

SHOULD THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD NOW LIFT ITS SUSPENSION OF FELLOWSHIP  
WITH THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD?

At its 1955 Synod convention, held at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato from June 20 - 26, the Norwegian Synod adopted the following momentous resolution:

THEREFORE WE HEREBY DECLARE with deepest regret that fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are suspended on the basis of Romans 16, 17, and that the exercise of such relations cannot be resumed until the offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned have been removed by them in a proper manner.

Earlier in these same Suspension resolutions, the Synod enumerated five points in particular that were causing offense. It was understood that when these five points were adequately and satisfactorily dealt with, then there would be good cause to remove the Suspension of fellowship. We shall now attempt in this paper to review once again those five points, and seek to learn from the official Proceedings of the Missouri Synod how these matters have been dealt with. Our purpose shall be to determine the answer to the question at the head of this paper.

The five points covered in the 1955 Suspension resolutions were the following: 1) the 1938 St. Louis Articles of Union; 2) the Saginaw Resolution of 1944; 3) the Chicago Statement of 1945; 4) the agreement with the National Lutheran Council; 5) the Common Confession. We shall now take up these points one by one.

I. The St. Louis Articles of Union.

With regard to the first point the Norwegian Synod said (Report 1955, p. 43):

First it was the 1938 St. Louis Articles of Union, which were drawn up and accepted as the doctrinal basis for union with the A.L.C. When this document was delivered to us for approval, however, it was found to contain the old error of the Iowa and Ohio synods on the central doctrine of justification, as well as certain unscriptural principles on church fellowship held by the A.L.C. The result was that neither our Norwegian Synod nor the Wisconsin Synod could give approval to such a doctrinal statement, and the Missouri Synod was petitioned to revoke these 1938 St. Louis Articles (Proceedings of the Norwegian Synod, 1943, an insert between pp. 68-69; cf. also Proceedings of the 39th Regular Convention of the Missouri Synod, 1944, p. 241) inasmuch as they contained false doctrine (e.g., the statement on justification in the Declaration: "to this end He also purposes to justify those who have come to faith." Cf. Proceedings of the 37th Regular Convention of the Missouri Synod, 1938, p. 222). Our pleas, however, were not directly nor satisfactorily answered (cf. Proceedings of the 39th Regular Convention of the Missouri Synod, 1944, p. 251).

Here it would be worthwhile to review once again what the Norwegian Synod had said with regard to the 1938 Articles of Union in previous years. The paragraph quoted above refers to the Missouri Synod Proceedings of 1944, p. 241, where a "REQUEST OF NORWEGIAN SYNOD" is printed. The request was as follows:

WHEREAS, "The St. Louis Union Articles of 1938" (Proceedings, 1938, pp. 221-233) stand as a confession on the part of the Missouri Synod so long as they are not revoked; and

WHEREAS, The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts unreservedly the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, but cannot and does not accept the other articles of Union in all points and considers said points church divisive for the following reasons:

- a. They contain false doctrine; for instance, the statement on justification in the Declaration: "To this end He also purposes to justify those who have come to faith. . . ." (Proceedings, p. 222.) (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:18; Rom. 3:28.)
- b. They do not require full agreement regarding the doctrine of the Church and the Last Things as a prerequisite for church fellowship and thus make room for the false principle that it is not necessary for a Church to agree in all matters of doctrine. (Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 1:10.)

Therefore, in the interest of the truth committed to us by the Lord, out of charity toward the brethren, to safeguard its own confessional position, and to clear the way for true unity in the Lutheran Church, the Norwegian Synod entreats the Missouri Synod at its forthcoming convention to revoke "The St. Louis Articles of Union," and thus let the Brief Statement stand unqualified and unsullied as our clear and joint confession.

The action which the Missouri Synod took with regard to the overture of the Norwegian Synod was as follows (Proc., 1944, p. 251):

"With regard to the overture concerning the objections raised by our brethren in the Norwegian and the Wisconsin Synods, we recommend that Synod respectfully call the attention of our brethren to the Proceedings of the Fort Wayne Convention, where the request of the brethren was fully respected, page 303, paragraph 9: 'That, after favorable action has been taken by our Synod and the American Lutheran Church in reference to the one doctrinal agreement prepared, our Synod take no further action with the American Lutheran Church until our Synod has submitted the entire matter to our sister synods in the Synodical Conference and the American Lutheran Church has submitted the entire matter to its sister synods in the American Lutheran Conference, and all this has resulted in favorable action.'"

At the 1947 convention of the Missouri Synod, numerous memorials were presented by various congregations within the Missouri Synod, asking the Synod to "rescind," "reject," and "annul" the 1938 Resolutions. An unprinted memorial from the Norwegian Synod was also in the hands of the floor committee. The following resolution was adopted by the Missouri Synod (Proc., 1947, p. 510):

WHEREAS, Synod acted in good faith in adopting the 1938 Union Resolutions, especially in view of the specific conditions under which these resolutions were to become effective; and

WHEREAS, According to the official report of Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity, it is a matter of record that these conditions have not been fulfilled; and

WHEREAS, All efforts to unite the contents of the Brief Statement and the Declaration by means of the Doctrinal Affirmation have admittedly not been satisfactory; and

WHEREAS, Wide divergence of opinion in Synod concerning the 1938 resolutions and subsequent documents indicates that there is not sufficient clarity regarding their true meaning, which fact has made their usefulness as a basis for future Church fellowship doubtful; therefore be it

RESOLVED,

1. That Synod declare that the 1938 resolutions shall no longer be considered as a basis for the purpose of establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church; and

2. That Synod encourage its Committee on Doctrinal Unity to continue discussion on a soundly Scriptural basis, using the Brief Statement and such other documents as are already in existence or as it may be necessary to formulate; and
3. That Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity be instructed to make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document which is Scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal; and
4. That Synod urge all its members to give thorough and prayerful study to the problems of Lutheran unity for the purpose of achieving greater clarity in its own midst.

Thus the Missouri Synod did not revoke the 1938 Resolutions as had been requested by the Norwegian Synod, but rather declared that they would no longer be considered as a basis for the purpose of establishing fellowship with the A.L.C. However, because the 1938 Resolutions were not revoked, they were still used and referred to, as may be seen from the ACDP Report, which came out under date of Aug. 15, 1952. In this Report Dr. Wm. Arndt is quoted as saying (p. 10):

Certain critics attack the essay which I delivered in the Southern California and the California and Nevada Districts in 1949. Let me say, in the first place, that what is attacked is really the position taken by our Synod in 1938. At that time all of our theologians were of the opinion that the doctrinal positions expressed in the Committee report were correct. Among these theologians were Dr. Engelder, Dr. Fuerbringer, and Dr. Hemmeter. I do not present anything new in my essay as far as doctrinal views are concerned, but I do sponsor the positions which our Synod gave expression to in 1938.

In 1954 the Norwegian Synod therefore sent a memorial to the convention of the Synodical Conference, which met later that same year in East Detroit, Mich. That resolution stated the following in Part V (Report, 1954, p. 45):

WHEREAS the St. Louis Union Resolutions of 1938 and the Common Confession both contain statements which allow the old error of Iowa and Ohio still to be maintained;

AND WHEREAS the American Lutheran Church has not forsaken its associations with the heterodox American Lutheran Conference, but together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegian Merger), United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Free Church in 1952 approved the "United Testimony On Faith and Life" as the basis for union among these synods;

AND WHEREAS it is apparent also for this reason that the negotiations between the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church have not brought the American Lutheran Church into agreement with the doctrinal positions of the Synodical Conference;

THEREFORE WE ASK the Synodical Conference to reject the St. Louis Union Resolutions of 1938 and the Common Confession as satisfactory doctrinal statements.

The Synodical Conference did not reject the 1938 Resolutions, but referred them to a new committee to be appointed. Because the 1938 Union Resolutions were never rejected by the Missouri Synod or by the Synodical Conference, it was altogether in place that this was included in the Suspension resolution of 1955. The 1938 Resolutions are not mentioned by name in any resolutions adopted by the Mo. Synod in 1956. However, the following resolution may possibly be intended to serve as an answer also on this point (Proc. 1956, p. 546):

WHEREAS, Dissatisfaction has been expressed in and outside of our Synod in regard to various doctrinal documents approved by Synod; and

WHEREAS, Such dissatisfaction seems to rest on the charge of inadequacy and lack of clarity in the doctrinal statements concerning election, objective justification, conversion, and the inspiration of the Scriptures; therefore be it  
 RESOLVED, That we reject any and every interpretation of documents approved by Synod which would be in disagreement with the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Brief Statement.

