

DIFFERENCES DISTURBING
the
PEACE
within the
SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

Presented
in the form of
questions and answers

Prepared and printed
by the
authority of the
Minnesota District
of the
Evangelical Lutheran
Joint Synod of
Wisconsin and Other States

July 1954

1. WHY SPEAK ABOUT DIFFERENCES WHEN WE HAVE SO MANY THINGS IN COMMON?

The question is an important one! Naturally we would rather speak about things which we have in common and which unite us. However, when differences arise, they dare not be ignored.

2. ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE REALLY SERIOUS?

That question can be answered better after we have examined the differences. All differences in doctrine are serious. They originate with Satan, whose purpose it is to cause divisions in the church to the destruction of souls.

3. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE DIFFERENCES IN THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE?

Generally speaking, all these differences reveal this change: IN RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS ONE OF OUR SISTER SYNODS, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD, NO LONGER SPEAKS SO CLEARLY THAT EVERY DEPARTURE FROM THE WORD OF GOD IS LABELED FALSE DOCTRINE AND REJECTED.

4. WHICH PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF MISSOURI ARE MEANT?

Statements made in the name of the Missouri Synod, as found in official periodicals, synodical resolutions, especially those adopted in recent years as a settlement of doctrinal differences between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church [1938 Resolutions and the Resolution of 1950 adopting *The Common Confession*].

I. THE COMMON CONFSSION

5. JUST WHAT IS *THE COMMON CONFES- SION*?

It is a public statement adopted by both the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church which attempts to show that these two bodies are in agreement in the doctrines treated in that statement.

6. WHAT ACTION HAVE THE FOUR SYNODS OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE TAKEN ON *THE COMMON CONFESION*?

The Missouri Synod adopted it in 1950 in spite of vigorous opposition from some of its own members.

The Slovak Synod expressed its agreement, but suggested numerous changes.

The Wisconsin Synod rejected it in 1951.

The Norwegian Synod rejected it in 1951.

7. WHY DID TWO SYNODS REJECT *THE COMMON CONFESION*?

They rejected it because

A. It does not in fact settle admitted and serious differences that separated the Synodical Conference and the American Lutheran Church;

B. It ignores many points of doctrine which had been under dispute;

C. It is inadequate in that it contains words and statements which can be understood in more than one way;

D. It does not follow the scriptural and Lutheran practice of labeling and rejecting error.

8. WHERE IN *THE COMMON CONFSSION*
ARE THESE OBJECTIONABLE FEATURES
NOTICEABLE?

In most of this document's twelve articles, but we shall here discuss Article V, "The Means of Grace;" Article VI, "Justification;" and Article XII, "The Last Things."

A. "*THE MEANS OF GRACE*"

9. WHAT IS TREATED IN THIS ARTICLE?

It treats the matters of The Word and The Sacraments. However, we shall limit ourselves to a discussion of The Word.

10. WAS THERE ACTUALLY A DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE
AND THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH
ON THIS MATTER?

A. To the Synodical Conference the terms "Bible," "Holy Scripture," "Word of God"—all these—are expressions that mean the same thing; they all mean every word found in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

To the Synodical Conference every word found in these sixty-six books is the Word of God because it was given by divine verbal inspiration.

B. Within the American Lutheran Church the terms "Bible," "Holy Scriptures," and "The Word of God" do NOT ALWAYS mean the same thing. In that church body it is permissible to teach:

a. That there is a difference between the Bible and the Word of God;

b. That the Bible *contains* the Word of God; with that is meant that only those chapters and verses that deal directly with the way of salvation are the Scriptures or the Word. Other parts, such as "historical, geographical, and other secular matters," are of human origin and may contain error.

11. CAN IT BE PROVED THAT THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH PERMITS SUCH FALSE DOCTRINE?

Yes, for by reaching agreement with the United Lutheran Church in the doctrine of inspiration, the American Lutheran Church endorses such statements as the following:

"There must be a clear distinction kept in mind between the Word of God and the Bible."

