

Continuing In His Word

11 Tracts

[Issued by the Conference of Presidents of The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States in 1954]

Lutheran Bodies In The U.S.A.

Continuing in His Word

Tract Number 1

Our joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States is only one of many synods in the United States which bear the name Lutheran. Many of them are older than our synod, which dates back to 1850. Over the years we have been in fellowship with some of these other Lutheran synods and have done joint work with them in mission fields and in other areas. To others we could not extend the hand of fellowship, because they differed from us in doctrine and practice. Throughout the history of the Lutheran Church in America there have been repeated realignments of the various synods—especially in late years.

Now we of the Wisconsin Synod have again arrived at a critical point in our history. Our Lord is testing our loyalty to Him and His Word as we are faced with the possibility that ties which we have cherished since 1872 may have to be severed out of reverence and concern for the truth of Scripture. We are very conscious of the fact that this situation—unless God in His mercy heal the breach—can only cause heartache to our pastors, teachers, and members, many of whom are bound by ties of blood and friendship to those in the other synods. In order that we may be prepared to cope with the situation that confronts us, it is necessary that we know something of the historical background of the various Lutheran church bodies in the United States and especially of the position of our own Wisconsin Synod.

THE THREE LARGER LUTHERAN GROUPS

In general, the Lutheran Church in the United States is divided into three larger church groups. They are the Synodical Conference of North America, the American Lutheran Conference, and the United Lutheran Church in America. These include approximately ninety-eight percent of all Lutherans in the United States.

Each of these three general Lutheran bodies is subdivided into a number of separate synods. Their relative size is illustrated in the diagrams. (See pages 8 and 9).

THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH

The United Lutheran Church was organized in 1918, but its roots go back to the early days of our country, for it is an amalgamation of the General Synod, founded 1820, the United Synod in the South, 1862, and the General Council, 1867.

The General Synod was the first general body organized among Lutherans in the United States. It was called into being when the leaders of the six independent Lutheran synods existing at that time were invited to form a general synod. Three of these joined hands in its organization in 1820. Unfortunately they did not accept the Confessions of the Lutheran Church and were Lutheran in name only. The majority of the newer synods that sprang up in the following years united with this liberal General Synod. The first split in the ranks came at the time of the Civil War, when the five synods in the Confederate States left the General Synod and formed the

United Synod in the South. They also expressed a desire for a more positive confessional stand. In the meantime, a growing conservative element in the General Synod was making itself felt, and finally—having withdrawn from the General Synod because of its increasing laxity—organized the General Council in 1867.

In later years, however, these three bodies were drawn together again, and in 1918 their forty-five synods established the United Lutheran Church. By merger this number has now been reduced to some thirty. As to its doctrinal stand the United Lutheran Church represents the most liberal tendencies in American Lutheranism, tolerating many different shades of doctrine in its midst and practicing church fellowship with most other Protestant denominations, going even so far as to become a charter member of the National Council of Christian Churches. In its stand over against the lodges it has proved itself shameless.

THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

The American Lutheran Conference is a federation, founded in 1930, and now consisting of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (originally Danish), the Lutheran Free Church (Norwegian), the Augustana Synod (Swedish), the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegian Merger, 1917), and the American Lutheran Church. The American Lutheran Church in turn, was formed in 1930 by the merging of the Ohio Synod, founded in 1818, the Buffalo Synod, 1845, and the Iowa Synod, 1854.

The synods of the American Lutheran Conference want to assume a middle-of-the-road position in American Lutheranism and in their desire for uniting all of Lutheranism in America hold out their hands to the right and to the left. They do not demand complete agreement in doctrine as the basis for church fellowship, and some of them have differed all these years from the Synodical Conference in the doctrines of Election, Objective Justification, Conversion, the Church, Open Questions, Sunday, and the Last Things.

THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

The group which from its very beginnings has had the reputation of being staunchly conservative is the Synodical Conference, organized in 1872. Its constituent synods were the Missouri Synod, founded in 1847; the Wisconsin Synod, 1850; the Ohio Synod, 1818; the Norwegian Synod, 1850; the Illinois Synod, 1846; and the Minnesota Synod, 1860. Subsequently the latter two joined the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods respectively. In 1881 the Ohio Synod left the Synodical Conference because it no longer agreed with the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods on the doctrine of Election. In the hope of settling in its own midst the controversy on Election and Conversion, the Norwegian Synod in 1883 withdrew from the Synodical Conference without a severance of fellowship. In spite of hope and intention, however, about a third of this synod soon left the fellowship and became part of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church.

In 1917 the remaining two thirds entered into a merger with the same United Norwegian Lutheran Church on the basis of the Madison/Austin Agreement (Settlement). Because this agreement was in reality a doctrinal compromise, a small minority refused to go along with the merger. This minority organized in 1918 as the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and rejoined the Synodical Conference in 1920. In 1908 the Slovak Synod also joined.

The constituent synods have the following membership today: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod: 1, 786,196; the Wisconsin Synod: 311,477; the Slovak Synod: 20,808; and the Norwegian Synod: 10,663.

WISCONSIN'S EARLY INTERSYNODICAL RELATIONS

Why did our Wisconsin Synod help organize the Synodical Conference? Our Synod was organized in 1850, with the sincere intention of being Lutheran. Its founders, however, came from unionistic circles in Germany, and it was years before they could overcome the influence of this background and training. In their zeal for growth they often became guilty of unionism for which they were sharply criticized by the Missouri Synod of that day.

Things gradually changed as God in His grace granted our synod pastors and professors who by diligent study of God's Word came to recognize the correctness of the Lutheran Confessions and firmly upheld them. When the General Council was organized in 1867, our synod seriously considered joining, since this new body seemed inclined to take a staunch confessional stand. Our synod, however, soon found itself forced to withdraw when the General Council failed to take a definite stand regarding the question of altar and pulpit fellowship with those differing in doctrine, regarding membership in secret societies, and regarding the Last Things. At that time our synod also declined fellowship with the Iowa Synod, because the Iowa Synod classified as Open Questions the doctrines of the Ministry, Sunday, the Last Things, Conversion of the Jews, and the Antichrist. The Iowa Synod stated that in these matters full agreement is not necessary for church fellowship, whereas our men held that whatever is written in the Scriptures is not an open question.

This attitude of our Synod brought about a meeting of minds with the Missouri Synod, and in 1868 at a meeting in Milwaukee, the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods recognized one another as orthodox and entered into church fellowship with one another. This eventually led to the establishment of the Synodical Conference in 1872, as mentioned before—one of the few church fellowships established upon full and complete agreement in doctrine, a fellowship for which we shall always thank God heartily.

The avowed purpose of the Synodical Conference, since its founding, has been “to give outward expression to the unity of spirit existing among the constituent synods; to encourage and strengthen one another in faith and confession; to further unity in doctrine and practice and to remove whatever might threaten to disturb this unity; to cooperate in matters of mutual interest, to strive for true unity in doctrine and practice among Lutheran church bodies.” Another provision of its constitution states: “Without the consent of all the synods of the Synodical Conference of North America no one of its constituent synods shall be permitted to enter into actual church fellowship with any other church body.” These principles breathe proper concern for God's Word, proper zeal for the souls of men, and also proper love for the brethren.

ATTEMPTS TO UNITE ALL LUTHERAN SYNODS

During the years that followed, serious attempts were repeatedly made to unite all Lutheran synods in America. In evaluating all these attempts our synod has always held that union must be preceded by unity of faith, and that anything else could not be God-pleasing. In that spirit it took part in the Intersynodical Conferences, 1903-1906. These conferences did not succeed in removing the differences which had long divided the members of the Synodical Conference from the synods now composing the American Lutheran Church. About 1916, conferences were again initiated on a smaller scale, leading to the appointment of the Intersynodical Committee, representing the Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods. By 1928 it seemed as though an agreement had been reached in the document known as the Chicago Theses. These theses, however, were rejected by the Missouri Synod as not settling the differences, especially in the doctrines of Conversion and Election.

The Missouri Synod then drew up a confession of its own, setting forth in clear and unmistakable language its doctrinal position. This doctrinal statement, adopted by the Missouri

Synod in 1932 and known as the Brief Statement, was also to serve as the basis for any further deliberation with those differing from the Missouri Synod in doctrine.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

In 1935, three years after the Missouri Synod had set down its doctrine in the Brief Statement, it began to negotiate with the same three synods it had refused to accept as brethren on the basis of the Chicago Theses. These negotiations have continued to the present day. Since it is not within the scope of this tract to detail the separate steps in these discussions, the story of these renewed efforts on the part of a sister synod in the Synodical Conference to work out doctrinal unity with the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo-Synods (now united in the American Lutheran Church after their 1930 merger) is told in the next of this series of tracts.

But in concluding this sketch of our synod's role in the movements toward Lutheran union, we must reckon with the fact that after more than fifteen years of negotiations the differences between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church have not been resolved. Two of her sister synods have plainly told the Missouri Synod that her proposed settlements of doctrinal matters with the American Lutheran Church have been unsatisfactory.

The reason for this failure to achieve true doctrinal unity lies in the character of the American Lutheran Church. The history of one of its members, the Iowa Synod, reveals a regrettable lack of zeal for pure Scripture doctrine. In the Civil War days we could not identify ourselves with Iowa's stand on Open Questions. Today the American Lutheran Church, the merger group to which the former Iowa Synod belongs, still maintains: "We are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree on all non-fundamental doctrines." Furthermore, the American Lutheran Church is altogether unwilling to dissolve its partnership with the other bodies in the American Lutheran Conference (such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Augustana Synod), and it is anxious to preserve its working relationship with the free and easy United Lutheran Church. It does not even want to disentangle itself from the meshes of the unionistic Lutheran World Federation, to which it belongs. Under these circumstances, is it any wonder that God-pleasing unity and sincere accord with a synod of the Synodical Conference has not been achieved?

The persistence of the Missouri Synod in dealing with a church body that negotiates in two directions at the same time has given our synod grave cause for concern in the past. Now our sister synod's failure to share our concern, and her claim that all differences with the American Lutheran Church have been settled in the document called the Common Confession have compelled us to protest vigorously and to charge her with breaking the bond of unity that has united us in the Synodical Conference for so many years.

Our synod is doing all in its power to repair the breach in the prayerful hope that the Missouri Synod will give some indication of reversing this trend. We pray that the Holy Spirit may restore the unity which formerly characterized our fellowship. With God nothing is impossible.

Pray for our synod, brethren,—not that she may preserve this union at all costs, but that she may remain true to the Savior's Word.

1938—1953

Continuing in His Word

Tract Number 2

At a special convention held on October 8 and 9, 1953, our synod adopted the following declaration: “That the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod...has brought about the present break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister synod.”

1938

This “break” was not a sudden and abrupt one. It has been developing steadily for more than fifteen years. From 1872, when the Synodical Conference was organized, until 1938, our Synod worshipped and worked together with the Missouri Synod in unity of doctrine and practice. Controversial issues which arose were quickly settled in a brotherly manner.

In 1938 a change became noticeable. In that year the Missouri Synod declared: “That the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod together with the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod’s actions thereupon be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.” That same year the American Lutheran Church also resolved: “That we declare the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of our commission, a sufficient doctrinal basis for fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church... [and] that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines.”

CHICAGO THESES

For a number of years prior to 1929 efforts had been made to bring about a union of the many synods of the Lutheran Church. An intersynodical committee had been chosen from the Synods of Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The sole object was to establish “full agreement based upon the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.” This committee drew up a document which became known as the Chicago Theses and which was laid before the several synods for action.

MISSOURI’S BRIEF STATEMENT

The Missouri Synod took action in 1929. Its examining committee reported: “Your committee finds itself compelled to advise Synod to reject the 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 incline more to the position of our opponents than to our own. ...Your committee considers it a hopeless undertaking to make these theses unobjectionable from the view of pure doctrine.” The same committee also recommended: “It now seems to your committee a matter of wisdom to desist from intersynodical conferences....”

Thereupon the Missouri Synod rejected the Chicago Theses, and its Committee on Intersynodical Matters recommended: “...that Synod elect a committee which is to be instructed to formulate theses which, beginning with the status controversial [the points at issue], are to present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest, most simple form.” This committee drew up the document which became known as the Brief Statement. At its 1932 convention the Missouri Synod adopted it. From then on the Brief Statement was to serve as the doctrinal basis in all future efforts to bring about agreement with the American Lutheran Church.

ALC’S DECLARATION

The American Lutheran Church did not accept the Brief Statement. Its committee found it necessary to “supplement” the doctrinal presentation in order to “emphasize” the points which seemed essential to them. The committee, therefore, in 1938, added its own Declaration on: I.

Scripture and Inspiration; II. Universal Plan of Salvation, Predestination, and Conversion; III. The Church; IV. The Office of the Public Administration of the Means of Grace; V. The Doctrine of Sunday; VI. The Doctrine Concerning the Last Things.

Although the Missouri Synod did not actually enter into fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, it nevertheless declared its own Brief Statement together with the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church as acceptable doctrinal basis for future fellowship and submitted this conclusion to the other synods of the Synodical Conference for approval.

WISCONSIN'S OBJECTION

At its 1939 convention the Wisconsin Synod made a thorough study of the proposed doctrinal agreements. The terms of the American Lutheran Church's Declaration were considered "as not stating the truth clearly, nor excluding error, in the controverted doctrines." Evidence of the American Lutheran Church's compromising position on doctrine was further found in the fact that earlier that very year its representatives had reached an Agreement at Pittsburgh with representatives of the United Lutheran Church on the Doctrine of Inspiration "the wording of which is such that a clear confession to the inerrancy of the Scriptures is lacking."

Our Synod, therefore, declared the proposed doctrinal basis for fellowship between Missouri and the American Lutheran Church to be unacceptable, since the latter insisted on reading the Brief Statement only in the light of its own inadequate Declaration. In view of these facts, our synod declared that "not two statements should be issued as a basis for agreement; [but] a single joint statement, covering the contested doctrines thetically and antithetically and accepted by both parties to the controversy, is imperative; and...that under existing conditions further negotiations for establishing church fellowship would involve a denial of the truth and would cause confusion and disturbance in the Church and ought therefore to be suspended for the time being." (Proceedings of the Wisconsin Synod, 1939, pp 59-61.)