We must therefore conclude that this document, which constitutes an offense contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, has not been removed by the Missouri Synod in a proper manner. In seeking to answer the question at the head of this paper on the basis of this first point, we must therefore answer "No."

## II. The Saginaw Resolution of 1944.

The second point mentioned in the 1955 Suspension resolutions of the Norwegian Synod was the matter of the Saginaw Resolution of 1944. The Norwegian Synod said (Report, 1955, p. 43):

Then came the Saginaw Resolution of 1944, which attempted to draw a distinction between "joint prayer" and "prayer fellowship" -- a distinction which the Missouri Synod previously had never made. These resolutions, accordingly, were also protested by our Norwegian Synod on the grounds that this distinction cannot be supported on the basis of Scripture and opens the door to further unionistic practices. The answer of the Missouri Synod to such protests was the reaffirmation of its 1944 Resolution (cf. Proceedings of the 40th Regular Convention of the Missouri Synod, 1947, p. 517; also Proceedings of the 42nd Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1953, p. 552)."

Here is the Resolution adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1944 (Proc. 1944, p. 251f.):

We reaffirm the position taken at the Fort Wayne Convention, page 303, paragraph 11, "that in the meantime it be understood that no pulpit, altar, or prayer fellowship has been established between us and the American Lutheran Church; and until such fellowship has been officially declared by the synods concerned, no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which ignores the fact that we are not yet united." However, joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for His guidance and blessing upon the deliberations and discussions of His Word, does not militate against the resolution of the Fort Wayne Convention, provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error. Local conditions will determine the advisability of such prayer. Above all, the conscience of a brother must not be violated nor offense be given.

This resolution thus made a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer, a distinction that had not previously been made within the Synodical Conference. As a fruit of this resolution, the Missouri Synod Committee on Doctrinal Unity joined in prayer with the commissioners of the A.L.C. in their meetings. In answer to memorials from within its own midst, the Missouri Synod at its 1947 convention resolved: "That we re-affirm the resolutions on prayer fellowship adopted by the Saginaw, Mich., Convention." (Proc. 1947, p. 517)

Again in 1950 numerous memorials were before the Missouri Synod convention, asking that the Synod clarify its position regarding the 1944 Saginaw Resolution. In answer to these memorials the Synod adopted the following resolutions (Proc. 1950, p. 659):

WHEREAS, Synod has been asked to declare that "there is no Scriptural basis for a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer"; and

WHEREAS, This question requires further study; and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod has been directed to provide such a study; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this question be held in abeyance until the treatise on "Prayer Fellowship" has been published; and be it Furthermore

RESOLVED, That if further clarity is needed on the question, it shall be referred to the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Practice.

Again in 1953 at the Missouri Synod convention in Houston, Texas, numerous memorials were received requesting the Synod to clarify its position in this matter. Upon recommendation of Committee 3, the following resolution was adopted by the Missouri Synod, with 7 negative votes cast (Proc. 1953, p. 552):

WHEREAS, Such prayer at intersynodical meetings does not pretend that doctrinal unity exists where it does not exist, nor intimate that doctrinal differences are unimportant, but rather implores God, from whom true unity in the spirit must come, for His blessing, in order that unity may be achieved in those things where it is lacking; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That Synod declare it does not consider Joint Prayer at intersynodical meetings unionistic and sinful, "provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error" (Proceedings of the 1947 Chicago Convention, page 517).

Ten years after the Saginaw Resolution was adopted, in 1954, the Norwegian Synod again took the matter into consideration at its convention, desiring to put an end to the confusion that had resulted. This time the Norwegian Synod decided to take the matter before the Synodical Conference convention. In its memorial to the Synodical Conference the Norwegian Synod said (Report 1954, p. 45):

WE ALSO ASK the Synodical Conference to adopt the following resolution:

RESOLVED: We reject the resolution with regard to Prayer Fellowship adopted by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1944, at its Saginaw Convention, since it conflicts with the above-stated definition of Unionism.

The definition of Unionism here referred to is quoted from the Concordia Cyclopedia of 1927, pp. 774-5, which states:

Religious unionism consists in joint worship and work of those not united in doctrine. Its essence is an agreement to disagree. . . All joint ecclesiastical efforts for religious work (missionary, educational, etc.) and particularly joint worship and mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who confess the truth, and those who deny any part of it, is sinful unionism.

The Synodical Conference, however, did not reject the Missouri Synod resolution of 1944 on Joint Prayer. Rather it referred the matter to a committee for study.

Again in 1956 the Missouri Synod was asked from many sources to clarify its position in this matter. It adopted the following resolution (Proc. 1956, p. 550):

WHEREAS, Synod has spoken clearly and unambiguously on fellowship, prayer fellowship, and unionism; and

WHEREAS, However, implications and interpretations have been attached to these expressions of Synod which have disturbed the consciences of some; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the joint theological faculties of Synod be requested to furnish comprehensive studies on these matters, and to make them available to the members of Synod at least one year prior to the next convention of Synod in 1959.

If we therefore are to seek an answer to the question at the head of this paper on the basis of this second point, the answer must again be "No."

### III. The Chicago Statement.

The third point mentioned in the 1955 Suspension resolutions of the Norwegian Synod as being an offense which must be removed before fellowship could be resumed was the "Chicago Statement." Regarding this document the Synod said (Report, p.44):

In 1945 the Chicago Statement appeared, signed by 44 Missouri Synod pastors and professors, many of whom held high positions of leadership in that Synod. This was a document which further weakened the bulwarks against unionism and laid down unscriptural principles of church fellowship. Representatives of our Norwegian Synod repeatedly asked the Missouri Synod in committee meetings either to require the signers of the Statement to retract or to exercise discipline over against them. In this case no satisfactory doctrinal discipline was exercised, nor did these signers retract their Statement.

For the sake of completeness, we shall here reprint the entire document which is at issue. It was written in the form of 12 Theses, as follows:

#### A STATEMENT

We, the undersigned, as individuals, members of Synod, conscious of our responsibilities and duties before the Lord of the Church, herewith subscribe to the following statement --

1.

We affirm our unswerving loyalty to the great evangelical heritage of historic Lutheranism. We believe in its message and mission for this crucial hour in the time of man.

We therefore deplore any and every tendency which would limit the power of our heritage, reduce it to narrow legalism, and confine it to manmade traditions.

2.

We affirm our faith in the great Lutheran principle of the inerrancy, certainty, and all-sufficiency of Holy Writ.

We therefore deplore a tendency in our Synod to substitute human judgments, synodical resolutions, or other sources of authority for the supreme authority of Scripture.

3.

We affirm our conviction that the Gospel must be given free course so that it may be preached in all its truth and power to all the nations of the earth.

We therefore deplore all man-made walls and barriers and all ecclesiastical traditions which would hinder the free course of the Gospel in the world.

4.

We believe that the ultimate and basic motive for all our life and work must be love -- love of God, love of the Word, love of the brethren, love of souls. We affirm our conviction that the law of love must also find application to our relationship to other Lutheran bodies.

We therefore deplore a loveless attitude which is manifesting itself within Synod. This unscriptural attitude has been expressed in suspicions of brethren, in the impugning of motives, and in the condemnation of all who have expressed differing opinions concerning some of the problems confronting our Church today.

## 5.

We affirm our conviction that sound exegetical procedure is the basis for sound Lutheran theology.

We therefore deplore the fact that Romans 16:17,18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. It is our conviction, based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that the text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America. We furthermore deplore the misuse of First Thessalonians 5:22 in the translation "avoid every appearance of evil." This text should be used only in its true meaning, "avoid evil in every form."

## 6.

We affirm the historic Lutheran position concerning the central importance of the *Una Sancta* and the local congregation. We believe that there should be a reemphasis of the privileges and responsibilities of the local congregation also in the matter of determining questions of fellowship.

We therefore deplore the new and improper emphasis on the synodical organization as basic in our consideration of the problems of the Church. We believe that no organizational loyalty can take the place of loyalty to Christ and His Church.

## 7.

We affirm our abiding faith in the historic Lutheran position concerning the centrality of the atonement and the Gospel as the revelation of God's redeeming love in Christ.

We therefore deplore any tendency which reduces the warmth and power of the Gospel to a set of intellectual propositions which are to be grasped solely by the mind of man.

