, a Biblical definition of a believer or a Christian.

None but those who are saints according to the definition of God's Word are members of the Holy Christian Church. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." (John 14, 6). The unbeliever is not a member of the Holy Christian Church, although he may be a member of an outward organization, called a church; for, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8, 9). Therefore the Lord's Church is called the Holy Christian Church. The Word of God teaches the perfect holiness of this Church: "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for It; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that It should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5, 25-27).

Since faith in Christ alone makes men members of the Holy Christian Church, and since faith in the heart is invisible to another man, we call this Church the invisible Church. We can only judge by the confession and life of a man whether he is to be considered a member of the Holy Christian Church or not. However, the true state and condition of a man's heart is known only to God. "The Lord seeth not as a man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Samuel 16, 7). Jesus clearly states that, while we must accept a man's confession as genuine, unless it is denied by his life, his heart may reveal to God that his words and life are those of a hypocrite. "Not everyone that says unto Me (Jesus), Lord, Lord, shall enter in to the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 7, 21).

The Holy Christian Church is also invisible in the sense that it is no visible, earthly organization. The Word of Jesus is clear, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo, here! or Lo, there! For, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17, 20-21). For this reason in our confirmation vow we promise "to remain steadfast in the confession of this church," and do not pledge ourselves to any local congregation or group of congregations banded together into a larger body, such as Synods. Visible, earthly organizations, as history proves conclusively, can and do turn aside from the pure faith they once held. The promise to remain true to the teachings of the Word of God is the one important thing.

The outward organization and form of Christians joined together on the basis of a common faith has varied from time to time. This is perfectly right and proper, since the form of outward organization is not essential to the existence of the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. In fact, when circumstances make

it impossible for any outward form, the Holy Christian Church will still be present where the Word of God is, even though it be only in the heart of a lone believer, or in a family, transmitting the Word from the memory treasure of the heart.

There is only one Holy Christian Church throughout the world. Though there are many members in this Church, there is a communion of saints, that is, a gathering together of many into one, joined together by their common faith in Jesus, their Redeemer. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." (Romans 12, 5).

This Church, the Holy Christian Church, is "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets (the Word of God), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone." (Ephesians 2, 20). The means of grace, the Word of God, and the Sacraments, while not a part of the Church, are the means, and the only ones, by which God makes and keeps men members of His Church. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10, 17). Except God convert men through His Word by the power of the Holy Ghost, there can be no members of the Holy Christian Church; for, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12, 3).

By the same token, wherever the Word of God is preached and proclaimed, there members of the Holy Christian Church will be found. God says, "So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55, 11).

Our whole effort in the issue before us has to do with the Holy Christian Church. It involves our genuine concern for the most important matter in this world--the assurance of being and remaining members of the Holy Christian Church.

Also in the matter before us we are not judging souls. Whenever separation must take place from those who have become errorists, we are indeed giving grave warning of the possible serious consequences that the turning away from the truth involves. However, we are not declaring them to be outside the Holy Christian Church. That God alone, the Reader of the thoughts and intents of the hearts of men, can know. We can only hope and pray that their disobedience to the Word will not lead to the loss of faith and therefore loss of membership in the Holy Christian Church. But God demands for our own sakes, as well as theirs, that we do by word and action judge their doctrine, if it is contrary to His Word. God's Word says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4, 1).

Separating ourselves from those who hold false doctrines and refuse to be instructed is not the same as when a Christian congregation excommunicates the impenitent sinner according the Matthew 18. In excommunication the Christian congregation with sorrow declares that a man has shown himself to be a heathen man and a publican. As an unbeliever the excommunicated is declared to be outside the Holy Christian Church, and the door of heaven is locked against him until he repents. Though the embracing of false doctrine may lead to the loss of faith and thus the loss of the soul, by separating ourselves from fellowship with those who persistently hold to false doctrine we are not saying that the loss of salvation has taken place, but through us God is warning while there yet is time that this terrible thing may take place.

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND FELLOWSHIP

(CONTINUED)

In our last lesson we learned that the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, is the one Body of Christ, made up of all believers in Christ Jesus and of such alone, a Body known to God, but invisible to the eyes of man, to be found wherever the Word of God is preached and proclaimed.

However, the Bible does not only speak of one Church but also of churches. In closing his letter to the Corinthians Paul writes, "The churches of Asia salute you." (1 Corinthians 16, 19). In the Book of Revelation we read, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Revelation 2, 7). It is clear that when the Bible refers to churches, it is not speaking of the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; for the Church is One. (cf. Romans 12, 5, page 5).

Also, the Bible speaks of a church or churches located in a certain place, as, for example, the church in Jerusalem, the churches in Asia. Again, the Bible cannot be speaking of the Holy Christian Church, since Jesus says that the Church is not visible to the eye of man and cannot be pointed to in any particular place. (cf. Luke 17, 20, page 4).

Also in the Bible we learn that in these visible organizations, called churches, there will be found not only true believers, but also unbelieving hypocrites, who look, speak and act in the eyes of men like true believers, but who, as God alone knows, do not believe what their lips and lives confess. Christ speaks of the presence of unbelieving hypocrites in visible assemblies or local congregations in several of His parables. In the parable of the tares among the wheat Christ speaks of local Christian congregations. (Matthew 13, 24-30). God sows the good Seed of the Word in local places and it brings forth its blessed fruit--the wheat, true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, members of the Holy Christian Church. But the devil, God's enemy, is also active. Among the wheat, the true believers, he plants tares (weeds which resemble the growing wheat), the unbelieving hypocrites. Since there is nothing in the doctrine or life of the hypocrite that will make it possible for men to unmask their unbelieving hearts, they are to remain undisturbed in the visible church until the day of judgement. Then, of course, they will be revealed for what they are and judged accordingly. (Matthew 13, 20). In the same chapter Jesus restates this truth in the parable of the net. (Matthew 13, 47-48). Therefore, it is clear that in the visible church or local congregation, in addition to the true believers there are also unbelieving hypocrites, though they do not reveal this fact to men with their words or actions. The visible church is not the Holy Christian Church; for there is not a single unbelieving soul that is a member of the Body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church. (cf. Romans 8, 9, page 4).

Therefore, while the Bible does speak of visible Christian assemblies or churches, these local congregations are not identical with the Holy Christian Church, even though, since they have the Word of God, which makes and keeps men members of the Holy Christian Church, there will, of course, be members of the Holy Christian Church in the visible assembly or local congregation.

But we must be clear on what a visible local congregation is. Visible local congregations or churches are nothing else than a group of people gathered around the Word of God in one particular place. In speaking of the power of such local assemblies to exercise the power of the Keys (to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, to forgive and to retain, that is not to forgive sins), Jesus defines the local assembly or visible church or congregation, when He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in (in connection with) My Name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18, 20). The Name of God is correctly defined in our Catechism from Scriptures in this way, "God's name is everything that He has made known of Himself and His Word" (Revised Wisconsin Synod Catechism, p. 41). It is the Word, therefore, which draws men together in visible assemblies or local congregations or churches.

The Lord has clearly expressed Himself about His will regarding the question of how such visible congregations or churches are to handle His Word in their midst. In His great commission, the directive to His New Testament Church as it was about to begin the work that was to continue until He came in judgment, Jesus clearly expressed Himself on the place of the Word in that work. He says, "Go ye therefore and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe (guard) all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matthew 28, 18-20). Jesus also says that the test of the claim of discipleship is a test of faithfulness to His Word: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word then are ye My disciples indeed." (John 8, 31). That it is God's will that nothing but His Word, the Truth, shall stand among men in their visible assemblies is clear: "For I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophesy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this Book." (Revelation 22, 18-19). Because of His loving concern for the salvation and safety of our souls, our Savior says, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life." (Revelation 2, 10). The will of the Lord that men on earth cling faithfully to the Word is finally emphasized by the Lord, when He says, "The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12, 48). The favorable judgment of the Lord on the Last Day will depend upon our faithfulness to His Word while we were on earth.