INCREASING TENSION

When the Missouri Synod again met in 1941, it recognized the necessity of a single document of agreement with the American Lutheran Church; nevertheless, it failed to repudiate the confessional arrangement adopted in 1938 and, despite the plea of the Wisconsin Synod, went on to establish closer ties with the American Lutheran Church. It began to cooperate with the American Lutheran Church in relief of foreign missions and in work among service men. This was done although the Missouri Synod had resolved in 1938: "That if by the grace of God fellowship can be established, this fact is to be announced officially by the President of the Missouri Synod. Until then no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which would overlook the fact that we are not yet united." Thus new issues arose which disturbed the former cordial relations between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. To prevent such threatening dissension from growing worse our synod in 1941 decided to "extend an invitation to our sister Synod of Missouri to discuss with the fellow members of the Synodical Conference the matters that endanger our unity of spirit."

In 1943 our synod addressed a memorial to the Missouri Synod, asking: "In view of the unionistic attitude of the American Lutheran Church, which has become increasingly evident, will you not agree that further negotiations for establishing church fellowship could only undermine the testimony that has previously been given, and should therefore be discontinued for the time being?" (Proceedings of the Wisconsin Synod, 1943, p.69.) No answer to this question was ever received.

While our synod, in 1941, had expressed the conviction that the commissioning of our pastors as “Protestant” army and navy chaplains would foster unionism in violation of Scriptural principles, the Missouri Synod failed to see any such conflict and accordingly commissioned many pastors to serve as chaplains in the armed forces. In 1944 the Missouri Synod abandoned its former position on the Scout movement by sanctioning Scouting under sponsorship of the local congregation. Thus it opened the doors of its congregations to the Scout movement and its influence. These actions, which will be fully discussed in future tracts, further strained relations between the two synods.

A SINGLE UNION DOCUMENT

In 1944 the Missouri Synod published a document which its committee had prepared together with a committee of the American Lutheran Church. This document, which was to supplant the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod and the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church, was largely the Brief Statement with many of the words and phrases of the Declaration inserted. The document was called the Doctrinal Affirmation. The Missouri Synod did not adopt it in 1944, but instructed its members to “be ready for a final vote in the convention of 1947. This document will, therefore, after acceptance by the respective bodies, clearly supersede all previous doctrinal documents and resolutions as accepted by Synod in 1938 and 1941.” This hope came to naught when the American Lutheran Church at Appleton in 1946, rejected the Doctrinal Affirmation as “not generally acceptable.” At the same time it declared that it despaired “of attaining Lutheran unity by way of additional doctrinal formulations and reformulations.”

COMPLICATIONS

In 1947, however, the American Lutheran Church Fellowship Committee issued “A Friendly Invitation,” in which it reiterated its 1938 resolution, declaring the Brief Statement together with the Declaration to be a sufficient doctrinal basis for church fellowship. It also stated its conviction that “no intervening discussions have revealed any fundamental doctrinal differences...that forbid entry into pulpit and altar fellowship with the Missouri Synod” and that there is “an area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God.” To demand a unified statement of doctrine as an absolute condition of fellowship, the committee said, constitutes a “threat to evangelical liberty of conscience.”

At its 1947 convention the Missouri Synod had to consider two things: 1. the American Lutheran Church’s rejection of the Doctrinal Affirmation; 2. the Friendly Invitation of the American Lutheran Church Fellowship Committee. Missouri’s Committee on Doctrinal Unity reported: “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.”

At this convention the Missouri Synod set aside the 1938 union document and resolutions. This was not to be understood, however, as a retraction; the 1938 union document was considered no longer adequate. Nevertheless, it was decided to continue negotiations with the American Lutheran Church, while our Wisconsin Synod’s pleas to curb instances of unionistic practice accomplished little.

In the same year (1947) our synod’s Standing Committee on Church Union addressed a memorial on Scouting to the Missouri Synod, reminding it of its 1938 resolutions, in which it spoke of “the naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement.”

Our 1947 convention made a thorough study of Scouting and adopted A Study of Boy Scoutism, which denounced Scouting's religious element and moral training program as utterly inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ.

Two years later our synod seriously studied "the sharp division in the Synodical Conference affecting matters of doctrine and practice." With deep concern we noted how the "ties which have united us, particularly with the Synod of Missouri, are being loosened." In order to clarify certain disturbing factors, in the hope that the bond of unity might be restored and strengthened, a letter was formulated in which six frank questions were addressed to the Missouri Synod. These questions touched upon incidents of joint worship and work under conditions contrary to Scripture, for example, participation of Missouri Synod pastors in the program of the unionistic organization, Lutheran Men in America; cooperation of Missouri Synod representatives with National Lutheran Council members in matters admittedly no longer in the field of externals. All our efforts to deal with Missouri about these situations met with little or no success.

THE COMMON CONFESSION

Although the American Lutheran Church had in 1940 "despaired of attaining Lutheran unity by way of additional formulations and reformulations," its committee together with the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of the Missouri Synod had in 1950 succeeded in drawing up a new document which became known as the Common Confession, and which was adopted by both the Missouri and the American Lutheran Church that same year. In 1951 the Common Confession was submitted to our synod to secure our consent and approval. After exhaustive study the following report was adopted by our synod:

"That we inform the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod that we not only find the Common Confession to be inadequate but that we also hold that the adoption of the Common Confession by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod involves an untruth and creates a basically untruthful situation since this action has been officially interpreted as a settlement of past differences which are in the fact not settled.

"That we ask the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to repudiate its stand that the Common Confession is a settlement of the doctrines treated by the two committees (Mo.-ALC).

"That we direct the attention of our sister Synod of Missouri to the position which the American Lutheran Church has taken in the Friendly Invitation of March 4, 1947, with the remark contending for 'an area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God,' and that we indicate to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod that this position of the American Lutheran Church challenges the clarity and therefore the authority of the Scriptures (Ps. 119:105). This can only cause confusion and disturbance in the church. Therefore negotiations should be suspended." (Proceedings of the Wisconsin Synod, 1951, pp. 147-148).

Instead of repudiating the Common Confession, the Missouri Synod in 1953 reaffirmed its stand and proposed that until 1956 we study Part II of the Common Confession as the answer to our synod's objections. In August and again in October of 1953, our synod reviewed the developments of the last fifteen years. Since our pleas and admonitions so far have gone unheeded and since our objections to the Common Confession and to the Missouri Synod's unionistic practices have been ignored, our Synod has found it necessary to declare the existence

of the “present break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister synod.”

What about the future? God, in Thy grace heal this present break and restore the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in which we have enjoyed Thy blessing in the Synodical Conference for three generations!

IMPORTANT EVENTS AND DOCUMENTS IN RECENT INTERSYNODICAL HISTORY

- 1928 Negotiations of many years culminate in the **CHICAGO THESES**, drawn up by representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Missouri Synods.
- 1929 The Missouri Synod rejects the **Chicago Theses** as inadequate.
- 1930 The Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo Synods unite to form the American Lutheran Church (ALC).
- 1932 Missouri’s **BRIEF STATEMENT** defines its position on the disputed doctrines as the starting point for future negotiations.
- 1935 The ALC makes union overtures to (1) the Missouri Synod and (2) the United Lutheran Church (ULC).
- 1938 Missouri’s St. Louis Resolutions join its **Brief Statement** with the ALC’s **DOCTRINAL DECLARATION** as a joint settlement of past differences.
ALC’s Sandusky Resolutions view the **Brief Statement** “in the light of” their own **Doctrinal Declaration**.
- 1939 ALC’s Pittsburgh Agreement concedes to the ULC on Inspiration.
- 1941 Missouri’s Ft. Wayne convention instructs its Committee on Doctrinal Unity to prepare a single document of agreement with the ALC
Missouri begins joint work with the ALC in relief of missions and establishment of service centers.
- 1943 Wisconsin appeals to Missouri to halt its negotiations with the ALC because of the false basis underlying those negotiations.
- 1944 Missouri and ALC publish a single document, the **DOCTRINAL AFFIRMATION**.
Missouri abandons its former position on Scouting.
- 1946 The ALC withdraws the **Doctrinal Affirmation**, despairing of union by such confessional statements.
- 1947 ALC’s commissioners issue a “Friendly Invitation” to renew negotiations, contending for an “allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God.”
Wisconsin adopts its theses on Scouting.
- 1950 Missouri and the ALC adopt the **COMMON CONFESSION**.
- 1951 Wisconsin rejects the **Common Confession** as “inadequate” and creating “a basically untruthful situation.”
- 1953 Wisconsin declares the existence of a break with Missouri and takes steps to heal the breach, if at all possible.

**Every Sinner Declared Righteous
Continuing in His Word**

Tract Number 3

So clear, so vivid, so certain does God want to make the revelation of His truth that He often talks with us as a father does in teaching his children. He uses picture-language. And for us sinners, the most comforting and blessed picture of all is that by which God assures us in His Word that our salvation is an accomplished fact. This picture we call JUSTIFICATION, for it illustrates God's saving act in terms familiar to us from our own courts of justice.

THE PICTURE IN THE BIBLE

God is "the Judge of all the earth" (Gn 18:25). He has a holy Law which demands perfect obedience of all mankind (Dt 27:26; Lv 19:2; Jas 2:10). Every sin is a transgression of this Law (1 Jn 3,4), and since "all have sinned" (Ro 3:23), the whole world stands convicted as guilty before His bar of justice (Is 64:6). Neither is there anything man can do to repay this debt of sin or to justify himself before God, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Ro 3:20). Nothing less than the eternal wrath of God, the punishment of hell, is the sentence which the justice of God's Law demands (Ro 6:23; Eph 2:3; Mt 25:46).

Into this world of sin came Christ, "to save that which was lost" (Mt 18:11). He, the eternal Son of God, paid the debt of sin for the whole world (Jn 1:29), both by His perfect obedience to the Law of God (Mt 3:15; Ga 4:4; Ro 5:18-19), and by the sacrifice of His life as a ransom for the sins of the world (Is 53:6; 1 Tm 2:6). On the basis of His redeeming death and triumphant resurrection He pleads the cause of sinful mankind before the throne of God (Ro 8:34; He 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1).

The Judge in heaven examines this evidence. He declares His verdict. It is one of acquittal. Man's debt of sin is no longer charged against him. Sinful man is free! "Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Ro 5:18-19). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19). "Who (Christ) was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Ro 4:25). We note that the Bible speaks of this justifying act of God as applying to the whole world, as having taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ, and as an accomplished fact. THIS IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION! It stands there by itself, not as something which demands faith to make it complete, but as a comforting assurance to give faith to helpless sinners. The entire hope of sinful man rests upon the fact "that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ" (Brief Statement, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod). The supreme importance of this doctrine has been set forth by Luther and others. It is the article by which the church stands or falls.

It is true, of course, and necessary for the completion of our picture to remind ourselves that this astounding verdict of God's justifying grace is received by faith alone. Not all, unfortunately, accept God's verdict of acquittal. Whether man accepts or rejects it, however, does not change the truth of justification itself, just as little as the prisoner can change any judge's verdict of acquittal by refusing to accept it. The declaration of the judge still stands. That is also the point to be emphasized whenever we speak of justification. By his faith man does not add to the power of God's justifying act. "Faith," as our Lutheran Confessions declare, "is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold of Christ, and thus in Christ of that righteousness

which avails before God” (Formula of Concord, Epitome). And it is in this sense that the Bible stresses repeatedly that man is justified by faith” (Ro 1:17; 3:28; 5:1). Faith, which God’s Holy Spirit alone can work in man, is simply the hand which receives or accepts a declaration which God has made to the entire world. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Ro 4:5).

THE PICTURE DISTORTED

About fifty years ago this picture was distorted by the old Ohio Synod, a church body which later became a member of the American Lutheran Church. Ohio taught: “Through the reconciliation of Christ the holy and merciful God has made advances to us, so that forgiveness of sin 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” (Kirchenzeitung, June 17, 1905).

In 1938 the American Lutheran Church stated in its Declaration (II,A): “God purposes to justify those who have come to faith.”

Dr. R. C. Lenski, a leading scholar of the American Lutheran Church, states in his commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: “But for faith there would be no justification....Nowhere in the Bible is any man constituted or declared righteous ‘without faith, before faith,’ all asseverations and argumentations to the contrary notwithstanding.”

It is easy to see that this way of speaking is entirely different from that of the Bible. Perhaps we should go to a courtroom for a moment to see how distorted this picture is. A group of prisoners stands before the bar of justice. Their debt is established. Their guilt is proved. A man walks in with the announcement that he has paid in full and pleads for the release of the prisoners. But what does the judge now do in this case? He recognizes the fact that payment has been secured and provided for all prisoners, but strangely enough he announces no verdict of acquittal. Instead, he invites all the prisoners before his bar of justice and tells them that he will acquit them only upon the condition that they first show their willingness to accept his verdict. He will do his part if they in good faith will show him the proper attitude and spirit of cooperation.

“Without faith, no justification.” Those are his terms of justice.

Surely we can see the difference—how this places the whole emphasis upon an attitude of man rather than upon the unconditional declaration of God. The scene takes on an atmosphere that would be strange to any courtroom procedure and foreign to the central truth of Scripture that salvation is a free gift of God’s grace.

DOES THE COMMON CONFSSION GIVE A CLEAR PICTURE?

It is now maintained that the Common Confession, a joint document of the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, settles this difference on the subject of justification. We examine its contents carefully. The bold type in the following study will give us the complete and exact wording of the Common Confession on Article VI, Justification :

By His redemptive work Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence, forgiveness of sin has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as objective justification.)

The prisoners stand convicted before the Judge. The Noble Benefactor has stepped in and “*secured and provided*” freedom for them. But where is the declaration of the Judge? Is it supposed to be covered by the statement appearing in parentheses?

The *Common Confession* continues with a quotation from the Bible:

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation, 2 Cor 5,19.

That this is a fine passage on justification is not to be questioned. We cannot feel certain, however, that the quotation of this passage settles anything. Our misgivings are based on the fact that we have seen leading scholars of the Bible take some of the chief passages on objective justification and flatly deny that there is such a thing, "all asseverations and argumentations to the contrary notwithstanding."

We proceed with the *Common Confession*:

Hence no sinner need be eternally lost on account of his sins. God offers this propitiation and reconciliation freely to all men through His means of grace. There is nothing in sinful man or in what he may do to merit God's declaring him righteous.

These statements could be correctly understood. But do they bring us closer to objective justification? The last sentence states that God does declare the sinner righteous, and that man can do nothing to merit his justification. But does this clarify the picture? The American Lutheran Church never did teach that man could do anything to merit his justification. They will readily admit that even faith is not a meritorious act on man's part. The point under consideration, however, remains the same. WHEN does God's justifying act really take place? Not until faith has been kindled in the heart? Or already in Christ's death and resurrection?

The next statement in the *Common Confession* gives support to the thought that justification occurs only when faith is already present:

God justifies the sinner solely on the basis of Christ's righteousness, which He imputes to the sinner through the Gospel and which the sinner accepts by faith.