## 8.

We affirm our conviction that any two or more Christians may pray together to the Triune God in the name of Jesus Christ if the purpose for which they meet and pray is right according to the Word of God. This obviously includes meetings of groups called for the purpose of discussing doctrinal differences.

We therefore deplore the tendency to decide the question of prayer fellowship on any other basis beyond the clear words of Scripture.

## 9.

We believe that the term "Unionism" should be applied only to acts in which a clear and unmistakable denial of Scriptural truth or approval of error is involved.

We therefore deplore the tendency to apply this non-Biblical term to any and every contact between Christians of different denominations.

## 10.

We affirm the historic Lutheran position that no Christian has a right to take offense at anything which God has commanded in His holy Word. The plea of offense must not be made a cover for the irresponsible expression of prejudices, traditions, customs, and usages.

## 11.

We affirm our conviction that in keeping with the historic Lutheran tradition and in harmony with the Synodical Resolution adopted in 1938 regarding Church fellowship, such fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church.

## 12.

We affirm our conviction that our Lord has richly, singularly, and undeservedly blessed our beloved Synod during the first century of its existence in America. We pledge the efforts of our hearts and hands to the building of Synod as the second century opens and new opportunities are given us by the Lord of the Church.

This document was then signed on Sept. 7, 1945, by 44 men from various parts of the United States. Among the signers, 20 men held no pastorates, being professors or engaged in youth work and social agencies. Four men were District presidents, one man a District secretary, five men professors at the St. Louis seminary, others were connected with the Valparaiso University, the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, the Alther League, and Social Welfare agencies. During the following months many additional signers were added to the original 44.

Efforts were made during 1946 by the so-called "Committee of Ten and Ten" (ten men from each side) to come to a settlement. On January 6, 1947, the president of the Missouri Synod met with the committee of signers, and at that time adopted the following Agreement:

An earnest evaluation of the discussions involved in "A Statement" has demonstrated that we are agreed on many of its assertions, even though agreement has not been reached on some of the specific questions raised. The discussions have also shown that interpretations of some of the expressions in the accompanying letter and in the deplorations have been made which were not intended by the Signers. The language is not always clear to everyone. Nothing has developed, however, which is divisive of church fellowship.

The longer discussions of this nature are drawn out, especially if the basis of the discussion is not understood by all participants in the same sense, the greater looms the danger of misunderstanding and the injection of personalities, temperament, personal experience, and emotion where calm objective judgment should prevail.

It has therefore been agreed in a meeting of the Praesidium and of the representatives of the Signers that in the interest of peace and harmony in our midst and for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God at large "A Statement" and "The Accompanying Letter" be withdrawn as a basis of discussion so that the issues involved may be studied objectively on the basis of theses prepared under the auspices of the President of Synod.

The withdrawal of "A Statement" as a basis of discussion shall not be interpreted as a retraction; nor shall it mean that the issues involved shall now be glossed over or ignored. They shall become the topics of special study and prayerful consideration which will lead us, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, to an ever more consecrated adherence to the Word and will of God.

What has the Norwegian Synod said with regard to the Chicago Statement? The General Pastoral Conference studied the matter in January of 1946, and adopted a resolution in which the following was stated (Report, 1946, p. 58):

It is with genuine concern for the unity of faith in the Synodical Conference that we ask our brethren of the Missouri Synod to recognize the confusion which these union endeavors have caused in its own ranks and within the Synodical Conference generally. From the STATEMENT of the forty-four sent out from Chicago in 1945, we judge that a liberal and unionistic spirit is abroad in our midst which, if it prevails, will work havoc with sound Lutheranism. We ask our brethren of the Missouri Synod to rise up against this spirit with a renewal of the old time vigor and earnestness in contending for the faith, that we may all stand together in the confession of the one true faith and in that strong opposition to error which a true confession demands.

In 1947 the Missouri Synod observed its 100th anniversary at its convention. However, all was not peace and harmony within its own midst. Numerous memorials had been presented to the convention asking the Synod to reject certain teachings expressed in "A Statement." The convention adopted the following resolution (Proc., 1947, p. 523):



WHEREAS, "A Statement" as such no longer is a basis for discussion according to the "Agreement" reported by the President; and

WHEREAS, The issues raised by "A Statement" and by memorials referring to "A Statement" are being submitted for study to pastors and congregations on the basis of materials supplied by direction of the President; and

WHEREAS, The subject matter is such as to call for time and patience, so that all pastors and maymen may have an opportunity to study the same in a quiet, earnest, and prayerful manner (a course which the Church should always follow); and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that we continue on the foundation of God's Word, and God's Word alone; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the President continue to submit to pastors and congregations material for the Scriptural study of the questions at issue.

The Norwegian Synod, at its convention in August of 1949, resolved to send a recommendation to the presidents and secretaries of the sister synods. That recommendation read in part as follows (Report, 1949, p. 76f.):

In view of the continued agitation in Synodical Conference circles for union with heterodox Lutherans on a wider basis than the conservative Lutheran Church has hitherto considered Scriptural, particularly in the field of so-called "externals" of church work, we of the Norwegian Synod wish to present to our sister Synods our position on the following points:

1. With regard to Pres. J. W. Behnken's call for a "Free Conference": -- Although we, in general, favor "free conferences" for doctrinal discussion with any and all who are willing to bow to the Word of God, we consider such "free conferences" of but doubtful value at the present stage in union negotiations among Lutherans. They are not welcomed by those Liberal Lutherans who want federation or organic union at once without further doctrinal discussion. Nor can they accomplish much toward building up a more conservative spirit in our own and other churches, so long as we in our own circles are divided on the fundamental question of what constitutes "Unionism." Cf. the agitation still carried on by the so-called "Statementarians," the "American Lutheran," etc.

Many controversial issues were before the 1950 convention of the Missouri Synod in Milwaukee, Wisc. This was the year in which the Common Confession came to the fore. Then there were memorials before the Synod asking for correction or clarification in the following matters: 1) the essay delivered by Dr. Arndt before two District conventions; 2) the President's Theses on the Church; 3) Synodical discipline; 4) the St. Louis faculty opinion on Rom. 16:17; 5) the pamphlet by Dr. Th. Graebner on "Prayer Fellowship"; 6) the St. Louis faculty opinion on engagement; 7) participation of St. Louis seminary students in the Association of Lutheran Seminarians; 8) a proposed investigation of the St. Louis faculty; 9) protests against the appointment of E. J. Friedrich as 4th Vice President; 10) purging the Lutheran Witness of error; 11) the Saginaw resolutions. In addition to all this, many pages of memorials were presented asking the Synod to take some definite stand with regard to the "A Statement."

The Missouri Synod spoke with regard to the "A Statement" by adopting the following resolutions (Proc., 1950, p. 658):

WHEREAS, Synod in 1947, convinced that the issues raised by "A Statement" should be submitted to the members of Synod for earnest and prayerful study on the basis of God's Word, resolved "that the President continue to submit to pastors and congregations material for the Scriptural study of the questions at issue" (Proceedings, 1947, page 523); and

WHEREAS, The President has faithfully endeavored to carry out this resolution, and has thus far submitted four essays, which have helped to bring the respective points at issue to a discussion for clarification; and

WHEREAS, Reactions to these essays received by the President should have due consideration, so that matters in controversy may be settled on the basis of God's Word and true unity be retained; and

WHEREAS, Not all matters at issue have as yet been presented through material from the President's office and several additional essays are in preparation; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we commend the President for his effort in submitting the essays sent out thus far and urge him, according to the resolution of the convention 1947, to complete the program by continuing "to submit to pastors and congregations material for the Scriptural study of the questions at issue"; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the President be encouraged to use the reactions received in connection with these essays for the furtherance of agreement on the questions raised, to the end that we may "be perfectly joined together in the same judgment," 1 Cor. 1:10; and be it further

RESOLVED, That specific accusations in the memorials on "A Statement" be referred to the proper channels of Synod.

At this same convention the Missouri Synod also adopted the following resolution (Proc., 1950, p. 669):

WHEREAS, The brethren of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States and the brethren of the Norwegian Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church have addressed letters to our Synod on matters of doctrine and practice within our Church; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That we gratefully acknowledge in these letters of the brethren an evidence of sincere concern for the welfare of God's kingdom; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we acknowledge the right and duty of our brethren in the Synodical Conference to call to our attention matters of doctrine and practice within our Church that have disturbed them; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we ask the Praesidium to answer the letters of the brethren of the Wisconsin Synod and the Norwegian Synod on the basis of the action of this convention.