Therefore in the visible church no man is permitted by God to speak and promote his own words and opinions. "If any man speak, let him speak as an oracle of God." (1 Peter 4, 11). To teach otherwise than God's Word teaches is strictly forbidden by God. "As I (Paul) besought thee (Timothy) to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge (command) some that they teach no other doctrine." (1 Timothy 1, 3). The doctrine of God as revealed in the Word is as pure and perfect as God Himself and is to be so kept among men. "The law (the doctrine of God) is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19, 7). This is so important that God says through Paul, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1, 8).

God wants His children to be gathered together around His Word in visible Christian congregations, but He wants them to be united by His Word. Only then can they be joined together in a fellowship of perfect unity that is a reflection of the perfect unity of Triune God and of His Word.



Through Paul God sets forth the only acceptable basis for a pleasing fellowship or union with others in the visible assembly or local church, when He says, "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name (the revealed Word) of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1, 9-10). Where men do the will of God and speak the same thing on the basis of the Word of God, they will be perfectly joined together, and there will be no divisions among them. Paul prayed for the same wonderful unity in the local congregation in Rome, saying, "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15, 5-6). When men are likeminded according to Christ Jesus, that is, on the basis of His Word, then, and then only can they with one mind and one mouth glorify their saving God.

God is unmistakably clear in His Word that it is His will that men be joined together in visible assemblies or local churches on the basis of a perfect unity in connection with His Word. Where this perfect inner unity of mind is found, all will confess the same glorious Truth and nothing else. This unity in the Word is to reflect to all the world the perfect unity that is God; for Jesus says, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one". The unity between Jesus and the Father was a perfect inner unity, which expressed itself in His complete submission to the heavenly Father's will for all the world to see. Even so our unity is an inner unity, born of the Holy Spirit, which expresses itself before the world by our complete dependence upon and adherence to the full Word of God in the visible assembly or local congregation. According to the will of God our fellowship with others in the visible church must be a fellowship based upon a common faith and a public confession that rests securely on the entire Word of God. Without that unity in the Word there no fellowship as God defines it in the Word is possible. Only that visible church can claim to be doing the will of God on earth that is based upon all the teachings of the entire Word of God.

If all men would heed the will of God and bow humbly to His Word, there would not be a single division among the visible Christian congregations of the world. But men are sinful and the clear expression of the rebellious nature of man is most evident in his refusal to bow to the will of God and to accept and uphold the Word of God. Here is the answer to the question often asked, "Why are there so many different churches, not only in the world, but in our own community?" In flagrant disregard for the will of God, they have corrupted or ignored doctrines of the Word, and thus have separated themselves from the fellowship of the truth. Every division in the visible church has come about, not because a certain few insist on holding to the truth of the Word and thus doing the will of their God, but rather because sinful men were unwilling to listen to God and abide in His Word. The truth of God always upholds, promotes and unites in true fellowship; it never makes divisions.

Departure from the doctrines of the Word and the divisions that such departures cause are clearly written in the history of visible assemblies or visible churches. The Bible record covers about 60 years from the day of Pentecost to the writing of the last Book, the Book of Revelation. Yet it records many instances of men and visible Christian churches who turned from the truth of the Word and embraced error. A few examples will be cited. The Apostle Paul had

founded the congregation in Galatia on the solid foundation of the Word of God. Yet, after the Apostle left, false teachers entered that congregation and the congregation began to listen to these wolves in sheep's clothing. With great sorrow Paul had to write this congregation, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel." (Galatians 1, 6). Again in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Book of Revelation God is the author of seven letters to seven local congregations in Asia Minor. All had been founded upon the doctrines of the Word by the Apostles. Yet, when the Book of Revelation was written four of the seven were condemned by God as such as had embraced error. Of the remaining three, only two could be called genuinely faithful to the Word. The third congregation, while still having the pure doctrine of the Word, had lost their first love for the Gospel and thus were ready to be led astray. The history of visible churches in the world is a history of fine beginnings on the basis of the Word of God and in time a turning away from that glorious Truth.

Our God has not only told us that in the visible church the basis for joining together in local assemblies or congregations is to be complete unity on the basis of the Word of God, but He has also in His Word laid down the conditions of our relationship toward other visible Christian assemblies, which have forsaken the full truth of the Word and refuse to accept correction on the basis of the Word.

In the first place, God demands that we test all teachers and teachings by the Word and expose and reject every false teacher and teaching. "Brethren, believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4, 1). This is not the responsibility of pastors alone, though as under-shepherds of the flock of God they are to lead in detecting and exposing error. It is the responsibility of every believer. When Paul and Silas came to Berea and preached to that visible Christian assembly, we read, "They were more noble than they in Thessalonica in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so." (Acts 17, 11). All teachings are to be tested by all Christians.

God furthermore demands in His Word that we be on our guard constantly against all false doctrine. Jesus says, "Beware of false prophets." (Matthew 7, 15). To beware means to be on your guard against something that is dangerous for you. False prophets are wolves, bent on the destruction of the sheep, the believers. Though they come in sheep's clothing, that is, as true prophets of God, who cover their false teachings by saying, "Thus saith the Lord", it is not an impossible task to recognize them for what they are; for Jesus says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7, 16). The fruits of a prophet are his words, his doctrine, his teachings. Recognizing a false prophet by his false teachings, we are warned, "Beware".

But when we do expose false teachers and teachings in visible Christian assemblies or churches, God has in His Word forbidden us to have fellowship with such false teachers and those who have been misled by them and their teachings. God says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16, 17-18).

When we find anyone who stubbornly and steadfastly holds to any teaching contrary to the doctrine we have learned, they are to be avoided. This avoiding has always meant to sound Lutherans that we are to have no spiritual fellowship with such as hold to false doctrine in the visible Christian Church. The words commonly used to describe the extent of this fellowship are pulpit, altar and prayer fellowship. In these areas we are to avoid all such as hold to doctrine contrary to the Word that we have learned. Nor are we to join in any spiritual undertaking that will give anyone within or without the church the impression that there is no difference between the doctrines of false visible churches and ours.

God also gives us the reasons why He has laid down the demand that there be no fellowship between false visible Christian assemblies and Christians and those that hold to the truth. In the first place, "they are such as serve not our Lord Jesus Christ." They are not true slaves of the Lord Jesus; they are not completely obedient to His will; for if they were true slaves of the Lord, they would "observe all things, whatsoever He has commanded" and not hold to teachings "contrary to the doctrine we have learned." Rather they are slaves of their own belly, their own thoughts and emotions. They follow their own reason and emotion and not the Lord Jesus, or else they would hold to the true and reject the false.

This is the basic reason for separation from those who hold to false teachings: obedience to the Word of God. This is reason enough for the simple child of God.

But God has in His grace given us more. He says that false doctrines cause divisions. Division in the visible Christian assembly are caused by such who hold to false doctrine. Separation is demanded that all such may realize what they are doing to the truth and to the visible Christian assemblies. If they are to learn at all, they must be warned by the fact that they who hold the truth separate themselves from them in obedience to the will of the Lord.