Here God's act of imputation and the sinner's acceptance by faith are linked together so closely, without even a comma separating them, that the false picture is strengthened. The thought is conveyed that the justification of the sinner is not complete until the missing factor of personal faith is supplied. Even more misleading is the statement that God imputes Christ's righteousness to the sinner "through the Gospel." The fact is that the Gospel proclaims the imputation that has already taken place.

A CLEAR PICTURE IS NEEDED!

The best that we can say for the *Common Confession* is that it gives us an unclear picture of God's judicial act. What did the Judge really say and when did He say it? Was it an outright grant of freedom, declared to the entire group of prisoners before His bar of justice? Or did He delay making any positive declaration until He was advised which prisoners would accept it? Both interpretations can be read into the *Common Confession*. The result is a blurred picture, a double exposure."

We need a clear picture of objective justification. We need the Bible picture. This alone can place our faith on an unshakable foundation. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, a respected theologian of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod of nearly a half century ago, shows how the comfort of a sinner rests solidly upon this foundation: "God has in Christ already forgiven the sins of the whole world. The entire Pauline doctrine of justification stands and falls with this special article of objective justification. For thus alone does it become unmistakably clear that justification is in no way dependent upon man's conduct. And thus alone can the individual become certain of his own justification. For it is a compelling conclusion: If God has already in Christ justified all men

and forgiven them their sins, then I also have a gracious God and the forgiveness of all my sins.” (Roemerbrief, p.264)

Our church has stood upon this objective truth of salvation for many years. It has always stressed with Scripture what God has done as a basis for our hope, rather than what man can do. We may sometimes wonder, perhaps, if this is always so practical. Wouldn't it be better at times to wake up some of our “dead Christians” by giving them a little more responsibility? Take this matter of justification. Why quibble about words and expressions? Maybe we would be better off if we would stress the personal side more than we do. Why not tell man that his faith is more important to think about than a justifying act of God? What good will God's verdict of acquittal do us if we don't stress personal faith? Where does the proof of our salvation finally lie?

A time will come in our life, however, when the picture of the Bible will become more practical and more personal to us than ever before. That is when we are face to face with death, and when we realize that we are but one short step from appearing before the final judgment seat of Christ. Whether we like to put off thoughts of that moment or not, we realize that our whole life points to that moment. The faith by which we live will be the faith in which we die. Where do we wish to have our faith rest as we approach that final hour? What comfort do we wish to have brought to us as this court of justice again passes before our eyes?

Will it be no more than this: “My justification has been made possible by God, and I know that He will finally pass judgment in my favor because I am sure that I have a personal and saving faith in my heart”?

No, it must be nothing less than this: “My faith is a weak and faltering thing. My personal feelings betray the weakness of my heart. But God has already declared the whole world righteous in Christ's death and resurrection. Sinner that I am, I know that I am included.”

Not By My Own Reason Or Strength Continuing in His Word Tract Number 4

In 1950 the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church adopted the following article in the *Common Confession* as a settlement of their long-standing differences in regard to the doctrine of Conversion:

The sinner's conversion takes place when God brings the contrite sinner to faith in Christ as his Savior. This change of heart with respect to sin and this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin is the work of God the Holy Spirit, without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” 1 Cor 12, 3b.

Under certain conditions this article might be acceptable (for example, if two church bodies that had always agreed on this doctrine were only restating what they had always believed). But it must be remembered that it is intended to settle the long-standing controversy on the doctrine of Conversion. In commenting on this article, our “Review of the *Common Confession*” pointed out that past differences must be considered.

PAST DIFFERENCES

Once the controversy over the doctrine of Election had arisen during the early years of the Synodical Conference, it did not take long before the doctrine of Conversion was also drawn in. False teaching cannot be isolated in one doctrine; it sets up a chain reaction. And since the

conversion of the sinner is the result of God's election of grace, it very soon became apparent that there was no agreement between the contending synods on the doctrine of Conversion either.

The Ohio and Iowa Synods (now in the American Lutheran Church) tried to answer the question which man's reason raises at this point: "God desires to save all men. Why is it then that some are converted and others not?" But this is a question Scriptures does not raise, much less answer. Neither should we. The Scriptures declare all men to be equally corrupt; everyone is by nature an enemy of God (Ro 8:7); all consider the things of the Spirit of God foolishness (1 Cor 2:14); thus by nature all willfully resist the Spirit of God when He comes to convert them through His Word. Consequently, man's conversion is entirely a gift of God's grace without man's cooperating in any way, not even in this way that he conducts himself in a manner which makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to convert him.

God would have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, but there still are many who are never converted. Scripture clearly states that this is entirely their own fault, for they stubbornly resist God's gracious call in His Word (Mt 23:37; Ac 13:46). Human reason dare not draw conclusions which the Holy Scriptures do not draw. We must not teach anything beyond what the Scriptures teach.

In the Ohio and Iowa Synods, however, it was taught that God "earnestly endeavours to take away the resistance from some as well as from the others, but that by some His gracious purpose is frustrated because they stubbornly and willfully resist the grace offered to them, whereas in the others God's work is accomplished *because they do not willfully resist, but let God's work be done on themselves.*" (Dr. G. Fritschel, "Monatshefte," 1872, p99.) You will notice that according to this statement man is converted because he does not willfully resist (as though natural man were capable of any other kind of resistance), and because he lets God's work be done in him (as though natural man could thus dispose himself toward the work of the Holy Spirit). In the end, this makes man's conversion dependent upon his conduct.

UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS AT SETTLEMENT

These differences were discussed in conferences between the years 1903 and 1906. In these discussions the synods which were later to form the American Lutheran Church continually spoke of two kinds of resistance in man: natural resistance, which will be overcome by the Holy Spirit with the result that man is converted; and willful resistance, which cannot be overcome by the Holy Spirit, with the result that he is not converted. Although they too spoke of man's conversion as the work of God, they always tried to solve the problem, why some are converted and others not, by reasoning that it must be because of a difference in man's conduct, some resisting only naturally, others willfully. They spoke of a preliminary kind of grace which God gives to natural man, enabling him to avoid willful resistance.

The Synodical Conference representatives showed from Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions that we can speak of only one kind of resistance, namely, willful resistance; and that man's conduct, accordingly, in no way contributes toward his conversion. They conceded that man can through his natural powers decide to read and hear the Word of Scripture, but he cannot dispose his heart to accept and believe it; he cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him. For natural man is completely corrupt, any enemy of God, who resists His Holy Spirit. Moreover, it was stressed by the Synodical Conference representatives that if man's conversion is in any way dependent upon his conduct, it is no longer *by grace alone*.

In 1915, discussions were resumed and were continued until 1928, when the *Chicago Theses* were proposed as a statement of agreement. These theses dealt particularly with the doctrines of Conversion and Election. In 1929, however, the Missouri Synod's examining committee criticized the fact that "the distinction between natural and willful resistance (was not) ruled out, so now as before our opponents can still say: Converted is only he who resists 'naturally'; he who resists 'willfully' makes it impossible for the Holy Spirit to convert him." (Reports and Memorials, 1929, p 132)

We note that the Missouri Synod at that time saw the need for a definite statement which would absolutely rule out the distinction between natural and willful resistance. Such a statement was drawn up in the *Brief Statement*, which was adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1932 as its doctrinal position.

THE PRESENT PROPOSED SETTLEMENT

Negotiations renewed in 1935 finally led to the formulation and acceptance of the *Common Confession* by both the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. If this *Common Confession* is to be a settlement of past differences, it must take this past history into consideration; it must face the fact that the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods, the present American Lutheran Church, have not officially disavowed this distinction in the kind of resistance a man offers over against the Gospel. In the final analysis, retaining this distinction makes a man's conduct play the decisive part in his conversion. This is a denial of the central doctrine of Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. For that reason our Synod insisted:

In view of past controversies on this subject a clear and correct presentation of the doctrine of Conversion must include a rejection of the untenable distinction between a natural and a willful resistance of man.

What we asked for in 1951 is exactly what the Missouri Synod itself insisted upon for many years. In view of that, one would expect our criticism of this article of the *Common Confession* to fall on receptive ears and hearts.

But what has happened since 1951? At its Houston convention in June, 1953, the Missouri Synod reaffirmed its stand on the *Common Confession* as a settlement of the past controversies. It added a Part II as a supplement to Part I with the recommendation that "for purposes of study (they) be treated as one document, with the understanding that Part II has not been adopted." However, even if Part II is officially adopted by the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, it will not change the claim that is made for Part I. Then, in August, 1953, the Missouri Synod made public a pamphlet entitled "A Fraternal Word," stating that its purpose was "to make clear to all members of the Synodical Conference the position of the Missouri Synod on the issues involved."

We expected an unmistakable rejection of the old distinction the American Lutheran Church has made between natural and willful resistance, but we are disappointed in the Missouri Synod's answer to our objection. In their "Fraternal Word" they stress the fact that the *Common Confession* speaks only of "willful resistance." It is true, that natural resistance is not even mentioned, but that is an unsatisfactory way of assuring us that the American Lutheran Church no longer distinguishes between natural and willful resistance.

We still look for the clear and positive declaration that the American Lutheran Church no longer distinguishes between these two kinds of resistance. We are not satisfied when the "Fraternal Word" states: "Nowhere does the *Common Confession* indicate a distinction between

natural and willful resistance, but speaks of willful resistance only,” for that is the very objection the Wisconsin Synod has raised against the article on Conversion.

To settle the old controversy, the article must face the old error, rule it out, and not merely be silent about it. To illustrate: If the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics were to agree on a statement concerning the Hereafter, would it be adequate to make mention only of heaven and hell? Would the fact that no mention has been made of purgatory mean that it has been ruled out? Would it not much rather indicate that the Lutherans are not ready to condemn that teaching of the Roman Catholics, at least that the Lutherans are ready to tolerate it?

How can the statement that the *Common Confession* nowhere indicates a distinction between natural and willful resistance be considered a satisfactory answer to our objection? The fact that the Common Confession does not face and settle the real controversy in a forthright manner brands this article as inadequate and as no longer upholding the sound doctrine which the Synodical Conference had championed. What the Wisconsin Synod stated in its 1951 resolutions clearly applies to the article on Conversion, namely that

The adoption of the *Common Confession* by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod involves an untruth and creates a basically untruthful situation, since this action has been officially interpreted as a settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled.

OF VITAL IMPORTANCE

The thought might arise that these differences in the doctrine of Conversion are of little significance, that they involve mere theological hairsplitting. Perhaps someone will point to the article on Conversion in the *Common Confession* and say that it definitely states that “this change of heart with respect to sin and this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin is the work of God the Holy Spirit, without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man.” It may be asked: “Doesn’t this rule out any contribution by man to his conversion? Doesn’t this rule out the thought that man can prepare himself for conversion by forsaking willful resistance?” To our way of thinking it should. But the fact is that the American Lutheran Church has always claimed to teach that. They have always said that we come to faith by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit through His Word, but at the same time they have always insisted that man’s conversion is in a measure dependent upon his attitude or conduct. Therefore our Synod rightly said:

If the conferring of faith, though emphatically attributed to God alone, is EVEN IN THE SLIGHTEST DEGREE CONDITIONED UPON THE ATTITUDE OF MAN, then the purity of the SOLA GRATIA [by grace alone] is impaired and its rays are dimmed and beclouded.

That dare never happen, lest we endanger and even lose our soul’s salvation. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of Ourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9)

We must oppose any teaching which even in the slightest degree makes our conversion and our salvation dependent upon anything we do. We must oppose any article of agreement on the doctrine of Conversion which lets any such ideas hide behind its wording and doesn’t clearly rule them out. For this reason we had to oppose the Missouri Synod in its adoption of the article on Conversion in the *Common Confession*. When the Missouri Synod persisted in upholding that adoption, we had to tell her that this was one of the things that has “brought about the present break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister Synod.”

For our soul's salvation we must ever confess: "I believe that I *cannot by my own reason or strength* believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

If The Trumpet Give An Uncertain Sound Continuing in His Word Tract Number 5

The Apostle Paul asks the question, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" What confusion will result if the bugle-call is so unclear that to one soldier it means "Retreat" while to another it means "Advance"! A bugler's slip of the lip may have far-reaching consequences.

Now it may seem like a big jump from a trumpet's uncertain notes to the *Common Confession's* statements about the Inspiration of the Bible. But, fundamentally, both have the same serious defect. Their true meaning is not sufficiently clear. They leave room for more than one interpretation.

Here are the paragraphs in which the *Common Confession* treats the doctrine of Inspiration:

Through the Holy Scriptures, which God caused to be written by men chosen and inspired by Him, God instructs and assures us regarding His will for us. The Holy Scriptures constitute His Word to men, centering in the revelation of Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Through the Holy Scriptures God continues to speak to men in all ages until the end of time. He speaks as the infallible and unchanging God, Whose message to mankind never changes. Since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired Word of God. His Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that His Word is true, that He will keep all His promises to us, and that our faith in Him is not in vain.

We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, and this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith (cf. Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II). We pledge ourselves to teach all things taught in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing but that which is taught us by God in the Holy Scriptures.

At first reading, these paragraphs of the *Common Confession* strike one as being an adequate presentation of the Biblical teaching that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The statement that "the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word" appears to be a restatement of the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration as it is believed and taught within the Synodical Conference. But when we trace the history of these words, we see them in an entirely different light.

"CONTENT AND FITTING WORD"

In 1938 the American Lutheran Church at its Sandusky convention adopted its so-called *Declaration* in which for the first time we meet with the expression "contents and fitting word." The *Declaration* defines Inspiration as "the unique operation of the Holy Spirit by which He supplied to the holy writers contents and fitting word."

Two years later, in 1940, the American Lutheran Church joined the United Lutheran Church in subscribing to a document known as the *Pittsburgh Agreement* in which the expression “content and fitting word” again occurs. The *Pittsburgh Agreement* follows the *Declaration* almost word for word in defining Inspiration as “a unique operation of the Holy Spirit by which he supplied to the Holy Writers content and fitting word.”

But while these words can be understood as teaching the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible, they can also be understood in another sense. For already in 1938 the United Lutheran Church at its Baltimore convention officially stated that it could not accept the Missouri Synod’s teachings regarding Verbal Inspiration. The United Lutheran Church reaffirmed this statement when it adopted the *Pittsburgh Agreement* in 1940. It declared that its acceptance of this document did not “in any wise alter the fundamental position of the United Lutheran Church” and that the *Pittsburgh Agreement* was “not contrary to or contradictory of....the *Baltimore Declaration* of 1938.”