During the following years the matter of the Chicago "Statement" was more or less lost in the shuffle, since attention was now centered on the "Common Confession." However, in response to several memorials, the Missouri Synod in 1953 did adopt the following resolution (Proc., 1953, p. 546):

WHEREAS, According to the Proceedings of Synod in 1947 (page 523) "'A Statement' as such is no longer a basis for discussion"; and

WHEREAS, Issues raised by "A Statement" have been ~~are~~ are being submitted for study to pastors and congregations on the basis of materials and theses supplied by the President; and

WHEREAS, The Convention of 1950 (cf. Proceedings, page 658) encouraged the President to use the reactions submitted in connection with these theses for the furtherance of agreement on the issues raised; and

WHEREAS, The President has informed your Committee that he is dealing with reactions submitted in connection with the theses sent out under his direction; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Convention refer the matter contained in Memorial 621 (3) to the Praesidium for consideration and for the purpose of obtaining "furtherance of agreement" on the issues raised.

Early in 1954 a brochure entitled "Our Relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod" was published and sent out by the Norwegian Synod to most pastors in the Synodical Conference. In this brochure it was stated (p. 7):

In 1945, the liberal, "left-wing" element in the Missouri Synod felt itself strong enough to publish a manifesto, called the "Chicago Statement," signed by 44 leading pastors and professors, which openly rejected the old Missourian stand on church unity and related subjects. Although there was wide opposition to the false principles expressed in the "Statement," nothing effective was done to discipline the errorists. In fact, many of the "signers" -- there were eventually several hundred pastors and professors who subscribed to the "Statement," -- were rewarded by more influential offices in the church than they had held before.

That was then the background for the resolution concerning "A Statement" which the Norwegian Synod included in its Suspension resolutions of 1955, as found at the beginning of this section. The convention directed that the entire Suspension report be forwarded to the 1956 convention of the Missouri Synod, to be held at St. Paul, Minn., hoping that proper action in this matter might finally be taken. In addition, several other memorials had been presented to the Missouri Synod pertaining to the "Statement" and related matters. The resolution which was adopted by the Missouri Synod was as follows (Proc., 1956, p. 552f.):

WHEREAS, The matter of "A Statement" has been dealt with by the responsible officials and by three previous conventions of Synod (1947, 1950, and 1953); and  
 WHEREAS, The President of Synod continues to take actions which are designed to carry out the instructions made by these synodical conventions (Proceedings, 1947, p. 523f.; 1950, p. 658; 1953, p. 546); therefore be it  
 RESOLVED, That this Convention take no further action.

That is the situation which then faces the Norwegian Synod today. When we again ask the question which is found at the head of this paper, what will the answer be on the basis of this third point? We can only answer "No." The matter was also discussed at several conventions of the Synodical Conference, but no satisfactory recommendations or action have been forthcoming to do away with this long-standing offense.

#### IV. Agreement with the National Luth. Council.

The fourth point mentioned in the 1955 Suspension resolution of the Norwegian Synod which stands as an offense which must be removed before fellowship relations can be resumed concerns the agreement between the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council. The Norwegian Synod resolution reads (Report 1955, p. 44):

Then came the agreement with the National Lutheran Council, a federation of liberal and heterodox Lutheran synods, by which the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod entered into joint welfare work and joint armed service work with these erroristic groups (cf. Proceedings of the 43rd Regular Convention of the Synodical Conference, 1954, pp. 99-100) -- a practice which is still being carried on, contrary to all the principles of the Synodical Conference and the "old" Missouri Synod (cf. Directory for Service People, May-June, 1955). To these acts of unionism, as well as numerous other instances, our Norwegian Synod has repeatedly protested, but to no avail.

Again we would do well to learn a little about the background for this resolution. It was at the 1944 convention of the Missouri Synod at which the President of the Missouri Synod stated the following in his report to the Synod (Proc., 1944, p. 15):

The war emergency necessitated several meetings with representatives of the National Lutheran Council. One of the items under consideration was the determination of areas in which there might be co-operation. As a result we have had co-operation in the renting and maintenance of Lutheran Service Centers and in the work among the prisoners of war. Your President ever emphasized that such co-operation in externals does not imply fellowship and that Lutheran fellowship must necessarily be based on true Lutheran unity.

Recently two meetings were held with the Executive Committee of the American Section of the Lutheran World Convention to determine possible co-operation in postwar rehabilitation and reconstruction. The agreement thus far is that we shall work together in as far as this can be done without violation of our principles.

The Missouri Synod adopted the following resolution (Proc., 1944, p. 252):

In Memorial 617 and in several other memorials of similar intent the recommendation is offered that Synod direct its responsible officers to make formal application for membership in the National Lutheran Council and that the Missouri Synod accept the duties and responsibilities of such membership under the constitution of the National Lutheran Council as adopted March 18, 1926.

After thorough consideration of these matters, your Committee respectfully presents the following:

WHEREAS, According to the best information available, membership in the National Lutheran Council, as at present constituted and in accordance with the proposed constitution, would apparently involve our Synod in unionistic principles and endeavors beyond a mere co-operation in externals and thus violate Scriptural principles which we are bound to observe; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we decline the request contained in Memorial No. 617 and others of the same intent and therefore do not direct our officers to make application for membership in the National Lutheran Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we request the President and the Vice-Presidents of Synod, together with our Committee on Lutheran Unity, to study the proposed constitution of the National Lutheran Council and to gather information as to the scope of the co-operative endeavors contemplated, with a view to collaborating with the National Lutheran Council in such matters as involve no violation of conscience and no denial of the truth.

In 1947 the President of the Missouri Synod reported as follows to the Synod convention (Proc., 1947, p. 15):

The convention at Saginaw decided that we were not to join the National Lutheran Council. However, it instructed the Praesidium and the Committee on Doctrinal Unity to study the Constitution of the National Lutheran Council as it was being revised at the time and later adopted, and also to gather further information as to the scope of the co-operative endeavors contemplated. These instructions were carried out. Both groups feel that in such matters as do not involve a violation of conscience nor a denial of truth we should be willing to co-operate. However, both groups were convinced that there are very few projects of which this is true, while, on the other hand, there is a great number of aims and objectives in which we could not participate without violation of Scriptural principles. A full report will be presented by the Committee on Lutheran Unity and Doctrinal Matters.

The Committee which had been authorized by the 1944 convention also made its report to the Missouri Synod. In its report it said (Proc., 1947, p. 535f.):

The following fields, which we believe to constitute major portions of the National Lutheran Council's planning and work, namely, student welfare work, missions among Jews, Negroes, and other minority groups, home missions, the publication of The Lutheran Outlook, youth work, postgraduate seminary work, are fields in which we cannot co-operate unless we are ready to change our whole definition of what constitutes unionistic practice. . . . .

There are, no doubt, areas in which we could participate, such as public relations, publicity, statistics, and in certain phases of public welfare. However, at the present time these constitute so small and limited areas of co-operation that it is a question of expediency, both to the National Lutheran Council and to the Missouri Synod, whether or not these limited fields of pure externals would justify the Missouri Synod in applying for such limited membership and make such limited membership acceptable to the National Lutheran Council. In these phases of the work in the National Lutheran Council the question of joining or not joining is one of expediency and not theology.

The Missouri Synod adopted the following resolution (Proc., 1947, p. 536):

WHEREAS, There is a difference of opinion among us on the issue of joining the National Lutheran Council and, therefore, evidently a lack of information; and

WHEREAS, There is no urgency demanding a decision on the question of joining or not joining the National Lutheran Council at the present time; and

WHEREAS, The policy of the National Lutheran Council with reference to its sphere of activity at home and abroad has not as yet been clearly defined; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That the Missouri Synod again officially express to the National Lutheran Council its willingness to co-operate in matters agreeing with Synod's principles; and

That a committee (two pastors, two laymen, one teacher) be appointed by the Praesidium and the Board of Directors to continue the study of the question of our relationship as a participating body in the National Lutheran Council and report its findings to the next synodical convention, after having submitted its findings to all pastors and congregations of our Church six months prior to the convention.

The question that was here involved, therefore, was this: What is co-operation in externals? This point was discussed at the Synodical Conference convention in 1948 in Milwaukee, Wisc. The following resolution was adopted (Proc., 1948, p. 146):

Your Committee at each meeting has discussed a number of joint activities among Lutherans some of which, on the one hand, have been condemned as unionistic and, on the other hand, have been defended by the argument that only a co-operation in externals is involved. While no definite conclusion was reached by your Committee, we wish to caution that such things only as actually are externals be regarded as externals, and that wherever there is co-operation in such externals, it be not made the occasion for joint work in the spiritual sphere.