"The Bible is the Word of God because it contains the Word of God." *What is Lutheranism?* p. 176.

There are "portions in the Bible which are worthy to be called the Word of God to man. It is unfortunate that the Bible has been called the Word of God." *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, 1937, p. 289.

"We may liken the teaching of the Bible to a large circle at the center of which we place Christ and the cross. Around the center there is a large region of certainty which includes all the great teachings of the Bible about religion and morality. Out at the circumference we may place those unessential matters about which for any reason there may be some doubt, such as historical inaccuracies, numerical errors, etc.

Now, if we inquire how far out toward the circumference does the region of certainty extend, answers may differ. . . . The realm of certainty gradually fades into the uncertain and unknown just as it does in every department of human knowledge" *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, 1935, p 131

12. IS THE COMMON CONFESSION ACTUALLY A SETTLEMENT OF THE DIFFERENCES IN THIS DOCTRINE?

No, for it still permits the false position of the American Lutheran Church that the Bible is not the same thing as the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God.

No, for the wording of *The Common Confession* does not compel the acceptance of divine verbal inspiration.

No, for this is now the situation:

Both sides admit that there were differences in the past;

Both sides maintain they have made no changes in position;

Both sides, however, now claim full agreement.

13. BUT DOES NOT PART II OF THE COMMON CONFESSION SAFEGUARD THE POSITION OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE?

Remember that Part II has never been adopted by either the Missouri Synod or the American Lutheran Church and so has no official standing. Even so, the fine-sounding statement of that section still permits the old false doctrine of the American Lutheran Church.

14. WHY MUST WE SO INSISTENTLY OPPOSE THE POSITION OF *THE COMMON CONFESSION*?

Because the very foundation of our faith is at stake, namely, the absolute certainty that every word of the Bible is the inspired Word of our God.

Because real agreement on the other doctrines of the Bible is impossible where there is no agreement on this doctrine.

B. "JUSTIFICATION"

15. WHAT DOES THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE TEACH REGARDING JUSTIFICATION?

That God in and through the death and resurrection of Christ HAS ALREADY justified all sinners regardless of whether they believe it or not. Rom. 5,18-19; II Cor. 5,18-20.

Note:

1] This justification took place in the past before faith, apart from faith. *Quartalschrift*, April, 1913, pp. 98-99; *Christian Dogmatics* by F. Pieper, Vol. II, p. 552.

2] Faith is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold on this finished blessing. Rom. 1,17; 3,28; 5,1.

16. WHAT ALWAYS HAS BEEN THE TEACHING OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH REGARDING JUSTIFICATION?

Numerous public statements show that the American Lutheran Church does not teach this scriptural doctrine of justification. For them there is no justifica-

tion before faith, apart from faith. If that be the case, then salvation is no longer by grace alone. Man's faith becomes a contributing and determining factor. *Interpretation of Romans* by Lenski, p. 338.

17. HAS *THE COMMON CONFESSION*
BROUGHT ABOUT A CLEAR-CUT AGREE-
MENT ON THIS DOCTRINE?

No. Although the correct term for this scriptural doctrine is used, it fails to assure us that our justification is a finished blessing merely to be received by faith. This failure explains why the American Lutheran Church to this day has never rejected such a statement as the following:

"Through the reconciliation of Christ the holy and merciful God has made advances to us, so that forgiveness of sins and justification *have been made possible* on his part; justification itself, however, does not occur until through God's grace the spark of faith has been kindled in the heart of the sinner." [Our emphasis.] *Kirchenzeitung*, June 17, 1905.

18. WHY MUST WE INSIST ON A CLEAR
AND FULL CONFESSION OF THIS DOC-
TRINE?

Because this is the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls, and perversion of this doctrine destroys the "by grace alone" and makes salvation uncertain.

C. "THE LAST THINGS"

19. TO WHAT DO WE TAKE EXCEPTION IN THIS ARTICLE?

Especially to the statement pertaining to the Antichrist.

20. WHAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE POSITION OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE?

The position of the Synodical Conference has ever been that which is expressed in the *Brief Statement* in the words:

"As to the Antichrist we teach that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist, II Thess. 2,3-12; I John 2,18, have been fulfilled in the Pope of Rome and his dominion."

That means that no future unfolding of the Antichrist, apart from the Papacy, is to be expected. We are in hearty agreement with a recent statement in one of the Missouri Synod's centennial publications, *The Abiding Word*:

"Whoever denies it [that the Pope is the very Antichrist] does not stand in one faith with his fathers; he is not a confessional Lutheran."

21. WHAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH ON THE ANTICHRIST?

Some hold to the position of the Synodical Conference, while others emphatically reject it. They maintain that the above-mentioned confessional statement from *The Smalcald Article* is merely hu-

man opinion. This is only natural in view of the fact that the American Lutheran Church contends that agreement in this doctrine and certain other doctrines is neither necessary nor possible.

22. DOES *THE COMMON CONFESSION* CONFESS "THAT THE POPE IS THE VERY ANTICHRIST"?

No, because *The Common Confession* limits its confession to the past and present with the future still in doubt. Here is the way the statement reads:

"Among the signs of His return for Judgment the distinguishing features of the Antichrist, as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures, are still clearly discernable in the Roman Papacy, the climax of all human usurpation of Christ's authority in the Church."

Note the word "still." It is important. This word does not rule out the possibility that the future may bring an unfolding of the Antichrist apart from the Papacy.

23. HOW COULD THE MISSOURI SYNOD ACCEPT THIS STATEMENT OF *THE COMMON CONFESSION*?

Although the Missouri Synod maintains that this statement means exactly what the Synodical Conference has ever taught, it now becomes clear that the Missouri Synod is yielding this *doctrine* and is accepting the unscriptural principle of the American Lutheran Church. The following statement issued by the officials of the Missouri Synod reveals this:

“Scriptures does not teach that the Pope is the Antichrist. It teaches that there will be an Antichrist [prophecy]. We identify the Antichrist as the Papacy. This is an historical judgment based on Scripture. . . . We believe that there is no conflict in the positions of the Scriptures, the Confessions, the Missouri Synod, the ALC. . . as far as identifying the Antichrist in the Papacy. The conflict arises in holding that this identifying is a clearly expressed doctrine of Scripture, whereas it is not.” ACDP pp. 14-15.

II. MATTERS OF PRACTICE

24. WHICH ARE SOME OF THESE MATTERS OF PRACTICE THAT ARE DISTURBING THE PEACE WITHIN THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE?

They are:

- A. Scouting
- B. Military Chaplaincy
- C. Joint Prayer

A. SCOUTING

25. IS THE ENTIRE PROGRAM OF SCOUTING CONTRARY TO THE SCRIPTURES?

Indeed not! Scouting has many commendable features. If Scouting restricted itself to such things as handicraft, first aid, life saving, nature lore, there could be no scriptural objection to it. •

26. WHAT THEN ARE THE OBJECTIONABLE FEATURES OF SCOUTING?

The objectionable features are found in its religious teachings.

27. SINCE SO MANY LOCAL TROOPS SEEM TO OCCUPY THEMSELVES WITH NOTHING MORE THAN KNOT-TYING AND CAMPING TRIPS, HOW DO WE KNOW THAT SCOUTING ALSO HAS A RELIGIOUS PROGRAM?

We know this from their Constitution, which has never been changed as to its principles and policies.

28. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STATEMENTS FROM THIS CONSTITUTION WHICH SHOW THAT SCOUTING ALSO ENTERS THE FIELD OF RELIGION?

Scout Oath: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God."

12th Scout Law: "A Scout is reverent. He is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties, and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion."

The Scout Constitution, Article III, Section I: "All Scouts and Scouters must know and subscribe to the Scout Oath or Promise, and Law."