We might add that already in 1937 an official periodical of the United Lutheran Church declared: “It is, of course, no secret that Verbal Inspiration is not taught in some of the seminaries of the United Lutheran Church.” So while the United Lutheran Church uses the expression “content and fitting word” when speaking of Inspiration, it has been publicly declaring since 1940 that this expression does not mean Verbal Inspiration as taught by the Synodical Conference.

SUBJECT TO MISUNDERSTANDING

Do you see, then, what the *Common Confession* has done? It has defined the doctrine of Inspiration, at least in part, in words that are acceptable to liberal Lutherans who openly reject the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. Let it be said at once that we do not imply that the authors of the *Common Confession* have given up the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. We are happy to read the statement of one of the Missouri Synod authors of the *Common Confession* in which he declares: “Nothing was farther from the minds of the committee members when the joint confession was drafted.”

Nevertheless the unhappy fact remains that in presenting the doctrine of Inspiration the *Common Confession* unfortunately uses expressions which are subject to misunderstanding. Passing judgment merely on its wording (and not on the motives of its authors), we are compelled to say that at this point the *Common Confession* is ambiguous because it leaves room for two contradictory views to stand side by side.

“AREN’T OTHER EXPRESSIONS USED?”

But one might object and say: The *Common Confession* uses additional expressions to set forth the doctrine of Inspiration. Is not the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration adequately safeguarded by statements such as these: “We acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired Word of God,” and again: “We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God’s inerrant Word”?

These expressions, too, must be viewed in the light of past history. For many years the notion has been held by some that while the Bible “on the whole” contains the inerrant Word of God, it also contains parts which are not God’s Word but merely the words of some human author. The exponents of this idea are ready to speak of an inspiration of the so-called “totality of Scripture” but not of an inspiration of all its parts and words.

By its statement that the Scriptures “in their entirety” are the inspired Word of God, the *Common Confession* leaves room for this mistaken view that “as a whole” the Bible is God’s Word although some parts of it may be only man’s word. True, this expression of the *Common*

Confession can be correctly understood. But since it can also be seriously misunderstood, it does not recommend itself as an adequate statement in a document intended to be a clear-cut settlement of doctrinal differences.

NO REAL AGREEMENT

We know that our brethren in the Missouri Synod have never advocated the “liberal” views of Inspiration referred to in preceding paragraphs. But we also know that in varying degrees such views have been held and tolerated by members of the American Lutheran Church. Such views were expressed by them not only in bygone years but in recent years as well. In fact, statements made by a writer of the American Lutheran Church in the very month that the *Common Confession* was adopted show that the more liberal views of Inspiration were still being held. (Lutheran Outlook, October, 1950)

Are we not justified, then, in the conclusion that the ambiguity of the *Common Confession* on this doctrine renders it inadequate as a statement of doctrinal agreement?

WHAT ABOUT “PART II “?

We are aware of the fact that the proposed Part II of the *Common Confession* makes some fine statements regarding the Holy Scriptures. It says, for example, “The Holy Scriptures are God’s verbally inspired Word.” It states also that the Scriptures alone “constitute God’s inerrant Word to men.” But this does not remove the fact that the ambiguous wording of Part I still stands.

Then, too, Part II has not yet been officially adopted by the Missouri Synod. But it did officially adopt Part I. In fact, the Missouri Synod declared it to be “a *settlement*” of the doctrinal differences which formerly separated it from the American Lutheran Church. But later it admitted that Part I is “not complete in itself.” In view of this admission of incompleteness, is it true that Part I really *settles* the controversy over the doctrine of Inspiration? Doesn’t it merely add to the ambiguity of the situation to call the one document a “settlement” and then to propose an additional document?

CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL?

The Missouri Synod committee members who assisted in drawing up the *Common Confession* were instructed by their Synod to strive for a document “which is Scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal.” A most worthy goal for which to strive! In setting forth any Scriptural truth we should always seek to speak clearly and unequivocally, that is, in language that cannot be misunderstood. But when we undertake to formulate a confessional statement regarding certain teachings which have been in serious controversy, then above all it is an absolute necessity that such a statement speak in clear and unequivocal terms.

The question, then is: Does the *Common Confession*’s statement on Inspiration rise to this situation? Does it meet the challenge of the hour? Does it succeed in clearing away the uncertainties which becloud the issue? Does it speak so unambiguously that there is no doubt as to its meaning? Or — is it a trumpet which gives an uncertain sound?

**Chosen By Grace From Eternity
Continuing in His Word
Tract Number 6**

AN ARTICLE OF FAITH

The doctrine of Election is a truth presented in the Holy Scriptures and is formally upheld and taught by the Lutheran Church in the Formula of Concord, Article XI. Perhaps this doctrine is not so well known nor appreciated in our church as it might be. The reason for this is not that the doctrine is unclearly taught by God in His Word, and not that it is easily misunderstood by the believing child of God, but that men by misusing their human reason have caused much confusion concerning it and have made it a source of controversy in the Church. As a result we have become reluctant to deal with it, as if it were a doctrine beyond the understanding of most Christians and reserved for consideration only by those especially trained in theology.

This impression of the doctrine is wrong. God presents it in Scripture specifically for the comfort and encouragement of all believers. In fact, it is only the believers, only the person whom God has already brought to faith by means of the Word and Sacraments, who can see the meaning and embrace the comfort in this doctrine. From the Word he learns to see that his salvation is sure because of God's election, and the fact that God has elected him in Christ leads him back to the Word of Christ for the strengthening of his faith.

Thus the Christian learns to view his salvation as dependent not upon himself, but entirely upon God. Before his personal acceptance of his Savior, before he was born, before the world's creation, from eternity God chose him in Christ unto salvation. Already then God out of pure grace chose him to be a brother of His dear Son, a child of God, an heir of heaven. With Luther, therefore, he can sing:

But God beheld my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And, mindful of His mercies great,
He planned my soul's salvation.
A father's heart He turned to me,
Sought my redemption fervently:
He gave His dearest Treasure. (TLH 387,4)

THE SCRIPTURES ARE CLEAR

Luther's comfort and ours is drawn from simple and clear Scripture passages like the following:

...He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Eph 1: 4-5

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. Ro 8, 28-30

...there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Ro 11:5

...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Ac 13:48

...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 2 Th 2:13

...they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. Jn 10:28

From these passages we gather together the elements which are essential to the doctrine. Election is

1. God's decree in eternity
2. whereby He chose, predestinated, or elected
3. in His Son, Jesus Christ,
4. certain individuals out of the world of sinners
5. and determined to bring them by means of his Word and Sacraments
6. without fail to faith and salvation.

Within the Synodical Conference, and thus between the Wisconsin and the Missouri Synods, there has always been agreement in this doctrine. Our immediate concern in this writing is whether there is agreement between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church (hereafter designated ALC) as is claimed on the basis of the Common Confession.

In the previous century (1880) disagreement on this doctrine arose between the Missouri Synod and the Ohio and Iowa Synods, which are now included in the ALC For that reason the writers of the *Brief Statement* (adopted by Missouri Synod, 1932) very carefully and pointedly rejected all the errors that had arisen concerning this doctrine during the many years of controversy. (*Brief Statement*, Paragraphs 36-40)

REASON REBELS

What underlies the error? The doctrine of Election, as Scripture presents it, is clear; but when it is considered in relation to the universal gracious will of God, human reason finds certain difficulties. The universal will of grace is this truth: "(God) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tm 2:4) Scripture, then, presents these two truths: 1) God loves the entire world and desires the salvation of all men; 2) He has chosen certain ones for salvation. Our reason rebels and we ask, "Why, if God loves all men, did He choose only some and not others?"

Scripture does not ask this question, much less answer it; neither should we. Here we have an unsearchable judgment of God, a mystery of His will which is not given us to know. St. Paul warns against prying into such things: "Nay but, O man, who are thou that repliest against God?" (Ro 9:20) Luther in connection with this makes a rather remarkable statement: "For what God wants to conceal we should be glad not to know." This is the position of the Synodical Conference.

However, it is just on this point, "Why some, why not others?" that all the errors in this doctrine have arisen. Calvinism, for instance, following the dictates of reason, seeks to answer the question by saying that if God elected some for salvation, then He must have chosen some for damnation, since not all are saved. We are not now considering this particular error, but will point out that Scripture nowhere teaches such a dreadful doctrine as a predestination unto damnation. We read in 2 Pe 3: 9: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." In explaining the fact that some are lost Hosea 13:9 tells us: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," adding, "but in me is thy help." In spite of God's gracious intentions, they "would not."

REASON LEADS ASTRAY

The error that has arisen among Lutherans in this doctrine has gone in a different direction. Instead of leaving unanswered the question, “Why some, why not others?” as does Scripture and true Lutheran doctrine, Lutheran errorists seek an answer in man. They still speak of a mystery, however not one that lies in the counsels of God, but in the conduct of men. The well-known ALC theologian, Dr. R.C. Lenski, spoke of it as a “psychological mystery in man.”

Here we must mention the error that comes up in the ALC teaching of the doctrine of Conversion, for it has a close connection. Her theologians speak of a two-fold resistance to the grace of God, natural and willful resistance. They teach that God’s grace can overcome the natural resistance of men, but that it is ineffective in those who offer willful resistance. So they speak of man’s being converted because he acted differently over against the grace of God — the difference being “refraining from willful resistance.” In election this “refraining from willful resistance,” foreseen by God, becomes the reason why God chose some and not others. Thus they taught an election in view of persevering faith.

This way of presentation indeed solves the problem of “Why some, why not others?” If some men by nature willingly cooperate with God and others willfully and stubbornly resist, then all becomes very simple. But the truth of Scripture is denied.

To say that man can cooperate with God (even if only to the extent that he does not willfully resist but submits to God’s saving efforts) implies that there is by nature some good in him. This is a denial of original sin, a denial of the fact that man is totally corrupt, “dead in trespasses and sins.” To say that man can cooperate with God also implies that man has power to help in his own salvation, and is a denial that salvation is by grace alone, that it is “a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”

That this error still persists in fact is strikingly shown in the report of the Dakota District of the ALC (1946), where we read: “We object to this old Missouri heresy which has not been changed or modified in the least since Dr. Walther introduced it in 1868 and reaffirmed it in 1877 and 1881, and we reject it as masked or crypto-calvinism. It is the same old raven with new gravy.”

In that same report in connection with the doctrine of Justification we find a statement that might also be mentioned here: “We reject the statement in this article that man cannot cooperate with God in kindling of faith.” Does that not supply conclusive evidence of just how serious these errors are? How far afield from the simple statement of the Catechism: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him.”

WHAT THE COMMON CONFSSION DOES NOT CONFESS

The question remains, “Was the matter settled in the Common Confession?” Article IV of that document says of election: “We believe and teach: God from eternity, solely because of His grace in Christ and without any cause whatever in man, elected as His own all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom and heirs of eternal life. The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us for Himself in Christ from the foundation of the world, and by the imputations of Christ’s righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before the throne of His glory.”

Our synod’s criticism of this article in the Common Confession, as given in the report of the Synodical Convention, 1951, is that it must be rejected because it lacks certain vital and indispensable statements in defining the doctrine. Specifically, it lacks “a clear and unmistakable

statement that this election is an election *unto* faith, the positive assurance that this election is a *cause* of our salvation and what pertains thereto: definite recognition of the *certainty* of this election.” That is the kind of language which our Lutheran Confessions speak, when, for example, they say: “The eternal election of God...not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is, also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God, a cause which procures, works, helps and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto; and upon this our salvation is so founded that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.” (Formula of Concord, XI,8)

Our synod’s criticism further says: “The article also falls short of confessional clarity by failing to state that God’s eternal decree of election did not merely set up a description of those who will be saved, but means that He has chosen ‘each and every person’ (F.C. XI,23), a specific number, unto faith and eternal life.”

A clear statement of this truth that God’s eternal Election is an Election of specific individuals is indispensable, if the Common Confession is to serve as a settlement of the past controversy on Election. This truth would have to be the final test whereby it could become evident whether or not the ALC is really confessing the Scriptural doctrine of Election together with the Missouri Synod. It has already been pointed out how in the Lutheran synods which are not merged in the ALC the error of an Election in view of faith was taught. (cf. pg.5, par. 1, end)

We need to be reminded, however, that the men who taught and defended this error also advocated another form of speaking of God’s eternal Election of Grace. They held that Election in this wider sense, as they called it, merely consisted in this that God from all eternity established and ordained a way of salvation, namely that way which Scripture reveals to us as God’s universal will of grace. In other words, God’s Election was said to be this that from all eternity He purposed to send His Son for the redemption of mankind, purposed to have the Gospel of this redemption proclaimed to sinners, purposed with His Spirit to call sinners to faith through the Gospel.

When the men of the ALC spoke of Election in this sense, they applied it to all who at any given time stood in faith, and they were willing to say that God’s Election was a cause of their faith, that their present faith and salvation were the result of God’s eternal Election. It should be obvious, however, that they were not using these expressions in the sense in which we would use them in setting forth the Scriptural doctrine of God’s eternal Election. Rather they meant to say nothing more than that faith and salvation had come to these believers in accordance with the way of salvation which God established in eternity for all men. Thus it was also maintained that these believers were God’s elect only as long as they believed, but that they might again fall out of faith and thereby cease to be God’s elect. For this very reason the ALC men were unwilling, when treating of Election in what they called the wider form, to speak of an Election of specific individuals who would come to eternal life. They contended that in order to speak of an Election of specific individuals it was necessary to state that God’s Election was *in view of persevering faith*.

Since this doctrine has been in controversy for these many decades and since agreement is now claimed, the question always arises: “Who has changed, the ALC or the Missouri Synod?” Surely one group must have changed if there is true agreement now. Yet neither synod will admit that it has changed its position in the least. If such an acknowledgement were forthcoming from the ALC, the misgivings would disappear.

FOR OUR COMFORT

Believers must always be alert to errors in the teaching of Scriptural truths. Here an error might rob us of our salvation entirely if we think that man in any way cooperates or helps along

with his salvation. For we are saved by grace alone or not all. “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Ro 11:6) Or an error might rob us of the great comfort God wants to give us. He has revealed this truth to believers to sustain them under the trials of this present life. We find it used by St. Paul that way in Romans 8 and by St. Peter in his First Epistle, chapter 1.