An interesting side-light might here be mentioned. The Christian Century (Oct. 27, 1948) contained an article in which it charged that the Synodical Conference, and especially the Missouri Synod, lived "behind an ecclesiastical iron curtain." In the May, 1949, issue of the American Lutheran, Dr. O. A. Geiseman defended his Synod against this charge by saying in an editorial:

Quite obviously the writer of the article was not too well informed, for the truth is that our church now is co-operating and for a long time past has co-operated with various religious agencies which in no sense of the term could be said to be identified with the full doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. What is

more, this co-operation has applied not only to so-called externals such as feeding and clothing the needy, but to the very heart and core of the church's task, which is bearing witness to the saving grace of God in Christ.

This whole matter of "co-operation in externals" was also duly studied by the Norwegian Synod. The General Pastoral Conference discussed the matter in its meetings in 1947, 1948 and 1949. In this last year they agreed to bring the matter before the Synod on the basis of four Theses. One of the Synodical essays in this year was titled: "Co-operation in Externals," and was based on the four Theses adopted by the Pastoral Conference. The Theses were as follows (Report, 1949, p. 31):

In view of the confusion in Synodical Conference circles in regard to so-called co-operation in externals, we present the following propositions:

- 1) Unionism is joint worship or joint church work with those who do not confess the true faith in all respects. Rom. 16,17; Matt. 7,15; II John 10,11; Titus 3,10.
- 2) If orthodox Lutherans co-operate or associate with heterodox Lutherans in any phase of the Church's work such as Education, Missions, Charities, etc., they disregard the fact that joint church work with false teachers is unionism just as much as is joint worship. Ezra 4,1-3; II John 10,11.
- 3) The test of so-called externals in church work is whether they may properly be carried on with all manner of churches and religious or civic organizations.
- 4) Since the National Lutheran Council, as well as the Lutheran World Federation, was organized to promote co-operation in church work between all Lutherans, without regard to doctrinal differences, we object to them as unionistic organizations and refuse to take any part in their activities.

The Norwegian Synod itself also adopted a statement on "co-operation in externals" at this same convention. It stated (Report, 1949, p. 77):

With regard to the "co-operation in externals", so-called, which is becoming so widespread in our circles through such organizations as "Lutheran Men in America", "The Lutheran Editors' Association", "The Association of Lutheran Seminaries", certain Welfare agencies, etc.; -- We hold that this constitutes Unionism. Cf. the Brief Statement. The organizations referred to do not limit themselves to things properly to be called "externals", but concern themselves also with the spiritual side of the work of the church.

It was obvious then that this matter would receive a great deal of attention at the 1950 convention of the Missouri Synod. The Committee appointed by the previous convention submitted its report, recommending that the Synod not join the N.L.C. at that time, but that it express its eagerness and earnest desire to work together with it in matters which are mutually agreeable. (Proc., 1950, p. 682). One member of the Committee presented a minority report, recommending that the Synod affiliate with the N.L.C. Other resolutions, representing both views, were also presented to the convention. The following resolutions were then adopted (Proc., 1950, p. 692):

WHEREAS, The constitution of the National Lutheran Council lists among its purposes and objectives joint activities in church work, such as missions, education, and student service (Article III,g) despite a lack of doctrinal agreement . . . . ; and

WHEREAS, Therefore much of the program of the Council is of a unionistic nature, as is plainly shown in the majority report of the Committee on Membership in the National Lutheran Council; and

WHEREAS, Recent developments show that there are unsettled organizational problems within the National Lutheran Council involving the possibility of organic union of the participating bodies of the Council; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That under the present conditions we decline to apply for membership as a participating body in the National Lutheran Council.

WHEREAS, There are certain areas of purely external endeavor in which our Church may participate, as it has done in the past; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That we express our continued willingness to co-operate with the National Lutheran Council wherever it can be done without compromising Scriptural principles.

It was on Jan. 5, 1951, that this bud of "co-operation in externals" blossomed out into full flower. For on this day in Washington, D.C., an agreement was reached between representatives of the Missouri Synod and of the National Lutheran Council regarding the communing of military personnel. This Agreement was subsequently ratified by the Praesidium of the Missouri Synod without, however, consulting with its sister Synods beforehand. Again for the sake of completeness we shall here present the full text of the Agreement (Quartalschrift, April 1951, p. 142f.):

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ARMED SERVICES COMMISSION, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD AND THE BUREAU OF SERVICE TO MILITARY PERSONNEL OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL.

1. This agreement is made with an eagerness to render our full duty to our country in a time of great emergency, to our Church in a time of severe testing, and to those members of our respective church organizations who in these perilous times more than ever need the consolation, guidance, and assistance of the church of their faith, and the Savior of their souls; and is drawn in full recognition of the positions, rights, doctrinal expressions of each of the parties to the agreement.
2. The parties agree to a co-operative conduct of service to Lutherans and others in the armed forces.
3. This service shall be concerned principally with a spiritual ministry, with major emphasis upon the preaching of the Word and the administering of the Sacraments, and on personal contact and counseling; and with the largest possible use of existing congregational facilities.
4. In this service, all those co-operating shall respect the confessional position of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and/or the National Lutheran Council churches.
5. As far as possible in each local situation, the spiritual welfare work in the interest of members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod shall be done by chaplains and pastors of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; and the spiritual welfare work in the interest of the members of the National Lutheran Council churches shall be done by chaplains and pastors of the churches of the National Lutheran Council.
6. In the matter of admission to the Lord's Supper, the rule shall be recognized by representatives of both groups: the normal procedure shall be that members of each group attend the Communion Services conducted by the representatives of that particular group.
7. Just as in our civilian church life, there are exceptions to the usual procedure in the administration of the Lord's Supper, thus exceptional cases arise in dealing with men and women in the armed forces.
8. In exceptional situations, where a member of one group earnestly seeks admission to the Lord's Supper conducted by a representative of the other group, the individual case in each instance will be considered by the pastor concerned. It is agreed that in such cases particular synodical membership of a Lutheran in the armed forces shall not be a required condition for admission to the Lord's Supper.

9. It is agreed that the chaplain or pastor may commune such men and women in the armed forces as are conscious of the need of Repentance and hold the Essence of Faith, including the doctrines of the Real Presence and of the Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace, and profess acceptance thereof.
10. Chaplains and pastors are encouraged, furthermore, to insert regular notices in bulletins, etc., announcing the celebrations of the Lord's Supper which are scheduled by the representatives of both the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, thus adhering to the principles set forth in the above paragraphs, and avoiding multiplication of exceptional cases.
11. In the administration of the Lord's Supper, chaplains and pastors are encouraged in all cases to take a sympathetic and evangelical attitude toward the men and women in the armed forces.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the Union Committee therefore presented its report to the 1951 convention of the Norwegian Synod, it said (Report, 1951, p. 43):

As we review the course which the Missouri Synod has followed in its union negotiations with the American Lutheran Church since 1935, we are forced to the depressing conclusion that while the Missouri Synod is indeed closer to a unity with the American Lutheran Church than it has ever been, this unity is not in the truth, but rather makes room for the errors of the American Lutheran Church, and threatens the breaking up of our Synodical Conference. We do not draw this conclusion from our sister-Synod's union negotiations only. It has shown its lax spirit in other ways as, for example, in its official acceptance of government chaplaincies in the armed forces, in its official approval of Scouting under Church auspices, in its official approval of joint prayer with the heterodox, and in its official agreement with the unionistic and erring National Lutheran Council regarding joint-communion.

This concern was further deepened by certain events which now took place. The Religious News Service reported that on Nov. 6 and 7, 1951, a semi-annual retreat was held in an army chapel in a Bavarian mountain resort. The group consisted of pastors and chaplains from the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council. A communion service was conducted by Col. Martin Poch (Mo. Synod), chief of air force chaplains in Europe.

This matter was again discussed at the 1953 Houston convention of the Missouri Synod. The Synod resolved as follows (Proc., 1953, p. 557):

WHEREAS, The conditions which prompted Synod's action with respect to membership in the National Lutheran Council at its convention in Milwaukee remain unchanged; be it

RESOLVED, That Synod's resolution of 1950, in which Synod declined to apply for membership in the National Lutheran Council, but expressed its willingness to co-operate with the National Lutheran Council wherever it can be done without compromising Scriptural principles, remain in force during the coming triennium.