Finally, God says that all who hold to false doctrine cause offences. The word offence means death trap, a deadly trap that kills. False doctrine is a lie and therefore of the devil, and therefore it does the devil's evil work. It is designed to mislead and destroy the souls of men. Concerning those who hold to and promote false doctrine God says, "By good words and fair speeches (they) deceive the hearts of the simple." If we value the most precious thing in this world, the salvation of our souls, we will avoid all false Christian assemblies or churches, lest by fellowship with them we become infected with the falsehood they hold, and be caught in a death trap that will destroy our souls in hell. Though the words sound good and the speeches are fair, if there be false doctrine, it can only deceive, mislead and harm. Therefore, God says, "Avoid them."

The issue that is before us centers on this doctrine and its application. To ignore this doctrine and join in any religious fellowship with those who hold to error is called religious unionism. It is without a doubt the great sin of our age and a potent weapon in the hands of the great enemy of the truth, the devil, the father of lies.

May ours be the spirit and strength of the true doctrine upon which this congregation is founded and to which each of us have pledged ourselves before the altar of the Lord. That spirit and strength is expressed in the Formula of Concord in the concluding statement on the "Requirements of Confessional Fellowship among Lutherans of the Augsburg Confession", "We have no intention of yielding aught of

the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ." (Concordia Triglotta, p. 1095).

This expresses the clear voice and will of our God. To this voice alone we must give heed.

In our next study hour on February 8th, we shall consider the application of the above doctrine to the departure from the Truth by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

## II.

### THE APPLICATION OF THE ABOVE DOCTRINE TO THE DEPARTURE FROM THE TRUTH BY THE LUTHERAN CHURCH -- MISSOURI SYNOD

In our last study meeting we learned that those who confess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and thus claim membership in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, will according to God's will gather themselves together about the Word in earthly visible assemblies or congregations, called churches. We saw further that in such visible assemblies He wants nothing but the doctrines of His Word to be taught and proclaimed, and that every false teaching is to be rejected. When men reject any doctrine of the Word and hold to error, they destroy the unity that God insists upon in the visible assembly. Such "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine we have learned" and are to be "avoided". (Romans 16, 17). There is to be no spiritual fellowship with such as hold to error in defiance of the Word. By our separation from them the testimony of God is given them concerning their departure from the Truth and the grave danger this involves.

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, once the bulwark of genuine Lutheranism, has departed from the truth of the Word that it once held. That the Missouri Synod is now teaching contrary to the doctrine we have learned cannot be questioned, if we examine the official records of the Wisconsin Synod. Concerning the departure from the truth and the Missouri Synod's continuance in these departures, despite admonition, until the present day, the official action of our Synod speaks clearly.

The beginning of the present tragic situation can be traced back to the union resolutions of the Missouri Synod convention of 1938. In its negotiations with the American Lutheran Church the Missouri Synod adopted the principle that certain differences of doctrine need not be resolved before churches could have altar, pulpit and prayer fellowship. The exact words were "need not be divisive of church fellowship".

This represented a major change in the historic position of the Missouri Synod. Throughout its glorious history until 1938 the Missouri Synod had steadfastly maintained that agreement on all doctrines of Scripture was necessary before joint worship and work could be entered in upon and church fellowship exercised and enjoyed.

Other Lutheran bodies outside of the Synodical Conference have always maintained that it is too much to insist upon agreement in all doctrines of Scripture before church fellowship can be established. They maintain that there must be agreement in the fundamental or chief doctrines of Scripture, but that "it is neither necessary nor possible to agree on all doctrines of Scripture". On the basis of this opinion of men they reason that the "avoid" of Romans 16 does not apply to those who differ on doctrines which do not directly affect our justifying faith in Christ.

It certainly is true that there are some doctrines in Scripture that one may not even know or about which one in ignorance may even hold a wrong opinion and still be saved. If, however, it is shown that a doctrine of Scripture is clearly taught in the Word, it will be accepted by the believer. If in spite of the clear testimony of the Word, a wrong teaching is maintained, the authority of the Word of God has been denied and rejected. Under such conditions fellowship would be a violation of the will of God.

That the false principle of 1938 is still alive in the Missouri Synod today is evident from the Lutheran Witness (the official church paper of the Missouri Synod) of December 29, 1959. In a letter on page 620, replying to an attack in a Catholic paper upon the Lutheran doctrine that the Pope is the very Antichrist, Dr. J. Behnken, President of the Missouri Synod, writes, "Permit me to add one more important point in 'clarification'. Lutherans are not accustomed to having articles of faith 'imposed' upon them. Furthermore, we do not regard Lutheran exegesis or historical judgment on the basis of 2 Thessalonians 2 as a fundamental article of Christian faith. As one of our theologians has said, "Knowledge of this article is not needed to plant and keep saving faith in the heart. A Christian may know Christ as his Savior and be saved by Him even though he does not recognize the Antichrist in the papacy. It is not an article on which saving faith rests, with which Christianity stands or falls. Denial of it is not, therefore in itself alone divisive of Church Fellowship. (Theo. Hoyer, 'The Papacy')."

This reversal of the historic position of the Missouri Synod on the doctrinal requirements for fellowship has removed the solid foundation of the absolute authority of the entire Word of God which had always been the strength of this body. As must certainly always be the result, this action in 1938 was the hole in the dike through which an ever-increasing flow of errors and un-Scriptural practices has rushed. When the absolute authority of the Word is forsaken, departure from that Word must inevitably follow.

By 1953 an imposing list of charges of departures from the Word on the part of the Missouri Synod was catalogued by the Wisconsin Synod in these words, "That we declare that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod a) by reaffirming its acceptance of the Common Confession as a 'settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled' (Proceedings 1951, p. 146) and by its persistent adherence to its unionistic practices (the Common Confession, joint prayer, scouting, chaplaincy, communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, cooperation with unorthodox church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals; negotiating with lodges and Boy Scouts of America with the plea that this gives opportunity to bear witness, under the same plea taking part in unionistic religious programs and in the activities of unionistic church federations; negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters of doctrine and which contends for an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God) has brought about the present break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuation of our affiliation with the sister Synod." (Proceedings 1953, p. 104).

This was not the first time the Wisconsin Synod had brought these charges to the attention of the Missouri Synod. The official records of the Synod show that the Wisconsin Synod recognized the departures and patiently admonished the Missouri Synod in a brotherly manner.

The 1941 convention of the Wisconsin Synod passed the following resolution. "2. That in obedience to St. Paul's exhortation 1 Corinthians 1, 10; Ephesians 4, 3: a) We extend an invitation to our sister Synod of Missouri to discuss with the fellow member of the Synodical Conference the matters that endanger our unity of spirit. b) That President Brenner appoint a committee to represent our Synod at these conventions." (Proceedings 1941, p. 78).

The committee was appointed and the resolutions carried out. Questions pertaining to church fellowship, prayer fellowship with errorists and the proper basis for "framing a document of agreement" were discussed. Two years later the committee reported, "A substantial measure of agreement was revealed on all these matters excepting only that of prayer fellowship at intersynodical meetings." (Proceedings 1943, p. 65). At the same convention a memorial was sent from our Synod to the Missouri Synod, warning at length of the present false and therefore dangerous basis for negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. (Proceedings 1943, p. 67). In the same year, 1943, note was taken of the fact that in a direct reversal of its former position the Missouri Synod had entered into the chaplaincy program of its government. A paper was also delivered at the 1943 convention by Prof. Schweppe, showing the Scriptural reasons why a pastor could not in good conscience enter the governmental chaplaincy under prevailing conditions. The convention "encouraged the pastoral conferences of the various districts to study the paper at their various meetings." (Proceedings 1943, p. 71).