Our Confessions say it this way: “Thus this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully provided therefor, that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it, and in His purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto and preserve me therein. Also that He wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that, since through weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands, or through craft and might of the devil and the world, be snatched from us, He ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior, Jesus Christ, from which no man can pluck us.” (Formula of Concord, XI, 45)

Our Position Against Scouting Continuing In His Word Tract Number 7

In a recent congressional investigation of Communist activities one of the “unfriendly” witnesses complained that he was being persecuted simply because he had joined certain organizations. A congressman replied, “It’s all a matter of the type of organization to which you belong. Nobody would ever think of investigating you because of membership in the Boy Scouts of America.” With the last statement even this witness agreed. If there is any organization above reproach in the minds of most people, it is the Boy Scouts of America. The general public will not agree when we disapprove of Scouting, when we refuse to have Scout troops in our churches, when we urge our young people to stay out of the Scout organization. Our Synod’s longstanding position against Scouting is: AN UNPOPULAR POSITION.

GOOD FEATURES IN SCOUTING

This stand against Scouting is all the more unpopular and frequently misunderstood because Scouting does have features that in themselves would be unobjectionable, and even desirable. The hiking and the hobbies, the camping and the comradeship of Scouting could be beneficial to any boy or girl. Scouting offers these activities in a well-rounded, well-organized program. With these features that catch the eye of the casual observer we have no quarrel. In fact, we regret that our boys and girls cannot participate in these activities and benefit from them. But if such participation and benefit can be had only at the cost of accepting the objectionable religious elements of Scouting, then we are unwilling to pay that price, even though that forces us to reject the good with the bad. We realize also that we will be unpopular in the eyes of those who heartily approve of everything in Scouting, and we know that we will be misunderstood by those who regard only the outward activities of Scouting and disregard its religious elements.

OUR DISAGREEMENT WITH THE MISSOURI SYNOD

Our stand against Scouting has in recent years become more unpopular than ever. Formerly, when nearly all church bodies were embracing Scouting, we at least had the comfort of knowing that we were not standing entirely alone when we testified against the movement. We could rely on the encouraging testimony of our sister synods in the Synodical Conference.

That situation, however, has been changed. In 1944 the Missouri Synod abandoned its former position on Scouting and left the matter of Scouting to the judgment of the local congregation. As a result, many congregations in our sister synod now cooperate with Scouting and sponsor their own troops. Our stand against Scouting now places us in disagreement even with those in church fellowship with us. Attempts to resolve this disagreement have thus far proved unsuccessful. This difference on Scouting is one of the matters that is straining our relations with the Missouri Synod and which, therefore, must be clearly understood by all of us.

AN INTERSYNODICAL PROBLEM AND MORE THAN THAT

The objection to Scouting, however, will not be fully appreciated, if we view the whole subject of Scouting as nothing more than an intersynodical difference, a question of synod policy, a problem for theologians that only remotely concerns us Christians as individuals. It is true that Scouting is now a grave intersynodical problem. But we are not doing justice to the subject if we are satisfied to say, "My boy isn't a Boy Scout because my pastor, my congregation, my synod doesn't approve of Scouting." Disapproval of Scouting must stem from conviction based on God's Word.

Scouting reaches into the field of youth training and will certainly affect the future of the Church. Our stand against Scouting is nothing inconsequential but is for all of us: A VITALLY IMPORTANT POSITION.

GOD-PLEASING YOUTH TRAINING

We are not against Scouting because of a stubborn desire to be against things. We are against it because we are for something that concerns us deeply. We want our youth to be saved eternally. We provide for their bodily welfare, their intellectual development, their vocational training, but above all else we strive to keep them with our Lord Jesus. They have been baptized into the new life in Christ. Their faith in Him must be preserved and strengthened as they grow to be young men and women. The Scripture truth, "By grace are ye saved through faith" in Christ Jesus, must ever be the confession by which they live and in which they die, Nothing dare obscure that truth or mar that faith. We earnestly resist everything that can undermine their trust in Jesus their Savior and Lord. That is why we do not want Scouting to play any part in the training of our youth.

RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN SCOUTING

We are not averse to having our boys and girls learn useful outdoor skills and pursue harmless hobbies. But that is not all that Scouting offers them. Scouting has always concerned itself also with the character, the morality, the religious life of its boys and girls. Changes in the program and in the organizational structure of Scouting may be made, but its Oath or Promise, its Law and Slogan, do not change. They are "the rules of Scouting, the Scout's Code"¹ without which there can be no Scouting and no Scout.

RELIGION IN THE SCOUT OATH OR PROMISE

In his Oath or Promise the Scout says: “On my honor I will to my best to do my duty to God...to keep myself morally straight.” Under “duty to God” the Handbook for Boys includes such things as worship, faithfulness to Almighty God’s Commandments, gratitude, helping others.² In its commentary on “morally straight” it offers these explanations: “A morally straight Scout knows how to love and serve God in the way He wants him to...A loving Scout son always asks his heavenly Father’s pardon before he goes to bed at night for any offense he may have committed...”³

RELIGION IN THE SCOUT LAW

The Twelfth Scout Law is: “A Scout is reverent. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.” This is explained: “The Scout shows true reverence in two principal ways. First you pray to God, you love God and serve Him. Secondly in your everyday actions you help other people, because they are made by God to God’s own likeness. All your life you will be associating with people of other beliefs and customs. It is your duty to respect these people for their beliefs and customs, and to live your own.”⁴ “By doing your duty to God, by living up to the Twelfth point of the Law and by taking part in church activities you are helping your church.”⁵

RELIGION IN THE SCOUT SLOGAN

The Scout Slogan is “Do a Good Turn Daily.” The Handbook says: “...since the beginning of Scouting every new member has proudly accepted the obligation to do a Good Turn to someone every day. It is the Scout Slogan just as ‘Be Prepared’ is the Scout Motto. Together they carry much of the meaning and spirit of the Scout Oath and Law.”⁶ The “Daily Good Turn” is interpreted in the latest Handbook for Scoutmasters, which says: “These small Good Turns are the boy’s first steps toward service to others...By encouraging the boy to replace Self with Service to others, you aid him in fulfilling his promise ‘to do my duty to God and my Country.’...”⁷

SCOUTING’S STRESS ON THESE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS

It is apparent from these assertions of Scouting that it seeks to train its members in matters which are of a religious nature. These are by no means inconsequential matters. They include things like duty to God, worship, prayer, keeping the Ten Commandments, church membership, and good works.

We are not to think that Scouting’s interest in the boy’s religious life is a relatively unimportant and often-ignored part of the whole program. On the contrary, the requirements for each higher rank in Scouting again stress the Oath or Promise, the Law, and the Slogan in the section on “Scout Spirit.” Scoutmasters are instructed concerning the Scout Law and Oath: “Talking over the ideas of Scouting is the most important part of your session with the new boy. So make the best possible use of the occasion to help the boy understand the Scouting ideals and accept them as his code for the future.”⁸

Regarding the advancement program this Handbook says: “The Merit Badges indicate the Scout Craft skills a boy has mastered. But in addition to these skills the boy must have proved himself a good Scout through his Scout Spirit and his Scout Participation. The requirements in those two areas are more intangible than the Merit Badge projects. The fact that they are harder to measure in specific terms adds to their importance, for they indicate growth in the things that really count in the development of a boy...initiative, sense of responsibility, leadership and the qualities implied in the Scout Oath, Law, Motto and Slogan.”⁹

Scouting obviously is very much interested in the religious elements of its program. It impresses their importance upon the boy when he enters the movement; it holds them before the Scout continually; and it uses them in determining the boys right to advance his rank. Scouting brings these religious elements to the boys who join the organization.

Certainly we want religion for our boys. But do we want them to have the religion of the Scout movement? A comparison of this religion with that of the Scriptures will show that the two are not in harmony and that our stand against Scouting is: A SCRIPTURAL POSITION.

SCOUTING'S "GOD" NOT THE TRIUNE GOD

Scouting places emphasis upon the boy's relation to "God." It speaks of "God" in its Oath and Law and frequently in its official handbooks. But who is the "God" of Scouting? Is it the God of Scripture, the Triune God, the Savior-God revealed in Christ Jesus? The "God" of whom Scouting so often speaks is nowhere identified as the Triune God. Nowhere does it honor Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of sinners, although He says: "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which bath sent him." (John 5:23)

The omission of the Son of God from the Scout Oath and Law is not unintentional oversight but deliberate policy, for Scouting welcomes into its rank also those who deny that Jesus is true God and Savior. The "God" of Scouting is, therefore, not acceptable to the Christian, who will give honor only to the Triune God and who regards the worship of any other "God" as a sin against the first Commandment. We want our children to have the Scriptural answer to the question, "Who is God?" Scouting does not supply that answer and in failing to supply it provides a wrong answer and confuses young minds on this all-important question.

NO "DUTY TO GOD" WITHOUT FAITH

Scouting insists on the Scout Promise: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God..." It requires an oath or promise that goes far beyond the "Yea, yea; nay, any" of Scripture, and is forbidden by God. It implies that the Scout can on his honor, by his ability, do his "duty to God." It tells the Scout while describing his "duty to God": "Above all you are faithful to almighty God's Commandments."¹⁰

"It is something to be good but it is far better to do good."¹¹ This conflicts with the Scripture doctrines of Original Sin, Faith, and Conversion. The Scriptures tell us that natural man is born in sin, that he is an enemy of God, that he cannot please God. They teach that our first duty is to repent of our sins and believe in Christ Jesus. They insist that only he who believes in Christ can do work acceptable to God. Scouting disagrees with the central teaching of Scripture when it leaves faith in Christ completely out of the picture and then supposes that Scouts can do their "duty to God."

SCOUTING'S UNIONISTIC CHARACTER

Because Scouting invites boys of different creeds to participate in a program which contains religious elements, it cannot but come into conflict with the Scripture's teaching on church fellowship. The Twelfth Scout Law maintains: "A Scout...respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion." We grant that every citizen has the right to hold his own religious beliefs, but we ourselves will not join in religious endeavors with those who persist in false beliefs. We cannot grant religious error equal status with religious truth. We cannot respect anyone's religious errors. We cannot agree with Scouting when it says: "Your...rabbi will teach you how to know God better."¹² No one can be "faithful in his religious

duties” unless he is faithful to the Triune God. We do not accept the modern theory that all churches are alike, that one is as good as the other. We remember what our Lord says: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” (John 8:31)

WHAT ABOUT LUTHERAN SCOUT TROOPS

These are the basic differences between the religious elements in Scouting and the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. We certainly will not want to have our boys trained by a movement which is in conflict with the Gospel. “But,” someone may ask, “cannot this conflict be avoided by establishing Lutheran troops in which the correct Bible teachings are upheld by Lutheran scoutmasters?” Many congregations in the Missouri Synod have tried to avoid this conflict by sponsoring such troops. Official pronouncements of Scouting even seem to support such a policy, for we are told that “there is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys.” In Scouting’s National Constitution, Article IV, Section I, we find this promise: “The Boy Scouts of America recognizes the religious element in the training of the boy, but it is absolutely non-sectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the organization or institution with which the Boy Scout is connected shall give definite attention to his religious life.”

Scout authorities are, no doubt, sincere in their conviction that there is nothing in their movement which conflicts with any religion, and in their claim that their program does not in any way hinder a church in carrying out its own youth training. But their sincerity does not guarantee that their convictions and their claims are correct. If we find that there are Christ-less religious elements in the Scout Oath, Law, and Slogan, then we will have to reject the Scout movement, no matter what Scout authorities say.

THE GOSPEL DARE NOT BE COMPROMISED

We cannot comfort ourselves with the mere assurance that our authority is supreme in phases of Scouting affecting the spiritual welfare of our youth, since this is not guarantee that in Lutheran Scout troops we can remove, counteract, or correct any faults in the Scout movement. If we should try to conduct a troop without using the objectionable Scout Oath, Law, and Slogan, we would soon be told that we cannot do this, that we are omitting what is mandatory. We would have to be satisfied, if we wanted a church troop, with superimposing our explanations, amendments, corrections on the objectionable elements of Scouting. And with all our explaining, amending, and correcting we would still be compromising the Gospel, pressing it into an unworthy form. We would be guilty of the folly, and something worse than folly, of pouring new wine into old bottles and using new cloth to patch up an old garment. (Mark 2, 21f.)

NOT COMPROMISE BUT CONFESSION

The Word of God directs us to a path quite different from that which leads into the Scout movement. Our Lord has laid upon His Church the duty of confessing the truth and remaining separate from error. Our Christian testimony is undermined when we enlist in Scouting. We Christians are to testify that God has revealed Himself in His Son, the Savior; that to deny the Son is to deny the Father; that natural man is a lost sinner and cannot please or serve God. We cannot confess our faith clearly if we take part in a movement which is at variance with that confession. We may know the truth ourselves, but we participate in error when we give moral and financial support to Scouting. If through our advocacy of Scouting only one boy is strengthened in the belief that he can do his duty to God without our Lord Jesus, that will be a

tragedy that can never be justified or compensated for by any bodily and earthly benefits Scouting may bring. It is our “duty to God” to remain separate from Scouting. Only thus can we be faithful to the confession we owe to the world and to our youth. Only thus can we faithfully train up our youth in the way they should go.

- 1) Handbook For Boys, Fifth Edition. Sixth Printing, June 1953, p. 17.
- 2) Ibid., pp 20-21.
- 3) Ibid., p.25.
- 4) Ibid. p.39.
- 5) Ibid., p.127.
- 6) Ibid., p.42.
- 7) Handbook For Scoutmasters, Fourth Edition, Sixth Printing, 1952, p. 20.
- 8) Ibid., p.310,
- 9) Ibid., p.347.
- 10) Handbook For Boys, p. 20.
- 11) Ibid., p. 23.
- 12) Ibid., p. 25.

Cooperation In Externals Continuing In His Word Tract Number 8

THE CHURCH’S WORK IS NO “EXTERNAL”

God has given us Christians work to do. We are to bring Christ and His salvation to mankind. All of us need the Savior. And in mercy He comes to us with all His grace in His Word and Sacraments. Our real work on earth is to use these means of grace in true faith ourselves and then to bring them to others.

In this work we do not stand alone, either as individuals or as congregations. Through the same means of grace God also calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

But God’s blessed work of salvation is constantly being attacked by a deadly enemy. The devil is ever trying to ruin God’s work and to corrupt our faith by perverting the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. The result is that the Church on earth has been and still is “by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed.”

WHEN WE MUST SAY NO

Already in the Ancient Church the early Christians had to confess their faith over against all heresy. This they did in the Apostles’ Creed, in the Nicene Creed, and in the Athanasian Creed. With those who taught otherwise they had no church fellowship.