At this same convention an unprinted Memorial asked that the Agreement between the Missouri Synod and the N.L.C. be either "disavowed" or "properly amended" by the Synod. The Synod resolved as follows (Proc., 1953, p. 565):

WHEREAS, Committee 3 examined the Articles of Agreement and finds that they safeguard Synod's Scriptural position with regard to unionism, and at the same time recognize exceptional cases that may arise due to military service and that properly fall into the realm of casuistry; be it



RESOLVED, That Synod decline the request of Unprinted Memorial No. 31; and be it  
 RESOLVED, That Synod urge all pastors to instruct their members entering the service with respect to our Scriptural position on unionism, so that exceptional cases arising in military life may not become the rule and gradually undermine sound practice in our congregations.

At the 1956 St. Paul convention of the Missouri Synod, one of the member congregations asked that "the convention be requested to reserve ample time in its general sessions for the hearing and review of the representations of our sister synods and for full and unrestricted discussion of the matters in controversy, in order that the convention itself may render a considered and clear response on the issues." The Synod decided as follows (Proc., 1956, p. 518):

WHEREAS, There is a vast amount of business before this convention and a limited time in which to accomplish the business at hand; and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod has informed us that approximately five hours of general time are scheduled to be devoted to the Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters; and

WHEREAS, The opportunity will be given in open hearings to consider the representations of our sister synods and of members of our Synod who share the convictions of our sister synods; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That we adopt the program as scheduled by the President of Synod.

The Intersynodical and Doctrinal Matters which took up these 5 hours of time were reports and/or memorials concerning: 1) the Common Confession; 2) Invitation from the ULCA and Augustana Synod; 3) Finnish relations; 4) Service Directory for Armed Forces; 5) Request for correction of District essay; 6) Rejection of ACDP report; 7) Correction of doctrinal errors advocated within the Synod; 8) Thesis on Christ's Descent into Hell; 9) the Lutheran World Federation; 10) Doctrinal discipline; 11) Clarification of position on Prayer Fellowship and unionism; 12) Complaints against statements in the "Seminarian," "The Presence," the "American Lutheran," and in "Una Sancta"; 13) Romanizing tendencies; 14) Rejection of "A Statement"; 15) Woman's suffrage; 16) Conscientious objections in time of war; 17) Fraternal organizations; 18) Boy scouts. In addition to these, the Suspension resolution of the Norwegian Synod and the resolutions of the Wisconsin Synod and of the Synodical Conference were also to be discussed.

Apparently no time was spent discussing the objections of the Norwegian Synod to the Communion Agreement reached between the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council. At least no resolutions were adopted pertaining thereto. Again we ask the question at the head of this paper. Have the offenses with regard to this point (Communion Agreement with the National Lutheran Council) been removed by the Missouri Synod in a proper manner? Our answer can only be "No."

### V. The Common Confession.

The fifth and final point mentioned in the 1955 Suspension resolution of the Norwegian Synod as being a cause for the Suspension was the Common Confession. The Norwegian Synod resolved concerning this (Report, 1955, p. 44):

Then, in 1950, came the Common Confession, the most recent document between the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the A.L.C., which was hailed as a settlement of the past doctrinal differences between these two bodies and a sufficient basis for union between them (cf. Proceedings of the 41st Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1950, p. 585). To this document we can only state once again that, in spite of numerous attempts to prove the adequacy of the Common Confession, we find it to be a document of compromise which does not in any way reject the errors of the A.L.C. and which is, therefore, inadequate as a settlement of past doctrinal differences and unsatisfactory as a basis for union. Once again our Norwegian Synod petitioned the Missouri Synod to "reconsider its adoption of the Common Confession and to reject it as a settlement of its doctrinal differences with the A.L.C." (cf. Report of the 34th Regular Convention of the Norwegian Synod, 1951, pp. 54-55). In this case our petition was met by resolutions calling for postponement and delay (cf. Proceedings of the 42nd Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1953, p. 539).

We shall not attempt to go into great detail with regard to all the union documents drawn up between the Missouri Synod and the A.L.C. We shall, however, summarize them briefly. The first of these were the so-called "Chicago Theses," brought up for adoption or rejection at the 1929 convention of the Missouri Synod. The report of the Intersynodical Committee was adopted, in which they stated among other things (Proc., 1929, p. 110):

After careful examination of the revised theses of August, 1928, your Committee finds itself compelled to advise Synod to reject these theses as a possible basis for union with the Synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate. At times they do not touch upon the point of controversy; at times they are so phrased that both parties can find in them their own opinion; at times they incline more to the position of our opponents than to our own.

In adopting the Committee report, the Synod also added (Proc., 1929, p. 113):

1. It was emphasized that future discussion be contingent on the following two conditions: --
  - a) That the move toward fellowship between the Ohio and Iowa synods, on the one hand, and the Norwegian Lutheran Church, on the other, be first adjusted according to the Word of God;
  - b) That future deliberations proceed from the exact point of controversy and take into account the pertinent history.

This Convention then appointed a new Committee, headed by Dr. Fr. Pieper, to draw up a statement covering the doctrines that had been in dispute among Lutherans in America and setting forth the position of the Missouri Synod. This resulted in the "Brief Statement," which was then adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1932. - In 1935 the Missouri Synod accepted an invitation extended by the A.L.C. (the U.L.C. also being invited) to confer about establishing pulpit and altar fellowship. The Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods turned down the same invitation on grounds that it was offered on a unionistic basis. After meeting 6 times with representatives of the A.L.C., the Mo. Synod "Committee on Lutheran Church Union" presented the "Declaration" to the Synodical Conference. In this document the A.L.C. defined its position over toward the "Brief Statement." The Union Committee recommended that this "Declaration"

be adopted, but the Missouri Synod declared that the "Declaration" together with the "Brief Statement" should be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between it and the A.L.C. (Proc., 1938, p. 231). - The Norwegian Synod in 1938 circularized the clergy of the Synodical Conference with a critical analysis of the "Declaration" and with a statement on "Unity, Union and Unionism." The Wisconsin Synod also officially rejected the "Declaration" in 1939, and called on the Missouri Synod to "suspend further negotiations with the A.L.C. until that body had given up its unionistic position." (Wisc. Synod Proc., 1939). In 1941 the Missouri Synod followed the advice of the Synodical Conference which asked it "earnestly to consider the advisability of bringing about the framing of one document of agreement." (Proc., 1941, p. 302). The Mo. Synod also resolved to continue negotiations with the A.L.C., in spite of protests from the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods. In 1944 it was reported to the Mo. Synod convention that the new "single document" was near completion and would be presented to the A.L.C. convention that fall. The A.L.C. convention referred this "Doctrinal Affirmation" to the conferences and districts of the A.L.C. for study. In 1946 the A.L.C. rejected the "Doctrinal Affirmation" because this "one document" did not sufficiently safeguard the principles which the A.L.C. had laid down in the "Declaration." It also re-affirmed its stand taken in 1938, that "it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines."

In 1947 the Committee on Doctrinal Unity reported to the Missouri Synod convention that "there are chiefly three difficulties standing in the way of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church: 1) The manifest lack of doctrinal unity. . . . 2) The difference in conviction regarding the degree of doctrinal unity required for fellowship. . . . 3) The membership of the American Lutheran Church in the American Lutheran Conference." (Proc., 1947, p. 497). However, the Missouri Synod resolved again to continue negotiations with the A.L.C., in spite of strong protests from the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods.

In 1950, shortly before the Missouri Synod convention, a new union document called the "Common Confession" was presented. Although time was limited for giving the document the thorough study required, numerous memorials were presented to the 1950 convention of the Mo. Synod asking the Synod to reject the document. The Synod adopted the following resolution (Proc., 1950, p. 585):

WHEREAS, By the grace of God the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of Synod and the Committee on Fellowship of the American Lutheran Church have jointly produced the document known as the "Common Confession"; and

WHEREAS, We find in this document nothing that contradicts the Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, We are of the conviction that, under God, our Synod should seek a God-pleasing unity with all Lutherans; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we rejoice and thank God that the "Common Confession" shows that agreement has been achieved in the doctrines treated by the two committees; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we accept the "Common Confession" as a statement of these doctrines in harmony with Scriptures; and be it further

RESOLVED, 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.

The Missouri Synod also adopted the following (Proc., 1950, p. 585f.):

WHEREAS, Not all phases of the doctrines of the Scriptures are treated in the "Common Confession"; and

WHEREAS, Further study or future developments may show the need of clarification or expansion of the "Common Confession"; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That additional statements, originating in the same manner as the present "Common Confession," may be submitted to future conventions of our Synod and the American Lutheran Church for adoption.