In the convention of 1945 the matter of the chaplaincy brought forth the following resolution, "Your committee reaffirms the position of our Synod in the matter of the chaplaincy and therefore holds it impossible for the Synod to commend pastors for chaplaincies" (Proceedings 1945, p. 22). With regret another change was noted in the Missouri Synod. At the 1944 convention of the Missouri Synod that body had reversed its former strong stand against Scouting. In calling attention to this reversal President Brenner stated, "This is a question (what a pastor and a church owe the public in the area of building good citizenship in the community) that demands serious study, but some brethren have already anticipated

the answer by allying themselves as Lutherans with agencies or organizations outside of our Church. The most disturbing case in point is that of the introduction of Boy Scoutism into our Church. We hold that the Scout program still contains elements of religion; that it perverts the teachings of Holy Scripture; and that, therefore, the Scriptures bid us avoid it. According to our firm convictions, the book 'Scouting in the Lutheran Church', which is a product of a joint committee of Lutherans not of one fellowship is rendering our Lutheran Church an outstanding disservice. These instances reveal a definite trend of thought and action away from the position we have held unto now. Shall we yield to this trend?" (Proceedings 1945, p. 11 & 12). The 1945 convention also adopted as its own a letter written before the convention by President Brenner, addressed to the Synodical Conference, "We feel constrained to state at this time that we have been seriously perturbed by numerous instances of an anticipation of a union not yet existing, or, as it has been put, not yet declared, which in our opinion is in conflict with the above agreement (of the Synodical Conference--LWS) and contrary to the best interests of the Synodical Conference. It will suffice to adduce only a few: Cooperation with the National Lutheran Council in the work among the prisoners of war; participation with others in the dedication of service centers, Washington and others; attendance at conferences of professors of theology, and membership in committees that clearly did not concern themselves merely with externals, but whose deliberations, planning and work dealt with doctrine and the things of the Christian life (Lutheran Committee on Scouting); a Synodical Conference pastor serving as guest essayist at the convention of a District of the American Lutheran Church; etc.

"We must frankly confess that we derive little comfort from the Missouri Synod's revision of its resolution on 'Prayer at Intersynodical Meetings' as it is reported in the Lutheran Witness of July 18, p.234. It is our firm conviction that the cause of true unity is not furthered by such actions, which can only put undue pressure behind the 'union movements' and cause confusion to our Church" (Proceedings 1945, p. 74). The convention also noted that "official protests in these matters have been filed with the Synodical Conference and is now before a Committee on Intersynodical Relations which has been appointed by that body." (Proceedings 1945, p. 75). The same convention declared that the so-called "Cooperation in Externals" are "unionistic". (Proceedings 1945, p. 77). Elaborating further the convention declared, 'Cooperation in Externals' (What in church work can truly be said to be purely external?) may hide our wounds, but it will not heal them. Joint endeavors will not remove existing differences, but it may lead us to forget them and to grow indifferent to the authority of the Inspired Word.

"A united front, after all, is only a 'front', will not strike terror to the heart of the foes of the Church, nor will it make for a vigorous wielding of the Sword of the Spirit by men rooted in the Truth and zealous for it."

"No, we are frank to state that we see a great danger to our Lutheran Church in the cooperation in externals that is being advocated so strongly these days." (Proceedings 1945, p. 77 & 78). It should be noted that the entire report dealing with these matters in 1945 was unanimously adopted.

At the 1947 convention of the Wisconsin Synod President Brenner reported in his opening address that the committee appointed in 1941 to represent our Synod at discussions "with the fellow-members of the Synodical Conference of the matter that endanger our unity of spirit" (Proceedings 1941, p. 78) had "performed its duties faithfully. Its executive committee attended many conferences with representatives of our sister-synods. The pertinent documents were printed and discussed in the

'Quartalschrift' (the theological magazine of our Synod--LWS), but for the sake of peace, not so frequently in the 'Northwestern Lutheran' and the 'Gemeindeblatt'. But now Professor Reim has been requested to present the issues to our people." (Proceedings 1947, p. 15 & 16). The Missouri Synod was to meet at Chicago on July 20 - 29, 1947. A memorial was addressed to that convention by the Standing Committee on Church Union (the committee appointed in 1941), asking the Chicago convention to "reconsider your 1944 Resolution on Scouting" (Proceedings 1947, p. 104). Attention was called to the obvious change from the former Missouri Synod position on Scouting. The memorial stated "We confess we find it difficult to reconcile the Saginaw Report (1944 Missouri convention--LWS) with the 1938 Resolution of your Synod on the same subject, particularly paragraph three, in which you speak of the 'naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement'. We note that this pronouncement was made even after the only material change in the Scout program of which our synods have been informed had already been made. That these unionistic features have not been eliminated, even now, is indicated, we believe, by the book, 'Scouting in the Lutheran Church' which to us is a plain instance of unionism with Lutheran synods with whom we are not in fellowship.

"Our own restudy of the question of Scouting has confirmed us in our conviction that Scouting is not consistent with Scriptural principles. In order to indicate our findings we enclose a paper entitled 'A Study in Boy Scoutism'.... We ask that you give it serious consideration in your deliberations and pray that it may help to reunite us in our views of this problem and allay the confusion which your 1944 Resolution has created." (Proceedings 1947, p. 105). The August 1947 convention of the Wisconsin Synod adopted this statement as its own. The Chicago convention of the Missouri Synod did respond to this memorial. It appointed a committee of three to restudy the matter and report to the next convention.

The Standing Committee on Church Union reported on the above matter to the 1949 convention, "It was the favorable impression of our representatives that this new Missouri Committee is making a sincere effort to understand our Wisconsin position. We cannot, however, venture a prediction as to the outcome of these discussions." (Proceedings 1949, p. 110). However, the general picture as reported by the same committee, was not encouraging. The committee reported further, "Your committee has with deep concern observed an ever-increasing number of incidents of joint worship and work under conditions which are contrary to Scripture. We are impressed by the growing frequency and boldness of these incidents. Unfortunately they often involve members and sometimes official representatives and organizations of our sister Synod, Missouri. Efforts have been made to deal with these matters privately or through official channels. They have met with little success. After careful consideration your committee authorized the writing of a series of articles for the 'Northwestern Lutheran', dealing with the issue of unionism in its several phases. The Synod should at this time become clear as to what further steps, if any, should be taken." (Proceedings 1949, p. 110 & 111).

The same Wisconsin Synod convention in 1949 noted that the Missouri Synod had formally proposed further meeting of all Lutheran bodies to further unity. To this the Synod responded, "In view of the sharp division in the Synodical Conference affecting matters of doctrine and practice, we are of the firm conviction that, before we undertake to correct and direct other Lutheran bodies, it is our first duty, and this is a holy duty, to set our own house in order, and that in doing this in the true spirit of the Gospel we are making the most effective contribution toward the unity of the Lutheran Church in our land and other countries." (Proceedings 1949, p. 115 & 116). In 1949 attention was again called to the fact that the departure



from the Word and from their former position by the Missouri Synod in the matter of the Army-Navy chaplaincy was still a source of disagreement. (Proceedings 1949, p. 116).

The same report noted the following, "With deep concern we note that the ties which have united us, particularly with the Missouri Synod, are being loosened. In order that certain disturbing factors may be clarified, and with the hope that the bond of unity may be strengthened, we move that a letter be addressed to the Synod of Missouri." (Proceedings 1949, p. 117 & 118). Again, as in 1947 the report states, "The adoption of the report and confirmation of action taken and action contemplated was unanimous." (Proceedings 1949, p.118).