29. IN WHAT WAY ARE THESE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE?

a. Scouting encourages a belief in a god, ANY god. Scripture demands belief in the ONLY true God, the Triune God. Deut. 6,4; Mt. 4,10.

b. Scouting teaches that man can do his duty to God.

Scripture teaches that by nature we cannot please God, and even all our righteousnesses, the things man might consider praiseworthy in us, are as filthy rags. Is. 64, 6.

c. Scouting teaches that man is reverent toward God.

Scripture teaches that man is by nature an enemy of God. Rom. 8,7.

d. Scouting teaches its members to be faithful to their religion, even a false religion; it teaches them to respect [with approval] the religious beliefs of others, even false religious beliefs.

Scripture teaches us not only to avoid and separate ourselves from false teaching, but also to warn against it and testify to others. Eph. 5,11.

e. Scouting teaches that man can merit God's favor by his good deeds.

Scripture teaches that without faith in Christ we are still separated from God and cannot please Him. Heb. 11,6; John 15,5.

Scouting encourages men to believe that they can not only become good citizens, but also children of God without Christ or the Holy Spirit. Rom. 10, 2-4.

30. BUT ARE NOT THESE OBJECTIONABLE FEATURES ELIMINATED WHEN A CONGREGATION HAS ITS OWN TROOP UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE PASTOR AND CONGREGATION?

They are not, since also a church troop must still accept the Scout Oath and Law with its false religious teachings and give financial support to the national organization and program. In this way they are still connected with the national organization and must be held responsible for its false religious teachings. I Tim. 5,22; II John 10,11.

31. ARE THE FALSE TEACHINGS OF SCOUTING SUCH THAT THEY VITALLY AFFECT OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

They affect the central article of our Christian faith, that we are saved by grace alone through faith; for if the religious teachings of Scouting were true, then there was no need for Christ to suffer and die in order to save us.

32. ARE THESE FALSE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS PROMOTED ONLY IN SCOUTING?

No, they have crept into many other so-called secular and civic organizations. The child of God must be on the lookout for them and testify against them wherever they occur. The unusual emphasis that has been placed on this one organization was caused by the fact that in this matter the Missouri Synod had publicly and officially given its stamp of approval to Scouting when conducted and supervised by the local congregation.

B. MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

33. WHAT IS THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY?

It is an office, appointed, regulated, and salaried by the United States government.

34. WHAT IS THE DUTY OF A MILITARY CHAPLAIN?

The duty of a military chaplain is to promote religion and morality in our armed forces as prescribed by the Government.

35. IS THIS MINISTRY CONSISTENT WITH THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY?

No, God has assigned this office to the Church. He nowhere permits it to be delegated to any other body. The chaplaincy is, however, part of the government program for the proper equipment of military personnel, just like the rifle.

36. IS THIS MINISTRY CONSISTENT WITH THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF SEPARATION OF THE STATE AND CHURCH?

No, since God has ordained that the Church and the State be two separate institutions and has assigned to each its own sphere of activity. Matt. 22,21; Rom. 13,1-7; Matt. 23, 18-20.

37. OF WHAT WOULD A TRUE MINISTER OF THE WORD MAKE HIMSELF GUILTY BY ACCEPTING THE POSITION OF A CHAPLAIN?

He could not *consistently* confess Christ and His Gospel; government regulations would make him a unionist, for so broad is the religion required of the chaplain that a Christian, a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Universalist, and a Buddhist may harmoniously combine with the chaplain in worship.

38. HOW HAS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MISSOURI SYNOD AND WISCONSIN SYNOD SHOWN ITSELF ON THIS QUESTION?

The Missouri Synod endorses the Military Chaplaincy and makes use of it. The Wisconsin Synod re-

jects the Military Chaplaincy in principle and practice.

The Missouri Synod has even reached agreements with false Lutheran Churches permitting inter-communion, establishing joint service centers, and cooperation in matters which are definitely not in the field of externals. Agreement between the National Lutheran Council and the Missouri Synod, 1951.