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synodical Conference provides that fellowship with another church body cannot be established by any one of its constituent synods without the consent of every synod in the Synodical Conference; and

WHEREAS, The American Lutheran Church already in 1938 declared itself ready to place the agreement reached with the Missouri Synod before its sister synods for approval and acceptance; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we request our President to place this matter before the Synodical Conference in order to secure the consent of the constituent synods to the action outlined in these resolutions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That our President inform the President of the American Lutheran Church of our action and request him, if the convention of the American Lutheran Church takes favorable action on the "Common Confession," to place the agreement reached with us before its sister synods for approval and acceptance.

WHEREAS, Several steps remain to be taken before church fellowship can be established between us and the American Lutheran Church, as outlined in the foregoing resolutions; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That when by the grace of God everything necessary for fellowship has been accomplished, this fact is to be announced officially by the President of Synod. Until then no action is to be taken by any member of Synod which would overlook the fact that we are not as yet united.

These resolutions were adopted by a majority vote. In October of 1950 the A.L.C. also adopted the "Common Confession," although without debate. This matter was discussed at great length at the 1951 convention of the Norwegian Synod. The Synod finally adopted the following resolution (Report, 1951, p. 54f.):

WHEREAS the matter of the Common Confession has been placed before our Synod by our sister synod, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, for our consent to the course of action outlined in the resolutions of the Missouri Synod,

BE IT RESOLVED that we cannot give our consent to the Common Confession as a settlement of doctrinal differences between the Synodical Conference and the American Lutheran Church, for the following reasons:

The Common Confession does not reject the errors of the American Lutheran Church. The document does not reject the false doctrine which has been expressed in the American Lutheran Church, that some parts of Scripture are not divinely inspired. John 10,35; II Tim. 3,16. On the contrary, when describing the origin of Scripture, the Common Confession uses the expression "content and fitting word," which is acceptable to many of those who also accept the false doctrine aforementioned.

Secondly, although the justification of all mankind in Christ (objective justification, Rom. 4,5, Rom. 5,18) has been openly denied within the American Lutheran Church, yet the Common Confession does not definitely state that God has declared all mankind to be righteous in Christ.

Thirdly, the error of the American Lutheran Church, that some people are converted to Christ while others are not, because the converted offer only a natural resistance, while others offer willful resistance -- this error is not rejected in the Common Confession. Rom. 3, 22-23.

Fourthly, the Common Confession does not reject the error taught in the American Lutheran Church that God elected His people to eternal life in view of their foreseen faith. (Acts 13, 48)

Fifthly, the Common Confession does not reject the error in the American Lutheran Church, that the Means of Grace belong to the essence of the Holy Christian Church. Eph. 2,19; Acts 2,38; Matt. 26,38. (The saints in heaven do not need the remission of sins.)

Sixthly, the Common Confession does not wholly reject such errors in the doctrine of the Last Things as the American Lutheran Church is tolerating, as, for example, that the Papacy may not be the Antichrist until the last day (II Thess. 2,8); that an unusually large number of Jews will be converted to Christ in the future (Acts 7,51; Rom. 8,7); and that there will be some kind of millennial reign of Christ (II Tim. 3,1). These are examples, sufficient to show that the Common Confession is not a settlement of the differences.

We therefore earnestly entreat our sister synod, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, to reconsider its adoption of the Common Confession and to reject it as a settlement of its doctrinal differences with the American Lutheran Church.

We further entreat the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to discontinue negotiations with the American Lutheran Church except on the basis of a full acceptance of the "Brief Statement." (Titus 3:10)

Concern for the truth and for the continuation of our fellowship with the Missouri Synod on the doctrinal basis which we have enjoyed in the Synodical Conference through these many years moves us to draw up these resolutions. We desire our fellowship on the basis of right doctrine and practice to continue. God grant that the unity which once prevailed in the Synodical Conference may be restored by a steadfast adherence to the Scriptural principles that have united us.

In 1952 the President of the Norwegian Synod reported that representatives of the A.L.C. had been meeting with representatives of the E.L.C., the Augustana Synod, the Lutheran Free Church, and the U.E.L.C., and had adopted a document known as "United Testimony on Faith and Life." The A.L.C. is also a member of the World Council of Churches and of the Lutheran World Federation, thereby showing itself to be a unionistic body. The Norwegian Synod determined therefore to send the following resolution to the 1952 convention of the Synodical Conference (Report, 1952, p. 68):

Esteemed Brethren:

WHEREAS one of the chief aims of our Synodical Conference, according to its constitution, is "to further unity in doctrine and practice, and to remove whatever might threaten to disturb this unity,"

WHEREAS our fellowship in the Synodical Conference is being strained by the adoption of the Common Confession and the continued negotiations of the Missouri Synod with the American Lutheran Church,

WHEREAS the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods have rejected The Common Confession as a settlement of doctrinal differences between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church,

WHEREAS the Slovak Synod "regards The Common Confession as a sufficient basis for future negotiations with Lutheran bodies toward the attainment of true unity in doctrine and practice," and suggests in its addenda various changes in The Common Confession,

WHEREAS many within the Missouri Synod have voiced their disapproval of this document, and some have even left in protest against it,

WHEREAS the American Lutheran Church, by its continuing fellowship with the National Lutheran Council of Churches, and by its union negotiations with the synods of the American Lutheran Conference, and by its official pronouncements regarding the toleration of error, has demonstrated that it is a persistently erring church body, and

WHEREAS our fellowship with the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference is treasured greatly by us and has been a source of many blessings, both spiritual and temporal,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Synodical Conference at its 1952 session allot sufficient time for a thorough discussion of The Common Confession and the continued doctrinal negotiations between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church on the floor of the Synodical Conference meeting in St. Paul, Minn., August 12 - 15, 1952.

At the 1952 Synodical Conference convention, the Floor Committee considering these matters said as follows (Proc. of Syn. Conf., 1952, p. 159):

Your Committee on Memorials has given extensive time to individuals and to groups for the discussion of the Wisconsin Synod and of the Norwegian Synod and herewith makes the following report:

WHEREAS, On the basis of these discussions your Committee on Memorials is of the opinion that the Common Confession in its present form is inadequate as a settlement of differences in regard to the doctrines; and

WHEREAS, Unity within the Synodical Conference has been disturbed by this document; and

WHEREAS, Two of the constituent Synods of the Synodical Conference have rejected the Common Confession; Therefore, we recommend

1. That time be allotted at this convention for a discussion of the Common Confession and of the propriety of the continued doctrinal negotiations between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, even if it necessitates an evening session; and
2. That we request the Missouri Synod at its next convention to give attention once again to the arguments against the Common Confession as a basis for negotiations; and
3. That the Wisconsin Synod and other groups and individuals so desiring be requested to present their arguments to the Missouri Synod in the form of memorials.

After a prolonged debate the convention resolved by majority vote to strike the preamble of the Floor Committee's report and to take up the discussion of the Committee's recommendations individually. Finally the motion was made and seconded "that this convention declares that it finds the Common Confession inadequate as a settlement of differences in regard to the doctrines treated therein and that it therefore in effect yields the Scriptural and historical doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference." This motion was tabled until Friday morning. At that time the following substitute resolution was proposed:

WHEREAS, Not all brethren of the Synodical Conference are persuaded that the Common Confession is adequate as a settlement of the doctrinal differences between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, The Committee on Doctrinal Unity of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as provided for by the Missouri Synod Convention Proceedings, page, 585, has prepared a tentative Part II of the Common Confession to meet the objections raised against the Common Confession; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Synodical Conference postpone all further action with reference to the Common Confession until said Part II has been completed and presented to the constituent Synods of the Synodical Conference and to the American Lutheran Church.

The motion to adopt this substitute motion was carried by a rising vote of 154 in favor and 62 against. (Proc., 1952, p. 160)

At the 1953 Houston convention of the Missouri Synod, the resolutions adopted by the Norwegian Synod in 1951 were up for consideration. Also before it was a statement adopted by the Norwegian Synod in 1953, in which it said (Report, 1953, p. 68):

We reaffirm our 1951 resolutions regarding the Common Confession and regarding continued negotiations with the American Lutheran Church, also for this reason (besides other reasons we have given), that the original purpose of a new confession, as defined by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1941, has not been fulfilled.