The 1951 convention saw a worsening of the situation. The 1950 convention of the Missouri Synod had replied to the 1947 Wisconsin Synod memorial on Scouting. The action of the Missouri Synod "reaffirmed the position taken by Missouri in 1944." (Proceedings 1951, p. 141). The Wisconsin Synod convention also reported, "Neither of these two documents has therefore informed the members of the Missouri Synod of the true reasons for the Wisconsin objections to scouting. They have in fact interposed an effective censorship, defeating the intentions of the Synodical Conference resolution." (Proceedings 1951, p. 142). The convention passed this judgment unanimously, "We deplore that the last mentioned reply holds forth no hope of settlement of this vexing question (Scouting--LWS)." (Proceedings 1951, p. 161).

Another new and serious departure from the truth was noted by the 1951 Wisconsin Synod convention. The Missouri Synod had adopted a document, known as the Common Confession, as a settlement of long-standing doctrinal differences with the American Lutheran Church. The Missouri Synod resolution read, "That, if the American Lutheran Church in convention assembled, accepts it, the 'Common Confession' shall be recognized as a statement of agreement on these doctrines between us and the American Lutheran Church." Our Standing Committee on Church Union reported concerning this, "After careful consideration and mutual discussion we find ourselves constrained to report that in our judgment this Agreement involves an actual denial of the truth, since it claims to be a settlement of doctrinal differences which are not settled in fact." (Proceedings 1951, p. 144). The convention action, again adopted by unanimous vote, was as follows, "Be it further resolved: 2) That we inform the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod that we not only find the Common Confession to be inadequate in the points noted (cf. Review of the Common Confession), but that we also hold that the adoption of the Common Confession by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod involves an untruth and creates a basically untruthful situation since this action has been officially interpreted as a settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled. 3) And be it further resolved that we ask the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod to repudiate its stand that the Common Confession is a settlement by the two committees (Missouri and American Lutheran Church)". (Proceedings 1951, p. 147).

After ten years of admonishing and instructing the Missouri Synod the pattern had clearly emerged. By its resolutions and actions the Missouri Synod had rejected the patient and loving testimony of the Wisconsin Synod, continued in the departures of the past, and regularly added new offences. The 1953 convention clearly recognized the pattern and stated, "That we declare that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod... has brought about the break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister Synod." (Proceedings 1953, p. 104). That all the world might know that we recognized the

Missouri Synod as a body persistently holding to doctrine and practices contrary to the Truth, the Synod declared that "we remain in a state of confession" (Proceedings 1953, p. 105). Another letter was sent by the Synod to the Missouri Synod listing the departures and asking for a complete disavowal of the same. It is to be noted that for the first time in three conventions the action was not unanimous. Not that there were those who by a negative vote wanted to say that the Missouri Synod had not departed from the truth it formerly held, but that some held that in view of the fact that the Missouri Synod had persistently rejected the admonition of the Word, Romans 16, 17 now be applied and the Missouri Synod avoided.

At the Saginaw convention of the Wisconsin Synod in 1955, in his first opening address as President, President Naumann clearly and forcefully stated, "We are convinced that our position not only in doctrine but especially in the application of doctrines in our lives and in the lives of our members, is the position that the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference had occupied ever since its organization. The differences that have arisen between us, which we have been trying to face honestly and soberly, and to remove in an evangelical manner by the application of God's Holy Word brother to brother, have not been removed. They have increased. Things we consider contrary to God's Word have been defended with the statement, 'That passage does not apply in this case.' We have heard so often the expression 'Synod's interests are sufficiently safeguarded'. Matters which we named in our resolutions of 1953, which we considered dangerous to our souls welfare, deterrent to our Gospel ministry, and detrimental to our fellowship in the Conference, have been and still are vigorously defended. The charges we brought in an effort to do our brotherly duty before God, have been definitely denied. We have reached the conviction that through these differences divisions and offences have been caused contrary to the doctrine we have learned. And when that is the case, the Lord our God has a definite command for us: 'Avoid them.' (Proceedings 1955, p. 13). The convention reechoed this conviction, though sad to say, it postponed action on the convictions it unanimously declared. This failure to obey will be fully explored in our next meeting.

It cannot be denied, in view of the fact that the Missouri Synod by its words and actions rejected all admonition intended to correct them and bring them back to their former sound position in the Word, that God's Word already in 1955 revealed them to be causers of divisions and offences and, as such they were to be avoided. Lest anyone be inclined to believe that the situation has changed since 1955, let it be stated that every charge of departure from the truth brought by the Wisconsin Synod before 1955 stands unchanged today, and new offenses have been steadily added since that time. We shall hear more of this when we consider the next topic for study, Whether the Wisconsin Synod has remained faithful to the truth in the application of the above doctrine.

### III.

"HAS THE WISCONSIN SYNOD REMAINED  
FAITHFUL TO THE TRUTH IN APPLYING THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND FELLOWSHIP?"

In our last study lesson we traced the departure from the truth on the part of the Missouri Synod from its beginning in 1938 to the 1955 convention of the Wisconsin Synod. We saw that the Wisconsin Synod recognized the departure at its very beginning.

As was its brotherly duty, the Wisconsin Synod patiently admonished the Missouri Synod by applying the Word of God in an effort to bring them back to the truth. The passing of the years proved that patient admonition to be fruitless. Not only did the errors remain uncorrected, but new offenses contrary to the doctrine of the Word were added to the growing list of charges.

The years 1953 to 1955 brought, both in private and in public, a flat rejection of the Scriptural admonition we had so patiently given for so long. This rejection of admonition without the support of Scripture was the basis for the adoption of the preamble to the report of the Floor Committee on Union Matters by the 1955 Wisconsin Synod convention. (Proceedings 1955, p. 84-85). This report, after referring to Romans 16, 17-18, declared, "The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies and practices created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference. Such divisions and offenses are of long standing." The entire preamble, of which the above quotation is the heart, was unanimously adopted by the convention.

At this critical point in the history of the Wisconsin Synod God through His Word had for us "marked" the Missouri Synod as such as "cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we had learned." When such "marking" is done in the light of God's Word the command is clear, "Avoid them." Separation through termination of fellowship is clearly demanded by God.

It was at this moment that the Wisconsin Synod placed human reason above simple obedience to the Word of God. Immediately following the adoption of the preamble the following resolutions were adopted, "Out of love for the truth of Scripture we feel constrained to present the following resolution to this convention for final action in a recessed session in 1956: Resolved, that whereas the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod has created divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies and practices not in accord with Scripture, we, in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ in Romans 16, 17-18, terminate our fellowship with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

"We recommend this course of action for the following reasons:

- 1) This resolution has far reaching spiritual consequences.
- 2) This continues to heed the Scriptural exhortation to patience and forbearance in love by giving the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod opportunity to express itself in its 1956 convention." (Proceedings 1955, p. 86).

The argument was appealing and seemingly reasonable. The Missouri Synod had not met in convention since June 1953, thus preceding our 1953 and 1955 conventions. I must confess that I was taken in by the reasonableness of the argument. This, however, was not true of all that were present. There were many that day that saw more clearly than I did the terrible danger that arises when human reason is elevated above the Word of God. Though the resolution to delay the termination of fellowship carried by a vote of 94-47, the vote of the 47 men who opposed the delay represented a voice of warning for the cause of the truth among us in the future. Following passage of the resolution men arose to voice their protest against an act of disobedience to the Word of God, which, if not speedily corrected would mean that the full authority and clarity of the Word of God would be lost for us and for our children. The passing of the years has increased the importance of the clear thinking and courage of these men.