During the Reformation our Lutheran forefathers had to proclaim the true message of God’s Word over against the false teaching both of Rome and of the Reformed churches. This they did in our Lutheran Confessions, for example, the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Catechisms. Church fellowship with those who taught otherwise was also out of the question. Those first Lutherans realized that it was grave matter to separate, but they said, “Here God’s command stands: that everyone should be on his guard and not be allied with those who teach false doctrine or who want to defend such false doctrine.” (Smalcald Articles, Treatise, 42) They were convinced that “the controversies which have occurred are not, as some would regard them,

mere misunderstandings or disputes concerning words.... But here the subjects of controversy are important and great, and of such a nature that the opinion of the party in error cannot be tolerated in the Church of God, much less be excused or defended.” (Formula of Concord Thor. Decl., Pref. 9)

We can take no other position today. We still concede the name “church” to a false church where the means of grace are still at work despite the dangerous errors that are mixed with the truth. But where there is no agreement in the teaching of the Gospel and in the administration of the Sacraments, there can be no joint use of the means of grace.

JOINT WORK WITH OTHER LUTHERANS?

This boundary of altar and pulpit fellowship must be upheld also when we are dealing with Lutheran churches. The fact that a church *calls* itself Lutheran, or that once in its history the Lutheran Confessions *were* its confessions, does not make it genuinely Lutheran. There must also be agreement in the teaching of the Gospel and in the administration of the Sacraments, otherwise there can be no joint use of them, even by Lutherans. The cry of “the present emergency” cannot be used to force a premature union of churches which are not agreed in doctrine and practice. After all, the Church is always living in an emergency, in the end-time of the world when she sees the signs of the times and looks forward to the coming of the great Judgment Day.

We can and should have serious doctrinal discussions with other Lutherans to remove misunderstandings and errors, or we may meet with them to regulate boundaries of permissible cooperation in externals in a Christian manner; but we cannot have pulpit and altar fellowship with those who are not agreed with us on such important doctrines as Objective Justification, the Election of Grace, and Conversion; and in such practices as union services, open communion, and the toleration of lodges.

We are generally agreed that if pulpit and altar fellowship are involved, cooperation with other Lutheran bodies outside the Synodical Conference is out of the question. Our pastors do not belong in pulpits of the American Lutheran Church and of the United Lutheran Church, nor do their pastors have a right to preach their doctrine and advocate their practice from our pulpits. Our communicants do not receive the Lord’s Supper at their altars, nor do their communicants unite with us in our celebration of the Sacrament. To ignore these sound principles would be unionism.

It is the same kind of unionism to cooperate with such Lutherans in publishing joint church papers, missionary literature, and the like, or to unite with them in establishing and maintaining educational and charitable institutions. We do not contribute to the support of a United Lutheran seminary, nor do we want a United Lutheran writer on the staff of our Northwestern Lutheran or an American Lutheran instructor on the faculty of Doctor Martin Luther College at New Ulm. It does not require a practiced eye to see that such cooperation in spiritual matters would also be rank unionism.

REAL EXTERNALS

On the other hand, we do not go so far as to insist that every kind of intersynodical cooperation among Lutherans of other synods must be ruled out. We have employed a non-Synodical Conference Lutheran welfare organization in Pennsylvania to distribute clothing to war sufferers in Europe. A congregation of our Synod and a congregation of the American Lutheran Church could own a burial plot jointly and share the responsibility for its upkeep. As American citizens, we could together with other Lutherans defend religious rights which we have under the Constitution, and oppose legislation that would discriminate against our Lutheran

churches and schools. Such cooperation does not involve pulpit and altar fellowship. It is not joint Gospel work. In such “externals,” all of them purely business arrangements or undertakings in defense of our civic rights, we may cooperate if need be.

DANGEROUS GROUND

Other types of cooperation in “externals” provide joint facilities for spiritual work. A well-known instance has been the construction and operation of service centers by the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council. Since there were large numbers of Lutheran young men and women in the armed forces during World War II, it was deemed advisable to build service centers in strategic locations which would serve not only as social centers, but also as places where church services could be held. The National Lutheran Council and the Missouri Synod made arrangements to use the same buildings but conducted their worship services, Bible classes, instruction classes, etc., at different hours or in different parts of the building.

Practical considerations appeared to recommend such coordination of effort. Many Lutherans felt that thereby duplication of effort could be avoided and unnecessary expenditures eliminated, and that the program of the Lutheran Church could be broadened, so that more people would be benefited than ever before.

During the past ten years these practical considerations have suggested many other fields in which cooperation appeared to be feasible. Missouri Synod Lutherans felt that they had been operating facilities together with National Lutheran Council Lutherans “without violation of principles.” It seemed reasonable to them that organizations and societies of those same synods could work together without compromising their spiritual principles if cooperation were limited to “externals” only.

As a consequence of such thinking, Lutheran charitable organizations began to cooperate with each other. A Missouri Synod committee collaborated with representatives of other Lutheran bodies in publishing the booklet entitled “Scouting in the Lutheran Church,” which set up guide-lines for cooperating the work of Lutheran churches with the Scout movement. Their Lutheran men began to associate with each other in a society called “Lutheran Men in America.” Lutheran youth organizations like the Walther League (Missouri Synod) and the Luther Leagues of the American Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church, and other Lutheran synods felt that their common interests and goals permitted them to discuss common problems. Since the mid-forties, cooperation among most Lutherans has flourished and spread like the green bay tree.

Our Synod together with other thoughtful Lutherans had reason to become more and more alarmed as Lutherans of different persuasions established increasingly familiar relationship with each other. They knew that “safeguards” were being set up, but in spite of them they foresaw real dangers in such wholesale contacts of Lutherans not in pulpit and altar fellowship. The distance between cooperation in “externals” and in joint spiritual work was being narrowed to perilous closeness.

INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES

Those fears were realized, despite the blithe and complacent assurance of advocates of practical cooperation that “a sound doctrinal position is so well anchored in the Bible that it does not need to fear being undermined by cooperation in externals with those who differ with us.” At the very first “All-Lutheran Youth Conference,” held at Valparaiso, Ind., in 1948, delegates of the Walther League and of assorted Luther Leagues did not confine their fellowship to “externals.” They worshiped and prayed together as if they were doctrinally and confessionally one. In the State of Washington Lutherans of all kinds (with the single exception of our

Wisconsin Synod congregations) took part in the formation of the organization called "Associated Lutheran Welfare." Soon "retreats" with spiritual programs in which the pastors of all synods were to take part were arranged.

Joint operation of service centers and close association in chaplaincy programs created a favorable climate for a "Communion Agreement" between the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council, according to which Lutheran service men and women of both groups could under "exceptional" conditions receive Communion at each others' altars. (Quartalschrift, 1951, p. 143) Spiritual programs for "Lutheran Men in America" flagrantly ignored the "safeguards" set up by the original "cooperation in externals" program.

No one had to be a prophet or the son of a prophet to predict the sorry outcome of these ventures in practical cooperation. When Lutherans of various stripes are encouraged to associate with each other and increasingly closer contacts are being cultivated among them, it comes as no surprise if they begin to fellowship on a more intimate spiritual level. To trust that it will be otherwise is to be as blissfully unaware of reality as a Lutheran congregation that arranges to have its young people attend roller-skating parties with the local Catholic Youth Organization and then dismisses all fears that such camaraderie will lead to closer attachments between some of those young people despite the barriers of conflicting faiths. Mixed marriages often result when young people allow friendships to ripen into affection and love. In the same way church bodies can be drawn together without settling religious differences first, especially when they feel that they have spiritual values in common.

Even he who runs may read the sobering record of history in this regard. In 1917, when the National Lutheran Council was organized by the synods of the present American Lutheran Conference and of the present United Lutheran Church, its purpose was intended to be purely external. They judged that they should be able to work together in "externals" in spite of differences in doctrine and practice. Thirty years later the *Lutheran Outlook* argued: "It is evident from the aggressiveness with which the Council is expanding its cooperative activities in various directions that it is laying the framework for a larger Lutheran unity.... It is not difficult to foresee how its continued expansion will make it the logical basis for organic Lutheran unity." First, cooperation with "safeguards", then the call for complete consolidation, thus bringing the movement to its inevitable unionistic climax.

Every home-owner living on a corner lot has had to contend with the very human tendency to take a short-cut. People are reluctant to take the long way round if a shorter and easier path is available. The way to union with other Lutherans by means of thorough-going discussions and agreements in doctrine and practice is painstaking and time-consuming. It does not appeal to those who are impatient of delay. On the other hand, the way to union by means of increased cooperation is easy and attractive. Which way to Lutheran unity will appeal to the average American?

Such heedless unawareness of the natural inclinations of the human heart becomes all the more dangerous in view of the world-wide surge toward union among churches. Churches have not been able to escape the pressure that has built up behind slogans with such emotional appeals as those calling for "toleration," "brotherhood," "understanding," "a united front." The very existence of such world-wide organizations as the World Council of Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation; and of such nation-wide organizations as the National Council of Christian Churches in the U. S., and the National Lutheran Council, will give the earnest contender for the truth cause for alarm. We need a strong anchor when the sweep toward union is at flood tide.

"EXTERNALS" THAT ARE NOT EXTERNALS

Under such conditions it will be nothing short of disastrous for the cause of Lutheranism to fail to distinguish properly between externals and actual church work, and as a result to mistake spiritual essentials for mere “externals.” What many casually call “externals” in the work of the Church are not at all separate and distinct from the real work of preaching the Gospel. Providing places of worship and doing Christian works of charity are but the outgrowth of the life within the Church which is created and nourished by the preaching of the Gospel. To think that we can treat important functions of the Church in one way, by merely referring to them as “externals,” and treat the actual work which the Lord has given us in another way is to make a distinction which the Lord has not made and which is not even logical when we understand what externals really are.

GOD’S UNMISTAKABLE LANGUAGE

It is possible to become so wrapped up in our human dreams of mighty unions of churches that we fail to heed the cautions given by a knowledge of human nature, an acquaintance with history, an awareness of the worldwide surge toward union, and above all an understanding of the essential oneness of all Church work. For that reason God has given us some blunt directives in Scripture. Every part of the Word of God which speaks of our relation with those who deny any part of the truth calls for separation from them and their work. The “beware” of Matthew 7, 15; the “avoid” of Romans 16, 17; the “reject” of Titus 3, 10, and the “neither bid him God speed” of 2 John 10 speak a language which is distinctly different from that which is spoken by those who feel that it is possible to cooperate with other church bodies in supposedly harmless and beneficial “externals.”

Then let us do the work the Lord has assigned to us, not disheartened because we cannot cooperate with those who do not stand together with us in doctrine and practice, but with a good will and in quiet confidence because we shall find much strength through being able to work with those who are of one mind and heart with us, and above all because He who has exhorted us to “be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” promises that our labor will not be in vain in Him. (1 Cor. 15, 58)

Antichrist Continuing In His Word Tract Number 9

“Antichrist shall come!” That alarm, sounded in loving concern by St. John, alerts Christians for the world’s fast approaching midnight hour and bids us who love our Savior to stand ceaseless guard against this wicked opponent of Christ. With Luther and the Church of the Reformation the Synodical Conference has always taught that the Pope is the great Antichrist, in whom all the prophecies of Scripture concerning this arch-enemy of our Savior have been fulfilled; and it has confessed this truth as an article of faith. Whether this tenet can be considered a doctrine of Scripture, an article of faith, is being questioned today.

LUTHER AND THE CONFESSIONS

So that the Christian make no mistake in identifying Antichrist, God has deposited in the Bible a very clear set of his fingerprints. (2 Thess. 2; 1 John 2, 18; 4, 3; Dan. 11, Rev. 13; 17) Since the space of our tract will not allow a complete analysis, we shall restrict ourselves to only one whorl of those distinguishing marks, the one on which Luther based his conviction.

In the Smalcald Articles Luther singles out one particular statement of the Apostle Paul which, beyond all doubt, labels the Pope as the Antichrist: "...the Pope...has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ." (II, Art IV, 10) This distinguishing characteristic of Antichrist is already pointedly indicated in the very names that the Scriptures assign to him.

"Ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists." 1 John 2, 18) St. John then, differentiates between the many antichrists, the false teachers of his day, and the one Antichrist, who is to come. (1 John 4, 3.) In the "man of sin" and "son of perdition," for so the Apostle Paul labels the Antichrist, the spirit of the many antichrists already at work in the days of the apostles will find specific manifestation and concentration. He will be the very personification of sin.

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3, 28) Into the focus of those few words the Apostle Paul has concentrated the basic truth of Scripture, the heart of Gospel teaching.

This central truth of Scripture that man is saved alone through faith in Christ, the Papacy brazenly and diametrically opposes with its doctrine of salvation by works. As justification by faith is the heart of the Gospel, so a denial of that truth is the essence of Papacy. The whole papal machinery, its arrogant usurpation of authority in the Church, its entire system of work-righteousness are built up on a denouncement of this cardinal truth. If justification by faith is admitted, the whole edifice of the Papacy falls. The Pope does not merely ignore this chief article of our faith or only change it by additions and subtractions. He rejects it. He does not attack some minor, less vital point of Christian doctrine. He condemns that article which is fundamental to all. He pronounced Luther a heretic for embracing it and banned him from the Church for preaching it. More than that. Upon all who hold to it he solemnly pronounces a gruesome curse. Listen to only two canons of the Council of Trent, Sixth Session:

Canon IX: If anyone saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order . . . [to obtain] the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema [damned].

Canon XII: If anyone saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema.

Faith simply recoils from such blasphemous pronouncement of damnation upon those who hold to the central truth of Scripture that man is saved alone through faith in Christ. What more "personal concentration of the antichristian power," what "more comprehensive fulfillment of 2 Thess. 2" can be awaited than that which is revealed in the Pope's anathematizing of the very heart of the Gospel truth?

Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man. In Him all hopes of the Christian find sure anchor. To Him alone faith looks for salvation, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4, 12) Yet, the Pope in the bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) insists that "to submit to the Roman Pontiff is a matter of absolute necessity for salvation." What more direct attack on Christ's person and office can be made than that the only Mediator and Redeemer is crowded off His rightful throne and that His work is declared insufficient and in vain by a brazen usurper who exalts himself above God and sets himself in Christ's place? Can anything be more **Anti-Christ**? Here is the villain to whom belong all the other arches loops and composites of the fingerprints on file in the Scriptures.

We are, therefore, compelled to confess with Luther: “. . . the Pope raised his head above all. This teaching shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power. This is, properly speaking, to *exalt himself above all that is called God*, as Paul says, 2 Thess. 2, 4.” (Smalcald Art., II, Art. IV, 9-10) This ringing confession of Luther is the expression of his conviction “that the Pope is the veritable, final Antichrist, of whom all Scriptures speak.” (St. L. ed., XIX, 1164) This conviction Luther held because the Pope had disemboweled the Gospel and dethroned Christ.