C. JOINT PRAYER

39. WHAT IS PRAYER?

The Missouri Synod in its own catechism thus defines prayer: "Prayer is an act of worship wherein we bring our petitions before God with our hearts and lips and offer up praise and thanksgiving to Him."

For our present purpose we are interested in the words, "Prayer is an act of worship." We may worship alone, or we may worship jointly with others.

40. WHAT CONFESSION DO WE MAKE WHEN WE WORSHIP WITH OTHERS?

We confess that we are united in faith and doctrine. Acts 2,42.

41. BUT ARE THERE NOT TIMES WHEN PRAYERS BETWEEN THOSE NOT UNITED IN DOCTRINE ARE PERMITTED WHILE OTHER FORMS OF FELLOWSHIP AS COMMUNING TOGETHER OR EXCHANGING PULPITS IS FORBIDDEN?

No. The American Lutheran Church, to be sure, teaches that this is possible, and now also the Mis-

souri Synod is officially advocating and defending it. Scriptures, however, knows only *prayer*, not joint prayer and prayer fellowship as two distinct kinds of worship.

42. WHAT SCRIPTURE PASSAGES FORBID US TO PRAY WITH THOSE OF ANOTHER FAITH?

Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid* them. Rom. 16,17.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us: II Thess. 3,6.

Wherefore come out from among them and be ye *separate*. II Cor. 6,17.

43. BUT DO THESE PASSAGES INCLUDE PRAYING WITH OTHERS OF UNLIKE FAITH?

These are general passages which forbid every form of religious fellowship with those of another faith. Prayer is included, for when we pray with those of another faith, we certainly are not avoiding them, withdrawing or separating from them as Scripture commands.

44. WHY DOES EVEN OUR DUTY OF MAKING A CLEAR CONFESSION RENDER SUCH PRAYER DISPLEASING TO GOD?

Such prayer gives the false impression either that those praying together are united, or that differences

in doctrine are not important. As loyal disciples of Jesus who want to continue in His Word in all things, we have no other course than to refrain from prayer with those who are not of the same mind and confession.

III UNIONISM

45. WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING REASON FOR THE DIFFERENCES THAT HAVE DEVELOPED BETWEEN US?

Unionism.

46. WHAT IS A GOD-PLEASING UNION?

It is one that is created by the Holy Spirit and not by man; it is one in which church-fellowship is brought about on the basis of full and complete agreement in all doctrines.

47. WHAT POSITION HAS THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE HELD IN THIS MATTER?

It has always held that full agreement in all doctrines of the Bible is necessary for church fellowship, as witnessed by the *Brief Statement*:

“We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command. . . .”

48. DOES NOT MISSOURI STILL HOLD TO THIS?

They so claim, but in reality their claims are contradicted by their actions: joint prayer with errorists; scouting; taking part in unionistic religious programs and in the activities of unionistic church federations; cooperation with persistently erring church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals.

49. HOW CAN WE ACCOUNT FOR SUCH ACTIONS ON THE PART OF A HITHERTO ORTHODOX CHURCH BODY?

Such practices merely reflect the changed doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod taken as early as 1938 when it gave evidence that it did not unconditionally reject the American Lutheran Church's unscriptural platform for church union, "that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines." In other words, the Missouri Synod by its action tacitly agreed that FULL agreement in ALL doctrines is not necessary for church fellowship. In support of this position, the Missouri Synod has come to refer to certain doctrines as "points of doctrine" in which a difference need not be divisive of church fellowship, or as matters of "interpretation," or as "historical judgment," thus conceding that in these matters one church body may teach this, another that, and still be in fellowship with one another.

50. WHAT MUST WE SAY OF SUCH ACTIONS AND PRINCIPLES?

They evidence a unionistic spirit, which we must unconditionally reject as the Lord directs. They permit false doctrines to stand side by side with truth and leave former differences unsettled.

"NOW I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE NAME 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." I Cor. 1,10.