The entire Standing Committee on Church Union attended the 1956 Missouri Synod convention and gave its evaluation of that convention to the Wisconsin Synod, which met in August 1956. President Naumann in his opening address reported, "As a whole the Committee was convinced at St. Paul (the site of the 1956 Missouri Synod Convention--LWS) that the Lord by His Holy Spirit had brought about a changed spirit and attitude in the sister Synod and that at least in some of the matters which affect our fellowship in the Synodical Conference the fruit of our testimony and the answer to our prayers was evident." (Proceedings 1956, p. 60). Although the convention "deplored the specific resolutions which our sister synod passed on the issues of Scouting and military chaplaincy; its stand on prayer fellowship; and the fact that several other issues were not acted upon at all, e.g., the communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council" (Proceedings 1956, p. 75), it passed the following resolution, "Resolved, that we concur in the suggestion of our Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union to 'hold the judgment of our Saginaw resolutions in abeyance until our next convention'." (Proceedings 1956, p. 74). In looking back at the action of the recessed Wisconsin Synod convention of 1956 we see that the leaven of the 1955 convention was at work. No longer was the question whether God's Word showed the Missouri Synod to be a causer of divisions and offenses, which it still did, but rather whether the spirit and attitude of the Missouri Synod was such as to give hope that further admonition would bear fruit. The former is decided by the Word of God, the latter by the reason and judgment of man.

The 1956 recessed convention of the Wisconsin Synod had left the question of the full application of Romans 16, 17, which demands termination of fellowship when anyone is marked as one who causes divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine, completely unresolved. Further investigation into the hopeful spirit and attitude that was reported at the 1956 Missouri Synod convention proved that the Wisconsin Synod had been over-optimistic in interpreting certain actions of the convention. The Floor Committee on Union Matters for the 1957 Wisconsin Synod convention called attention to this fact in its report as follows, "Our Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union report to us: '....we cannot come to the conviction that the answers given by the Praesidium of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod do full justice to the spirit and intent of the pertinent St. Paul resolutions as they appeared to the majority of your observers....' And '....we must recognize the difficulty of the Joint Union Committees thus far to agree on an antithetical premise, and the problem presented by the fact that the Missouri Synod representatives were not ready to declare the issues between us divisive'. And 'the controversial issues still remain wholly unresolved and continue to cause offence'. And 'While we saw a hopeful sign in the excellent statement of Scriptural principles of church fellowship on which the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in 1956 declined membership in The Lutheran World Federation, this hope has been dimmed by the fact that on an official basis The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has since the 1956 convention in St. Paul involved itself in just such cooperative programs 'in actual church work e. g., joint... educational endeavors,' of which it said in its resolution that they would involve it 'in a union in spiritual matters with groups not in doctrinal agreement with us'."

"Since we now find that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod still upholds resolutions and condones principles and practices which deny the Scriptural Truth expressed in Article 28 of its own Brief Statement of Doctrine.... we feel conscience bound to declare publicly, that these principles, policies and practices create a division between our Synods which The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod alone can remove. Until these offences have been removed, we cannot fellowship together with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as one body, lest our own Wisconsin Synod be affected by the same unionistic spirit which finally weakens and destroys all true doctrine and leads to indifference and liberalism concerning Scriptural Truth." (Proceedings 1957, p. 143). On the basis of this finding, the Floor Committee recommended the following

resolutions, "Resolved, that we now suspend church fellowship with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16, 17-18, until the principles, policies, and practices in controversy between us have been resolved in a thoroughly Scriptural and mutually acceptable manner; and be it further Resolved that we declare ourselves ready to continue discussions with representatives of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod with the aim and hope of reestablishing unity of doctrine and practice." (Proceedings 1957, p. 143).

God in His grace here granted the Wisconsin Synod a golden opportunity to correct the error of the 1955 convention. Through the Floor Committee He pointed clearly to the way the Synod must act in obedience to His Word. He also spoke plainly of the tragic results that must follow disobedience to that Word.

The question was before the convention. The debate revealed that since 1955 a division had been created in our own Synod. President Naumann in his opening address to the convention had called attention to the division. He said, "Many individuals, several conferences and one entire District are convinced that we as a Synod are guilty of disobedience to God's Holy Word, because we have not as yet applied the injunction of Romans 16, 17-18 to the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.... Others in Synod are of the conviction that doctrinal discussions as now carried on are the one means by which we can testify of our convictions." (Proceedings 1957, p. 16). In 1957 President Naumann gave no directive from the Word, but presented the issue as something to be decided by the vote of the convention. How different from the ringing statement of 1955, when he said, "We have reached the conviction that through these differences divisions and offences have been caused contrary to the doctrine we have learned. And when that is the case, the Lord our God has a definite command for us: 'Avoid them'." (Proceedings 1955, p. 13).

In 1957 the false principle of elevating human reason above the Word of God was reaffirmed. It was now all-important how the vote went. God has not left matters on which He has spoken to the discretion of men, to be decided by a majority vote. All a body, whether it be a Synod or a congregation, can do by vote is to reveal whether it upholds the truth or not.

By a vote of 77 to 61, with 8 delegates not voting, the Wisconsin Synod set its course of disobedience to the plain Word of God. The principle that man determines when a clear Word of God is to apply was now firmly entrenched.

After rejecting the Floor Committee report the convention voted to formally enter into a completely new era of negotiations with the Missouri Synod, the new approach that always presents itself to those who believe that the truth can be preserved through the devices of men, even though God's Word says otherwise. The present negotiations with the Missouri Synod are the fruits of the new approach, adopted in 1957.

The false principle of letting human judgment decide by majority vote whether or not termination of fellowship was called for, first put into effect in 1955, and the basis for Synod's wrong position since that time, was never clearly enunciated until 1958. In a document mailed to all pastors and teachers of Synod by the Synod's Protest Committee the following statement appeared, "Termination of fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that the erring body demand recognition for their error." This statement clearly set forth the false principles under which Synod had operated since 1955.

That statement was challenged in a memorial to the 1959 Wisconsin Synod convention entitled, "A Call to Decision". This memorial set forth the Scriptural requirements for termination of fellowship in these words, "Termination of church fellowship is called for when Scriptural correction has been offered and rejected and the erring

brother or church body have continued in their error despite admonition. This is the persistence which distinguished an errorist (Romans 16, 17-18) from an erring brother (Galatians 2, 11-14)." The entire memorial, which all should read, is found in the Proceedings of 1959, p. 209-212. It bore the signatures of 30 men and was endorsed in another memorial, signed by another 30 men.

The question that had been troubling the Wisconsin Synod since 1955, namely, when must fellowship be terminated with an erring church body, was now pin-pointed. The Synod's position, as evidenced by its actions since 1955, was that fellowship must be terminated when you reach the conviction that admonition is of no further avail. This would reduce the question of the time for separation to the judgment of men. When more are involved, it would be decided by the majority vote. The other position set forth that separation is called for when Scriptural correction has been offered and rejected and the erring body continues in its error despite admonition. This would make the time for separation not a matter of human judgment, based upon reason, but a recognition of certain facts, based upon the Word of God.

It was evident that the real decision of the 1959 Wisconsin Synod convention in the matter of its future relations with the Missouri Synod would be decided on the question as to which principle is to apply in the matter of termination of fellowship. If the principle was adopted that separation could only come when you reach the conviction that admonition is of no further avail, then the present course would be continued. Actually, separation on the basis of this principle would be difficult, if not impossible; for who but God is really able to determine conclusively that admonition is of no further avail. If, on the other hand, separation must come when Scriptural correction has been offered and rejected and the church body continues in error despite admonition, then the Synod would be bound to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod at once; for it was perfectly clear that Scriptural correction had been offered the Missouri Synod and rejected already in 1955 and 1957 and that they were continuing in the same errors in 1959.