The Missouri Synod adopted the following resolution, with 12 negative votes cast (Proc., 1953, p. 538f.):

WHEREAS, The Norwegian Synod and the Wisconsin Synod have expressed their misgivings about Part I of the Common Confession (Reports and Memorials, pages 320-322; 357; 358); and

WHEREAS, The addition to Resolution 14, pages 585, 586, of the Proceedings of the 1950 convention makes explicit provision for additional statements to clarify the Common Confession; and

WHEREAS, Part II of the Common Confession is intended as a supplement to Part I; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, at its 1953 convention in Houston, Tex., resolved that "for purposes of study, Parts I and II of the Common Confession hereafter be treated as one document with the understanding that Part II has not yet been adopted"; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we respectfully request also our sister synods in the Synodical Conference, for purposes of study to treat Part I and Part II of the Common Confession as one document.

This same 1953 Missouri Synod convention also resolved to continue discussions with representatives of the A.L.C., although this resolution was adopted with 10 negative votes cast. (Proc., 1953, p. 534f.)

Much time was spent discussing this whole matter at the 1954 convention of the Norwegian Synod. It was decided, first of all, to circularize the entire clergy of the Missouri, Slovak, and Finnish National synods with the tract "Our Relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod." - In addition to this, an overture was sent to the convention of the Synodical Conference which was to meet in East Detroit, Mich., in August of the same year. This resolution contained 5 points: 1) asking the Synodical Conference to reaffirm its adherence to a statement on objective justification accepted by the first Synodical Conference convention in 1872; 2) asking the Synodical Conference to reaffirm its original stand against unionism by adopting the definition of Unionism in the Concordia Cyclopaedia of 1927; 3) asking the Synodical Conference to affirm that a statement in the Common Confession does not settle the differences between the Synodical Conference and the A.L.C. with regard to Objective Justification; 4) asking the Synodical Conference to reject the 1944 Saginaw resolution of the Mo. Synod on Prayer Fellowship; 5) asking the Synodical Conference to reject the 1938 St. Louis Articles of Union and the Common Confession as satisfactory doctrinal statements. (See Report, 1954, pp. 43-46.)

At this same 1954 Norwegian Synod convention, a motion from the floor to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod was tabled until the next regular or special convention of the Synod.

The Synodical Conference spoke as follows with regard to the overture from the Norwegian Synod (Proc. of Syn. Conf., 1954, p. 199f.):

WHEREAS, We would, under ordinary circumstances, consider it unnecessary to reaffirm our adherence to doctrines which our fathers and we also have already affirmed in the past; and

WHEREAS, However, in a special appeal of the Norwegian Synod presented to this convention in Point 1 of their Overture we recognize a very definite tone of anxiety on the part of our brethren regarding the Doctrine of Objective Justification; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Synodical Conference does hereby reaffirm its adherence to the doctrine as defined in the Synodical Conference Proceedings of the convention held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the month of July, 1872. . . . And

WHEREAS, A similar anxiety on the part of our Norwegian brethren in Point 2 of their Overture is expressed regarding unionism; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Synodical Conference hereby reaffirm its stand against unionism by making the definition of unionism quoted in Section II of the Overture of the Norwegian Synod its own. . . .

(Note: This was adopted with considerable opposition from Mo. Synod spokesmen.)

WHEREAS, Points 3, 4, and 5 of the Overture of the honorable Norwegian Synod are also doctrinal questions which are under debate among us; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Points 3, 4, and 5 be referred to one of the several committees which will be appointed as outlined in the report of the Floor Committee adopted by this convention.

Other pertinent resolutions of the Syn. Conference were (Proc., 1954, p. 193f.):

2. WHEREAS, Further fellowship negotiations between the American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have been suspended because of the merger actions of the American Lutheran Church; and . . .
4. WHEREAS, Not all synods of the Synodical Conference had a part in the negotiations between The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, which resulted in the drafting of the Common Confession; and
5. WHEREAS, The Wisconsin Synod and the Norwegian Synod and other individuals within the Synodical Conference believe that the Common Confession is unacceptable as a settlement of past differences with the American Lutheran Church; therefore be it
6. RESOLVED, That we request The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod not to use the Common Confession as a functioning union document, without, however, passing judgment pro or con on the doctrinal content of the Common Confession by this convention.

These resolutions of the Synodical Conference with regard to the Common Confession were adopted by majority vote, with many negative votes being recorded in the official Proceedings. - - In the fall of 1954 the American Lutheran Church unanimously adopted Part II of the Common Confession, and at the same time continued plans for merging with the other bodies in the American Lutheran Conference.

That was then the situation which faced the Norwegian Synod in 1955, when it drew up and adopted resolutions suspending fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on the basis of Rom. 16:17. The Synod also stated (Report, 1955, p. 45):

We feel, therefore, that, as matters now stand, further negotiations by committees will be fruitless; that an impasse has been reached in our fraternal relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; and that further negotiations will result in indifferentism and in compromise of Scriptural doctrine and



practice. At this point we can only say that we have testified to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as best we know how and have tried for many years to preserve the unity in confession and practice which we enjoyed with it for so many years.

What was done by the 1956 St. Paul convention of the Missouri Synod with regard to the Common Confession? The following resolution was adopted unanimously (Proc., 1956, p. 504f.):

WHEREAS, The Common Confession represents a sincere attempt on the part of Synod to achieve unity of doctrine with the American Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, Honest and painstaking scrutiny of both Part I and Part II of the Common Confession has revealed nothing in conflict with the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, It appears from recent historical developments that the Common Confession can no longer serve as a functioning union document; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That hereafter the Common Confession (Parts I and II) be not regarded or employed as a functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Common Confession, one document composed of Parts I and II, be recognized as a statement in harmony with the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

With regard to future statements of doctrine the Mo. Synod said (Proc., 1956, p. 539):

WHEREAS, Several memorials submitted to this convention express the opinion that the authors of the Common Confession should have made fuller use of antithetic statements; and

WHEREAS, In the future statements of doctrine may conceivably be prepared; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we recommend to the committees preparing doctrinal statements to take note of these observations.

The Missouri Synod also said (Proc., 1956, p. 546):

WHEREAS, Dissatisfaction has been expressed in and outside of our Synod in regard to various doctrinal documents approved by Synod; and

WHEREAS, Such dissatisfaction seems to rest on the charge of inadequacy and lack of clarity in the doctrinal statements concerning election, objective justification, conversion, and the inspiration of the Scriptures; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we reject any and every interpretation of documents approved by Synod which would be in disagreement with the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Brief Statement.

With regard to Intersynodical Relations, the Missouri Synod adopted a lengthy report. At one place they state the following, evidently with reference to the 1955 Suspension of fellowship on the part of the Norwegian Synod and the "status confessionis" of the Wisconsin Synod (Proc., 1956, p. 516):

There are definite indications from groups and individuals in all constituent synods that definite severance of the bond of fellowship because of present conditions would be inadvisable and premature, and also not in accordance with the pronouncements of Scripture.

Was then the Norwegian Synod's request, that the Missouri Synod "reconsider its adoption of the Common Confession and to reject it as a settlement of its doctrinal differences with the A.L.C." met? How are we to answer the question at the head of this paper with regard to the Common Confession? As with the previous four sections of this paper, the question must again be answered with a "No" when we consider the facts and the official resolutions of the Synods concerned. Likewise, the efforts of the Norwegian Synod to bring these matters to a proper settlement through the medium of the Synodical Conference have been without success.

In 1956 the Norwegian Synod held its annual convention in August in order that it might study the resolution of the 1956 Missouri Synod convention. The Norwegian Synod then adopted the following resolution (Report, 1956, p. 46f.):

WHEREAS, it is apparent that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at its convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, June, 1956, did give consideration to the causes of our suspension resolution of 1955, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that our Synod express its gratitude for that consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at the same convention, in Resolution 15, c of Committee #3, pleaded with us that we accept their "fraternal expressions of concern" in regard to us; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Norwegian Synod meet with the other synods of the Synodical Conference to determine whether or not the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference are now in doctrinal agreement; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod's Union Committee be designated to represent the Synod in this matter; and be it further

RESOLVED, that our Synod express its desire to take part in the proposed international conference of conservative Lutheran theologians, affiliated with the Synodical Conference.

WHEREAS, however, more time and study are needed to determine whether the causes for our suspension resolution of 1955 have been removed; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that for the present the exercise of our fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod remain in suspension.

The Synod stated above that "more time and study are needed to determine whether or not the causes for our suspension resolution of 1955 have been removed." It is hoped that the evidence presented in this paper may be helpful toward that end.

Arthur E. Schulz  
Tracy, Minn.  
February, 1957