AN “OPEN QUESTION”

In the centuries succeeding the Reformation the Lutheran Church accepted Luther’s confessional statement without qualification. Controversy on this question, however, arose in the 1860’s when the Iowa Synod, now a member of the ALC, refused to grant doctrinal status to the tenet that the Pope is the Antichrist. It consequently listed the teaching of Scripture on this subject under the category of “open questions.” The Missouri Synod, on the other hand, held to the view of our Lutheran Confessions that the prophecies of Antichrist have been fulfilled in the Pope. The Iowa Synod, however, argued that the Bible does not say in so many words that the Pope is the Antichrist, that it is therefore a “human application” of the teaching of Scripture to declare the Pope to be the Antichrist. And so the Iowa Synod officially stated:

Our Synod wants the question left open. . . Those who from Scripture have gained the conviction that the final fulfillment of these prophecies is still to be expected in the future, should have the same right in the Church as those who consider themselves convinced that everything is already fulfilled in the Roman papacy.

(*Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1904, pp. 24-25)

A “HISTORICAL JUDGMENT”

Since 1930 the ALC likewise denies doctrinal status to the tenet that the Pope is the Antichrist. It treats the whole matter as a “historical judgment” only. The ALC, sponsoring the position of the Iowa Synod, argues that the teaching concerning Antichrist is indeed a doctrine clearly defined in Scripture; however, as soon as the Scripture prophecy concerning Antichrist is applied to the Pope, they say the doctrine is being augmented, since our knowledge of the Pope is based on history and the Scriptures do not say in so many words that the Pope is the Antichrist.

In 1938 this position of the ALC received official sanction in its *Declaration*:

“... we accept the historical judgment of Luther in the Smalcald Articles . . . that the Pope is the Antichrist . . . because among all the antichristian manifestations in the history of the world and the Church that lies behind us in the past there is none that fits the description given in 2 Thess. 2 better than the Papacy....

The answer to the question whether in the future that is still before us, prior to the return of Christ, a special unfolding and a personal concentration of the antichristian power already present now, and thus a still more comprehensive fulfillment of 2 Thess. 2 may occur, we leave to the Lord and Ruler of Church and world history.” (VI, B. a)

A DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Over against the “open question” of the Iowa Synod and the “historical judgment” of the ALC, the Missouri Synod held “that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning Antichrist . . . have been fulfilled in the Pope of Rome and his dominion”; it “[subscribed] to the statement

of our Confessions that the Pope is ‘the very Antichrist’”, and it declared that the doctrine of Antichrist is “not to be included in the number of open questions.’ (*Brief Statement*, 43; 44)

Even a quick glance at the history of the Smalcald Articles will reveal that Luther was solemnly confessing an article of faith, a doctrine properly drawn from Scripture, when he declared the Pope to be the very Antichrist. In the instructions for the drafting of these Articles the Elector of Saxony had given Luther these pointed directives: that he should “prepare his foundation and opinion from the Holy Scriptures”; that he should draft such Articles by which he was determined to abide, “upon his departure from this world and before the judgment of Almighty God, and in which we cannot yield without becoming guilty of treason against God” that he should present them upon their completion to the “Wittenberg theologians” and obtain their opinion, “as they hoped for their soul’s salvation.”

In the conclusion of the Articles appear these arresting words from Luther’s own pen: “These are the articles on which I must stand, and, God willing, shall stand even to my death.... If anyone wishes to yield anything in them, let him do it at the peril of his conscience.” Imperil conscience, risk treason against God! —for an “open question”? Ready to die, ready to stand before the Judgment! —for a “historical judgment”? It was an outstanding part of Luther’s faith that he considered the Pope the Antichrist.

Luther’s identification of the villain was not a mere “historical judgment,” an identification performed primarily by his intellect. A cold, two-plus-two-equals-four, intellectual process of comparing the marks of the criminal with the fingerprints on file in the Scriptures did not settle him in his conviction. Not until his faith had become deeply rooted and firmly anchored in the Savior and His Scriptures, not until it had fully embraced and lived the truth that we are saved alone through faith in Christ, did Luther fully recognize and denounce the vicious corruption of the Gospel by the Papacy. It was because Luther cherished the Gospel so dearly that his faith instinctively recoiled and protested in unmistakable terms when the Pope put himself in the place of Christ and declared His work insufficient and in vain. That is the use to which Luther’s faith put the prophecy of Scripture. For him the tenet that the Pope is the Antichrist was an article of faith.

For Luther there was a very close relation between the knowledge of the Gospel and the identification of the Pope as the Antichrist. For him they were the obverse and reverse sides of the same coin. The identification of the Pope as the Antichrist was for him the reverse of the knowledge of the Gospel; and his battle against the Pope as the Antichrist the reverse of his battle for the Gospel. Only he who has grasped this intimate connection can understand Luther’s position and appreciate his confession of this article of faith.

Luther’s confession has always been our confession. Some maintain that today the antichristian character of the Papacy is no longer as vicious as it was in Luther’s time. Is this true? Since Luther’s day the Papacy has already defined two unscriptural dogmas which elevate the Virgin Mary to a position above that of a sinful mortal: her Immaculate Conception (1854) and her Assumption into heaven (1950). And just recently a president of a Catholic university said that Mary is likely to be “proclaimed in a definition of doctrine as Co-Redemptrix of the human race, that next the dogma of Mediatrix of all graces . . . and finally the definition of her queenship as participation with her Son in the power of ruling the World, may be proclaimed.” Theologians agree, he added, “that these are definable . . . all three of these may come to realization before another century passes.” (*Time*, March 22, ‘54) What blasphemy! Luther’s confession must still be

THE COMMON CONFESSION CONFUSES

The *Brief Statement* considers the tenet that the Pope is the Antichrist a doctrine “clearly defined in Scripture.” The *Declaration* of the ALC regards it only as a “historical judgment.” Does the Common Confession settle this past difference? It declares:

Among the signs of His [Christ’s] approaching return for judgment the distinguishing features of the Antichrist, as portrayed in the Scriptures, are still clearly discernible in the Roman papacy, the climax of all human usurpations of Christ’s authority in the Church.

The document contains no express statement that this is an article of faith. Its present wording allows the ALC to hold to its old view of a “historical judgment.” Even though the Papacy is termed “the climax of all human usurpations of Christ’s authority in the Church,” the word “climax” is given only relative significance by its connection with the phrase “are still clearly discernible.” The whole tone of the statement is that of a casual historical observation. To say that the features of the Antichrist are *still* discernible, strongly suggests the old ALC notion that at some future time the situation may be different. And if that is the case, then “climax” really means the highest point of usurpation up to the present time only.

It is true that the Missouri Synod’s *Fraternal Word* claims that the word still “indicates that we hold to the position of our Confessions.” In its present position the word simply does not bear that connotation. To convey that meaning, the sentence should read: We still hold”

Even then the statement would be unsatisfactory, for an unqualified confession that the Pope is the Antichrist is lacking. The document merely states that “the distinguishing features of the Antichrist . . . are still clearly discernible in the Roman papacy.” The ALC can agree to that, for it has always recognized that “among all the antichristian manifestations in the history of the world and the Church that *lies behind us in the past* there is none that fits the description given in 2 Thess. 2 better than the Papacy.”

The ambiguous language of the *Common Confession* fails to settle the past controversy.

HOW OTHERS UNDERSTAND MISSOURI

In general, our Synod holds that the “*Common Confession* does not adequately restate the Lutheran doctrine, nor does it treat this matter as an article of faith, but rather as a historical judgment.” (*Proceedings*, 1951, p. 135.) And we are not alone in our observation that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod no longer occupies its former position in this matter. In a recent book review (Nov. 7, ‘53) the *Lutheran Standard*, official organ of the ALC, offers this comment: “In contrast with the vote taken at the recent meeting of the Missouri Synod in Houston, Texas, Dr. Pieper [held] that the Pope is the Antichrist.”

A Roman Catholic magazine published by the Benedictine Fathers interprets the Houston convention in this way: “Luther denounced the Pope ceaselessly as the Anti-christ. This libel passed into the Lutheran formulas of faith.... Only last summer in Houston, Texas, some members of the Missouri Synod wanted to proclaim this absurdity as an article of faith to be believed by all members of that synod. Cooler heads prevailed and definition was postponed but this doctrine can still be taught and believed by Missouri Synod Lutherans.” (*Why*, Feb. ‘54) In the prevailing of “cooler heads” and in the postponement of “definition” the Papists see a retreat of the Missouri Synod from its former staunch loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions.

If we with Luther cherish the central truth of Scripture that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, if the Lutheran Confessions are still our own, then we will also with bold conviction confess that the Pope is the very Antichrist. For those who can no longer confess this as an article of faith, the next step must follow: public retraction of what has been taught and an abject apology to Rome! The Eighth Commandment bids nothing less!

Prayer Fellowship Continuing In His Word Tract Number 10

PRAYER IS BASED ON THE WORD OF GOD

Our prayers are our answer to God's Word. God comes to us first. In Word and Sacrament He reveals Himself to us as our Creator, our Redeemer and our Sanctifier. He speaks to us first; and only because He first reveals Himself to us and creates faith in our hearts do we reply in faith and prayer.

If God had not acted first to bring us salvation, we would still be lost in sin and could not turn to Him in faith and prayer. If Christ had not first opened heaven for us, we would never even begin to think of sending up prayers to the throne of the Father in heaven. If God had not first established His holy Word and Sacraments as a means of grace, we would have nothing to hold fast to, no real basis for our prayers. Our faith and the exercise of that faith in prayer are dependent upon God's work and upon God's Word. The Christian does not invent the promises on which he bases his prayers. He takes God at His Word, and thus he prays.

This means that at the heart of our prayer-life there always stands the central doctrine of our Christian faith that we are made righteous before God through the sacrifice of Jesus our Savior. Prayer is the blessed privilege of those who are "the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3, 20) Their sins are forgiven, and hence the barrier of sin which otherwise separates them from God has been removed. If our right to pray is based upon the very heart of Christian doctrine, then prayer itself is also a matter of doctrine; it is dependent upon what we believe, on what we are taught in the Word of God. The Word of God is the means of grace through which our faith with its prayer life is implanted and nourished. Prayer in itself is never a means of grace, but is always dependent upon the Word of God. Only those pray properly who hear God's Word and keep it in good and honest hearts.

PRAYING WITH OTHERS

It is certainly part of the joy of Christian faith that we can join with other believers in making our requests known unto God, in uniting our voices to offer praise and thanksgiving unto Him whose blessings we share. Such praying together is described in the New Testament where we hear that the early church continued "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2, 42) The Apostle Paul instructs the congregation at Ephesus: "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph.5, 18ff.)

One in faith, one in the confession of it, one in their sincere effort to live by it, those Christians were able to pray together at all times and in all places. So God would always have it in His Church on earth. But Satan, the spiteful foe of God and His people, cannot bear to see this blessed harmony among Christians. He disrupts this communion of hearts and voices by sowing the seeds of discord in the visible Church. Soon false doctrine and false practice rear their ugly heads to divide the Church. He is responsible for the schisms that have torn Christendom asunder. He has set the Greek Church against the Roman Church, the Roman Catholic against

the Protestant. In Luther's day he spread the false teaching that led to the split between Lutherans and Reformed. As a result of his malicious work, one denomination cannot have fellowship with another in the pulpit and at the altar. Joint worship in the visible Church is out of the question because it has been split by false doctrine and false practice.

Not only is joint worship impossible, but where there is no common confession of faith, there can be no common prayer, for prayer is a vital exercise of our faith. Before we can agree in prayer, we must agree in the faith which turns our hearts to prayer. Unity of faith must be the basis for the prayer fellowship Jesus speaks of in Matt. 18,19: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

As mortals whose human vision is limited, we cannot see another's faith to judge whether or not it is the same as our own. We can and must accept what he confesses and practices in his life as a sincere expression of his faith. If his confession of faith is fully in harmony with God's Word, and if his practice does not contradict this confession, then we conclude that such a person believes as we do. We feel that we are united in faith, and we express our common faith by joining in prayer.

Conversely, if the confession of faith that other Christians make is not in harmony with God's Word, if it is tainted by false doctrine and practice, then the unity of faith which is a prerequisite for prayer fellowship is out of the question. We cannot gather publicly and pray with them, although we should certainly pray for them if their doctrine is not pure and their practice is not God-pleasing.

Every Christian feeling is shocked when Christians practice prayer fellowship with those who deny Christ. Our teeth are set on edge when we see followers of Christ praying with Christ-denying Jews, Mohammedans, or Unitarians. Our Christian sense of propriety and decency will give decisive answer to Paul's question: "What concord hath Christ with Belial?"

But not everyone within the visible Church is offended when Christians of differing confessions pray together. The Methodist joins in prayer with the Baptist, and the Lutheran with the Reformed, and there are many Protestants who believe that Christian love and charity are broad enough to unite such divergent faiths. They applaud such fraternizing as a display of tolerance and democracy despite the plain prohibition of God's Word: "If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

PRAYING WITH OTHER LUTHERANS

Protestants by and large see nothing objectionable in the comradely prayer fellowship of differing Protestant denominations. Many Lutherans approve just as wholeheartedly when Lutherans of different synods join hearts and hands with each other. They warmly commend the brotherly spirit that moves the ULC Lutheran to pray with the Augustana Lutheran. They have no doubt that it will be a significant blessing for the Lutheran Church as a whole if the Missouri Synod Lutheran can see his way clear to pray with his ULC neighbor, and our Wisconsin Synod members with those of the ALC church across town.

Those who promote such broad Lutheran fellowship across synodical lines argue that all Lutherans subscribe to the same Augsburg Confession, use the same Catechisms of Luther, and square their doctrines by the same Book of Concord. They honor the same Reformer of the Christian Church. Their hymns are often identical, and their orders of service are similar. There is much more to unite them than to separate them. After all are they not all Lutheran? Are they not all brethren? Is it not a Christian duty to pray with Lutherans of all synods when we must

regard them as Christians who pray to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for a God-pleasing purpose?