The question was turned over to a Floor Committee for study and recommendation. This Committee brought in its report on Tuesday evening. The report stated, "It has become clear from lengthy discussion that the signers of the Memorial "A Call for Decision" espouse a principle of terminating church fellowship which is at variance with the principle which we as a Synod have been following and which is again enunciated in a larger context in The Report of the Protest Committee: 'Termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that the erring brother or church body demands recognition for their error,' and in our Fellowship Thesis (Reports and Memorials, p. 82, B, 5b), and Whereas, The signers have called this thesis, given in a Report to the Protest Committee and approved by the Standing Committee on Church Union, false and unscriptural and have implored the Synod in convention to disavow it; therefore, be it Resolved, That we herewith reaffirm the thesis on termination of church fellowship as Scripturally sound and correct." In this report it appeared that Synod was headed for a clear cut decision. After a brief discussion of the report Synod adjourned. However, on Wednesday morning it was apparent that an effort was being made to head off such a clear cut decision. Professor Lawrenz, President of the Theological Seminary, who was the author of the disputed statement on termination of church fellowship, was given the floor to explain his statement. Upon the motion of one of Synod's vice-presidents, the Floor Committee's report, the fruit of "lengthy discussions", was sent back to the Committee for re-study. About two hours later the same committee brought in a new report, which is to be found on p. 211 of the 1959 Proceedings.

It stated, in effect, that there was no difference between the two statements. It disavowed the charges that the statement under attack was false and unscriptural. Thus, in an indirect way, by declaring the statement Scriptural, Synod gave its approval to the false principle on termination of fellowship.

At least twice during the course of the discussion motions were introduced, asking a Synod-wide study of this issue and a decision in 1961. Both times President Naumann ruled the motion out of order. Thus the Wisconsin Synod officially adopted a false principle and rejected the admonition brought in the form of the correct principle, based on Scripture.

The consideration of the report of the Floor Committee on Church Union followed the action on the 'Call for Decision' and was an anti-climax. The report, to be found on p. 194 of the 1959 Proceedings, felt that admonition was still of avail. This judgment was based upon "a receptive attitude" on the part of the Missouri Synod Union Committee, upon "a spirit of frankness and willingness to face all the issues", the adoption of the "Statement on Scripture" by the Missouri Synod, certain actions of the Missouri Synod at its 1960 San Francisco convention. At the same time the same report states, "Many of the offenses of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, which have brought about the troubled conditions in the Synodical Conference, and which are named in our 1955 Saginaw resolution (p. 85) have not been removed and have been aggravated by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod's reaffirmation on their position on Scouting, and Whereas, These uncorrected offenses have caused many consciences to be troubled and have been the underlying cause for a serious breach of fellowship in our own Synod; therefore, be it Resolved, That in our vigorously protesting fellowship with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod we testify strongly against the offenses which are still prevalent and unresolved in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and request that body to remove them and to refrain from causing a wider breach between the members of the Synodical Conference." (Proceedings 1959, p. 195-196).

Because of the Wisconsin Synod's disobedience to the clear Word of God in 1955, and because of its rejection of all the admonition between 1955 and 1959, which was intended to correct the error, and because it adopted an un-Scriptural principle governing the termination of fellowship and in effect rejected a correct statement of the principles governing the termination of fellowship, the Wisconsin Synod itself has become a causer of divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine we have learned (Romans 16, 17-18). God's Word has so marked them for us and obedience to the Word of God demands that, when any are so "marked" they are to be "avoided".

Nor has there been any sign in the six months since the Saginaw convention that the Wisconsin Synod might recognize what it has done to itself by its action on the "Call for Decision" and call for a Synod-wide study of the question for reconsideration at its 1961 convention. An official announcement, read by President Naumann before it was printed, demonstrates that the Wisconsin Synod is steadfastly set on its wrong course. The following notice appeared in the January 3, 1960 issue of the Northwestern Lutheran on page 15: "Since Pastor Otto J. Eckert unqualifiedly declares that the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and St. Paul's Evangelical Church, Saginaw, Michigan, which endorses the action of the Synod, are following an unscriptural course in their relationship to the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, his ministry both in the Synod and at St. Paul's congregation has been terminated. --Signed: Gerhard L. Press, President, The Michigan District, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod."

There is no other course left us, if we would be obedient to the Word of God, than to separate ourselves from the Wisconsin Synod. Only in this way can we be preserved from the unionistic spirit that has now also infected the Wisconsin Synod.

Only in this way can we bring the one admonition, namely, separation, that may yet stop the tragic course upon which the Wisconsin Synod has embarked.

In our next study meeting we shall consider "The Decision that Lies before Us and what this Involves."

#### IV.

### "THE DECISION THAT LIES BEFORE US AND WHAT IT INVOLVES"

As we bring this series of study meetings to a close, we now face a decision.

What does that decision involve? The congregation through its voting members will decide whether St. Paul's congregation will remain in membership with the Wisconsin Synod or not.

It should be clearly understood that by our decision we will not determine which position is the correct and God-pleasing one. The truth is never decided nor established by the majority vote of men; it is determined alone by the Word of God. The truth remains unchanged regardless how men react to it. This the Word of God clearly states, when it says, "We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth." (2 Corinthians 13, 8). We can by majority vote say that the Wisconsin Synod is correct when it says that "termination of fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail." That decision would change the position of this congregation, but it would not change the truth. God's Word would still be true when it says that those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine we have learned are to be avoided.

This is true because God's Word is as unchangeable as God Himself. Jesus says, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5, 18). Again the Savior promises, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24, 35). Because the Word of God is unchangeable, Jesus says, "The Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10, 35). Men may destroy themselves by setting themselves against the Word, but they will never destroy or change the truth; for "God's Word is truth" (John 17, 17).

All that we will do by our vote on this issue is to establish the witness or confession of this visible assembly or local congregation. We will either confirm and strengthen the confession of this congregation, or we will reject and change the witness we have thus far given. This congregation will either confess that it still holds uncompromisingly to the whole Word of God, or it will henceforth be known as a congregation that is willing to yield something of the Word when circumstances seem to demand it.

Not only will the congregation make a testimony and confession in this decision, but each individual member will make a confession also. By belonging to this or that visible assembly or local congregation we as individuals confess to the world what we believe. Whatever the visible assembly to which we belong believes, teaches and confesses, that both the Lord and the world may rightly assume we believe, teach and confess. We cannot separate ourselves from the confession of the visible assembly to which we belong. We bear either the blessing or the burden of that confession.



There are few in this congregation that have deeper affection and roots in the Wisconsin Synod than I have. Nevertheless, because the Wisconsin Synod has turned aside from the old paths and has become persistently disobedient to the Word of God and thus altered its confession, obedience to the Word of God demands that I separate myself from the fellowship of faith I have enjoyed these many years. God has left me no choice. The safety of my soul and those I love makes separation the only possible course. No one more fervently desires that the Wisconsin Synod will correct itself and thus make possible a re-establishment of that fellowship in the future. However, to remain in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod under present circumstances would mean that I would become guilty of the very thing that I have been protesting against and seeking to correct.

By the same token, should this congregation reject the testimony of the Word that I have brought and vote to continue in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod, that act would end my ministry at St. Paul's at once; for the confession of this congregation would then be changed. St. Paul's and I would no longer hold to the same confession. No longer could this congregation claim its glorious heritage as a congregation in which the Word of God rules supreme.

This decision is a highly personal one for each of us, though the voting members will make the decision that will establish the future doctrinal course of this congregation. On the basis of the information I have given, each must make his own decision. I have always sought to lead you into the paths of righteousness through the Word of God. I could have kept silence in this matter and continued in loud protest without pressing for action. If I would have done so, however, I would have been an unworthy under-shepherd of my Lord and unfaithful to the vow I took when I entered the holy ministry and when I was installed as the God-given pastor of this flock. To be sure, my immediate earthly prospects would have been brighter, if I had kept silent. You may be sure that, human as I am, I was fully aware of this. However, I face eternity, when I shall stand before my Lord. Not only will I need the cleansing blood of my Savior for the forgiveness of my sins, but God is going to call me to account for the souls he entrusted to my care on this earth. Listen to the charge He gives every pastor, "So thou, O Son of Man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the Word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it: if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou has delivered thy soul." (Ezekiel 33, 8-10). The way of silence would not have been safe for you; for me it would have been utterly disastrous on the Last Day. In doing what I have done in bringing this matter to your attention for action, I have followed the instruction of the Word of God to pastors, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20, 28). By speaking out I have taken the only course that is safe for me and good for you.

God, however, has not only laid an obligation upon me, but also upon you. Unless it can be shown from the Word of God that your pastor is leading you contrary to the Word of God, the only right and safe course for you as a member of the Flock of God is to follow him. Jesus says of His pastors, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." (Luke 10, 16). Again God says concerning the relation of people to their pastors in matters concerning the Word of God, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13, 17).

The decision that we face is most important for us as individuals. God is confronting us with a personal testing of our faith. His purposes in such testings are always good. Through this and other testings He wishes to strengthen our faith and thus increase our joy and hope in Jesus and His salvation. The Word of God declares, "Wherein (in your salvation) ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1, 6-7). By following the Word of God in a time of testing we always experience the strengthening of our faith; by the same token, a failure to follow the Word at such a time can and will weaken our faith. We must also remember that if we turn aside from the Word of God in the face of the testimony of that Word we may lose the ability to make correct spiritual decisions in the future.

As we prepare to make our decision we certainly will think of the future of the Word of God among us. To think of the future of the Word is to think of our children and our children's children. The importance of preserving the truth now so that it may be preserved unto and through our children is emphasized in Scripture. Moses says, "Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear My Words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." (Deuteronomy 4, 9-10). The teaching of our children is a continuing, daily process. Even now as we prepare to make this decision they are being shaped for the future. They are watching us in the matter before us. Either we will demonstrate to them that the Word of God is to be valued above all else, or that full obedience to the Word of God is not always necessary, or that we are unconcerned about the outcome of this matter. In my judgment the last impression is the worst; for to be indifferent is to leave the impression that the Word of God is not important enough for us to be concerned about it. Let us not underestimate the lasting impression that the decision we face will have upon our children and thus upon the future of the saving truth among us.

Also as a congregation we face one of two possible effects in the decision before us. Either we will be strengthened in the way of obedience that we have always upheld in this congregation, or else we will begin a new course that does not demand complete, unquestioning obedience. History proves that the latter course always leads downward. The individual, congregation or Synod that finds reason to yield on one point of doctrine will find that the same reason will make it possible to yield other truths.

Such visible assemblies that are willing to adjust their doctrine and practice according to the circumstances that happen to prevail are to be found in abundance in our country and in our own city. This congregation could find no justification for its organization in 1941, if those who organized it had not been interested in a certain kind of church--a church that was thoroughly and soundly Lutheran. That small group could easily have been absorbed by existing Lutheran congregations. But that little band was determined to have a Scripturally grounded and doctrinally sound Lutheran congregation. How else can we explain the establishment of this congregation?

The sound, Biblical principles upon which this congregation was founded has brought the evident blessing of God in our midst. God has given us some 18 years later a fine congregation with beautiful property. But the physical beauty of this church property and the fine congregation to be found here are not the real glory of this congregation.

The crown of glory, which God recognizes, is its heritage of love, devotion and obedience to the will of God as expressed in His Word. If that is removed, the glory of this house and this congregation will depart with it. Even in our own community we have come to be recognized as a church that is different. The people among whom we live may not fully recognize why we are different, but we have gained their respect.

We must also be aware of the fact that the decision we make will not only affect us, but those in the world in which we live and the cause of the truth in our generation and in the future. We will either lend our strength to the waning cause of the truth here and beyond our borders, or we will add to the tide of indifference to the truth that is sweeping our land like a plague.

But most of all we must recognize the importance of the decision we will make in the light of eternity. How can we be dismayed in eternity, if in regard to this decision we will be able to say on the Last Day, "Lord, this is what your Word said and I acted according to it." Is not that far better than to have to say on that Day, "Lord, I know what your Word said, but I thought it would be better if we followed a different course." To stand on the Word of God and act accordingly is to be absolutely sure of being safe on Judgment Day. My reason may seek to lead me on an entirely different way than God's Word points me. But if I follow my reason rather than the Word of God in this life, I have no assurance of everlasting life in heaven. To lead and guide me safely through this evil world with its many temptations to the glory in heaven, God has given me the only safe and certain guide--His Word. Though I stood alone on the Word of God in this world, since I stood on that Word, I will be safe and will not be deceived on the Last Day.

The decision we face will also have practical effects. However, they are relatively unimportant compared with the spiritual implications noted above.

Actually, there would be little change noted in the congregation itself, should St. Paul's decide to leave the Wisconsin Synod and become, for the time being, an independent congregation. The preaching the instruction and the work of the congregation would continue as they had in the past.

It is true that there would be certain problems to be faced. Arrangements would have to be made for disbursing mission funds, perhaps through the congregations own Mission Board. Consideration would have to be given to the training of pastors and teachers. We now have five students from the congregation, all in their High School years, preparing themselves for work in the Church. Our people would have to be trained to consider the availability of a congregation of our faith before they decided to move to another place. While these and other practical considerations will arise, they are neither great nor insurmountable.

Also, while we would become an independent congregation upon leaving the Wisconsin Synod, we are not alone. There are many, not only in the Wisconsin Synod, but also in other Synods of the Synodical Conference, who are of the same mind. While the exact number is not known to me, newspaper accounts speak of 70 pastors and 40 congregations that have left the Synodical Conference because of its doctrinal change. We already would have a common basis of fellowship with those who have taken the same step we are now considering. It is a fact that these pastors and congregations who have left the Wisconsin Synod are in the process of formal organization as a church body on a sound doctrinal basis. "God setteth the solitary in families." (Psalm 68, 6). He will see to it that those who have the same faith find each other and enjoy a common and blessed fellowship. No doubt the first concern of any new organization would be the establishment of a mission program and a school for the training of pastors and

teachers. Even now, though not the product of a joint effort, there is a High School, College and Seminary for the training of pastors and teachers available for those who have left the Synodical Conference.

If we are faithful to the Word of God, we may be sure that the Lord God will provide the answer to every problem we may face as a result of our obedient action.

Neither will the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, suffer, if we in obedience to the Word of God terminate our fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. Rather God promises that the blessed work of the Church will be furthered. After all, Christ says, "I will build My Church." The work of the Church and the building thereof is entirely God's work. We serve Him and His cause by being faithful witnesses to His truth among sinful men. More we cannot do; less we dare not do.

May God grant us the faithfulness that will lead us to follow His Word and the courage to act accordingly. God's blessing will surely rest upon us if we do.

"O Lord, let this Thy little flock,  
Thy name alone confessing,  
Continue in Thy loving care,  
True unity confessing.  
Thy Sacraments, O Lord,  
And Thy saving Word  
To us e'er pure retain.  
Grant that they may remain  
Our only strength and comfort." Amen.