The conscientious Lutheran's answer to these impatient questions cannot be determined by what seems desirable or even by what our best human judgment considers necessary for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth. In these matters the earnest Lutheran's judgment, like Luther's, is bound by God's Word. And God's Word takes for granted that we agree with each other whenever we pray together: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 18, 19)

Since we are not one with every Lutheran in the confession of faith, we cannot pray with each and every one who claims that he is a Lutheran. When tolerant ULC Lutherans see nothing wrong with lodges when the president of the ULC can be a leader in the unionistic National Council of Churches, when such liberal Lutherans allow the termites of doubt to undermine the Scriptural foundations of the doctrine of Inspiration, their different spirit is so evident that there can be no possibility of church fellowship or of prayer fellowship, which is a part of it. Neither can we have prayer fellowship with ALC Lutherans, who compromise the Biblical doctrines of Conversion, Justification, Election, and Antichrist, and who consort with the most liberal Lutheran churches. Prayer with such Lutherans makes a mockery of true unity.

JOINT PRAYER FOR UNITY?

But can we pray with the ALC, for example, in situations where it does appear possible to agree with them? The Missouri Synod pastor will not preach a mission festival sermon in the neighboring American Lutheran church and unite in prayer with its pastor and congregation. But can he and other Missouri Synod pastors attend a conference with that ALC pastor in his parish hall and join in praying for unity between their disunited synods? Can both groups agree in their desire for unity? It has been contended that both of them could be equally concerned about coming to true unity of doctrine and practice, so that they could pray for it jointly though they were not yet doctrinally one.

Before such joint prayer can qualify for acceptance among us, it must pass two challenging tests. We must determine whether there is true agreement of purpose among those who join in such prayer, and also whether all other unionism is ruled out in their joint prayer.

First of all, it must be established that the ALC and the Missouri Synod are actually in agreement in their desire for unity. There must be evidence, confessional evidence, that they are of the "same mind and of the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1, 10) in this regard.

In probing for this unity of purpose, we feel constrained to ask pointed questions. Do the ALC and the Missouri Synod want union for the same God-pleasing reasons? Are both groups equally concerned about a union of hearts? Do both approach the Word of God in the same completely selfless spirit, putting aside all human considerations in their quest for unity?

Even when we ask such heart-searching questions as these, we should like to assume that the ALC and the Missouri Synod are one in their sincere desire for unity. But we dare not leave out of consideration the fact that for many years there has been disunity between the ALC and the Missouri Synod. Evidence of this disunity is clear in such a matter as lodge practice, not to mention the disagreement in basic doctrines. Why have the two synods differed in those doctrines all these years, in spite of their repeated attempts to come to agreement? Is it not because the same mind and the same judgment have not been present to unite them?

They have not even been on common ground in their attitude toward the role Scripture plays in determining how much agreement is necessary before church bodies can unite. The ALC

has always felt that the Scriptures allow a rather wide area for difference of opinion on doctrine, while the Missouri Synod has held that in doctrines revealed by Scripture there is no room for differing opinions. In view of these facts, how can two synods, differing so fundamentally, pray together with the same unity of purpose?

If it should be possible for disunited Lutherans to pray together for unity, could not Lutherans and Methodists, or Lutherans and Catholics pray together for the same purpose? God has not said that the degree or the seriousness of the error determines our prayer relations. If we can pray together with one whom a “small” error separates from us, we can pray together with one whom a “great” error separates from us. No one will dare to vouch for oneness of mind and judgment in cases of “major” disagreements. But, who will prove that “minor” errors do not affect oneness of mind and judgment in praying together? Error, not degree of error, settles the question.

Secondly, before joint prayer for unity passes inspection, it must be established that no unionism is involved. Unionism is characterized by these marks: It fails to confess the whole truth of the divine Word; it fails to reject and denounce every opposing error, it assigns error equal right with truth and creates the impression of church fellowship and of unity of faith where they do not exist. Representatives of the Missouri Synod and of the ALC, meeting to discuss their differences, cannot pray jointly without giving the impression that they are united in faith. When they pray together, have they not, in the public eye, already crossed the divide that has been separating them? Have they not already taken a greater step toward fellowship than a subsequent written and sealed agreement in doctrinal matters can take? When they say they can pray together, they have committed themselves to an assumed unity of faith between them. This presumed unity they must now defend, even if they declare that they are not united in doctrine and practice, and even if they may not be able to unite on that level for many years, if ever.

CIRCUMSTANCES VARY, PRINCIPLES DON'T

Those who advocate joint prayer between representatives of Lutheran synods which are not doctrinally one will not be able to obtain clear credentials for their practice. But does this rule out every joint prayer with members of a heterodox synod? Before answering that question, we must remind ourselves that on all occasions where Christians associate with one another, whether in public or in private, whether as synodical representatives or as individuals, the same Scriptural principles apply.

What these principles are, this tract has set forth, namely, that it is always the will of God for His believers (a) to manifest in worship and in prayer the fellowship of faith that unites them, (Acts 2, 42; Eph. 5, 18ff.) until and unless (b) confession of the truth and rejection of error require them to separate. (2 John 10) These are not legalistic rules, but evangelical principles. They are to be applied in the spirit of our Savior who would not break a bruised reed, nor quench a smoking flax. In both these principles, that of fellowship and that of separation, there is inherent the spirit of love and true concern for the spiritual welfare of others. In any given instance we must do whatever the glory of the Savior and the true edification of the other person may require. This may direct us to join in prayer with others, or to refuse to pray with them.

Now we know that there are devout children of God in all synods who unfortunately are not yet informed regarding the matters in controversy and are not aware of their involvement in error through membership in a heterodox synod. I may have an ALC grandmother who has always manifested a simple, childlike faith in her Lord and Savior, but who nevertheless is unaware of the intersynodical differences and their implications. When I visit her in the privacy of her home, it might be a grave mistake were I to assert the principle of separation by refusing

to pray with her under such circumstances. What would the Lord have me do? Should I trouble her simple faith with these matters which are apparently beyond her grasp? Or is it not my plain duty to support and build up her faith by praying with her or otherwise expressing my own faith?

If, however, my cousin is not only aware of the synodical differences, but defends his church's errors, I cannot pray with him— not even in the privacy of his home. In order to make clear to him that the error he defends destroys the unity of our faith, I must refuse to join with him in prayer. In cases of this kind it matters not how close the other person may be to me as a relative or friend; here the word of Jesus applies: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10, 37)

There may be more occasions where prayer together with other Lutheran Christians or even with Christians of other denominations is indicated— in the hospital, for example, at the scene of an accident, or on the battlefield. When peril and imminent death reduce a Christian's confession to no more than a gasping, "Lord Jesus, help me," we pray with that soul in his desperate need, even if he is not a member of our church body. When we stand in the presence of God, one in the awareness of our guilt and one in our complete trust in His saving love, we can unite in prayer as we could have united with the thief on the cross in his simple plea, "Lord, remember me." Let us only be careful that we do not even then compromise the truth nor sanction error.

Finally, we dare not forget that there are those Christians who may be caught in an error, not willfully, but because their understanding of Scripture is insufficient. They are willing to bow to Scripture, but as yet, through human weakness, do not see clearly how the truth of Scripture necessarily rules out their error. What does God say to us concerning such weak Christians? He tells us: "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." (Rom. 14, 1) *Receive*, He says, *receive* such a weak brother and tenderly help him to overcome his weakness. "Receiving" such a weak Christian means that praying with him may well be in place and God-pleasing, and we trust that God will help him to grow in knowledge and strength. Certainly, this could not be done publicly without offense. And if such a person were to defend the error, even privately, then prayer with him would again be a denial of the Lord.

If we let these two principles guide us, that we manifest our Christian fellowship until confession of the truth and rejection of error require us to separate, then these concrete examples will not represent a policy of exceptions, but will constitute a truly Biblical and evangelical practice.

IN CONCLUSION

Though for the reasons set forth above we cannot enter into prayer fellowship with everyone, we still are deeply concerned about Christian unity. In our concern for unity we pray for others and for ourselves. We pray that God may pour upon all Christian people the grace of unity, that all schisms may be healed, so that His people, gathered from all nations, may serve Him in the unity of faith. But we leave it to God, who orders the course of His Church on earth, to effect this unity of faith through His Holy Spirit. As instruments in His hands we faithfully use the means Christ has committed to us His Word and Sacraments, holding them sacred, and avoiding all that might hinder their effectiveness. By thus conserving the truth of God's Word we are promoting the best interests of His kingdom and the cause of Christian unity, for sound doctrine has its roots laid in Christ, and Christ will draw all men unto Himself.

The Chaplaincy Question

Continuing In His Word

Tract Number 11

WHY NO CHAPLAINS IN THE WISCONSIN SYNOD?

In this brief study we shall present information and evidence that make clear why our Wisconsin Synod has not entered upon the Government's military chaplaincy program. Much of the evidence will be given in direct quotations from the Government's own statements on the military chaplaincy.* As we examine this evidence, we shall give special attention to:

1. An Evaluation of the Military Chaplaincy in the Light of Christ's Great Commission to His Church
2. A Study of Government Directives Regulating the Military Chaplaincy, Together with an Application of those Directives to Practical Situations
3. Conclusions

1. AN EVALUATION

Looking into the origin of the chaplaincy, we do well to mark that from its inception the military chaplaincy in the United States has been an institution established and implemented by the Government and not by the Church.

The Government believes that to make and keep its military personnel morally fit and generally effective some kind of religious guidance and help is needed. *A Report* says in its opening paragraph:

The religious programs and services of the Armed Forces, in addition to their primary spiritual values, are an essential part of an attempt to make available an environment and services which will improve the general morale, promote military efficiency, and enhance national preparedness and security.

"The religious programs and services of the Armed Forces" are obviously Christless in character, since the Government sees helpful "spiritual values" also in the chaplaincies of the Unitarians, Mormons, Jews, and Universalists, who deny Christ or His redemptive work. We observe from the quotation above that the Government aims to take advantage of these "spiritual values" for non-spiritual purposes.

Regarding the responsibility for the effectiveness of the "religious programs and services," *A Report* states, p. 3:

The basic responsibility for seeing to it that the religious program functions well rests with the commanding officer, as do all military programs. However, the chaplain is the staff officer who actually carries out the religious program for the commanding officer.

AR 660-20, p. 4 reads:

Commanders are responsible for the religious life, morals, and morale of their commands, and for the efficiency of chaplains under their command without trespassing upon the ecclesiastical field.

The two points to be noted above are that the chaplaincy is an institution of the Government and not of the Church, and that it embraces religious services that are to be carried out by the chaplain under Government direction. These two facts bid any confessional church to

be cautious and thoroughgoing when it considers the assignment proffered in the military chaplaincy: for this is a matter that vitally affects the Church and its Ministry.

The Church lives at all times in the realization that in its mission and work in the world it receives its directions only from Christ its Head (Eph. 5, 23-24), that the only means it has to work with are the Word and the Sacraments which it has received from Christ its Head (Matt. 28, 19-20; Lk 22, 19); and that as sole administrator of Word and Sacrament its greatest concern must be to remain faithful in all things to Christ its Lord who “loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5, 25-27)

Every true pastor within the Church lives and works in the same realization, remembering that in the service of Word and Sacrament he shall be directed only by Christ the Lord, that if he compromises any part of the Word of God, he is not true to Him who says plainly through His apostle, “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” (1 Cor. 4.2)

But when the Church probes the chaplaincy question earnestly, considering the possibility of entering on the chaplaincy program, it must face the fact that in this military ministry it would not be free to obey the direction of Christ its Head alone, but would also in a measure be subject to the direction of the Government, which has given it its assignment in the chaplaincy. It consequently must face the further fact also that in the administration of the means of grace within the chaplaincy it may at times have to close an eye to Christ’s clear injunction in order to carry out the intention of the Government.

Likewise a pastor entering the chaplaincy must face the reality that though he is a minister of Christ to whom alone he is responsible, he must nevertheless acknowledge a representative of the Government as his directing superior and must recognize the responsibility that at times his faithfulness to the Government, to which he pledged himself when he accepted the chaplaincy assignment, may require him to become unfaithful to Christ the Lord and Head of the Church. To close an eye to Christ in order to carry out the Government’s direction, to sacrifice faithfulness to Christ for loyalty to the Government’s intention: these Government-fostered tendencies in the chaplaincy give birth to a religious practice that is displeasing to Christ and harmful to His Church. That they are not just imaginary or merely hypothetical we can see from a study of Government directives and from practical situations that can arise from them in the chaplaincy.

2. A STUDY OF DIRECTIVES AND PRACTICAL SITUATIONS

The following statements found in *The Manual* should be carefully read and compared:

On the one hand:

No chaplain is required to conduct any service or rite contrary to the regulations of his denomination. (p. 3, 8)

But on the other hand:

The commanding officer is ultimately as completely responsible for the religious life, morals, and morale within the command as he is for strictly military affairs. The chaplain [as a staff officer] will familiarize himself with the plans and policies of the commanding officer and will formulate his program in keeping with these plans and policies. (p. 13, 30b)

AR660-10 requires chaplains to conduct or arrange for appropriate burial services at the interment of deceased members of the military service . . . active and retired . . . (p. 7, 13)

Now to apply the above directions to a practical situation. A popular young soldier, respected by all but definitely not a professing Christian, is killed near the front lines. What about the burial? His chaplain, who is Lutheran, finds it contrary to his faith as well as to the confessional practice of his denomination, to officiate. According to the guarantee in the basic regulations he is not required to do so. Nevertheless Army Regulation 660-10 “requires chaplains to conduct or arrange for appropriate burial services.” The morale of the men clearly demands that the dead soldier be given proper burial by the chaplain since here at the front no other clergyman can be secured to take charge of the service. The commanding officer is also of the opinion that it is the chaplain’s duty to officiate. —What is now the chaplain’s course?

Basically, the chaplain is permitted to follow his own religious conviction and to uphold the confessional practice of his church and thus refuse to officiate at the burial— disregarding the morale of the men and the opinion of his commanding officer. But he is aware of the Government’s assumption that “being the servant of God for all, the chaplain cannot cultivate a narrow sectarian spirit.” (*A Report*, p. 12) He recognizes that “as a contributor to the efficiency of the military man” (*A Report*, p. 18) and as “the religious and spiritual leader of the military community” (*The Manual*, p. 8) he is expected to officiate at the burial, even though such service is contrary to his own conscience and to the practice of his denomination. He finds himself almost irresistibly pushed into the plainest kind of religious unionism, for even though at the interment he may read only the barest kind of Army ritual, he is nevertheless conducting as a **Christian** chaplain the burial service of a man who was definitely not a Christian. and any burial service conducted by a Christian minister must always be considered a religious service. This last point is emphasized by Professor John H. C. Fritz of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, when he writes in his *Pastoral Theology*, page 305: “. . . whenever a Christian pastor officiates at a funeral, he is always *officially* representing his Christian congregation.”

We examine another pertinent and practical example of unionistic service which characterizes the military chaplaincy in its present form.

The following statements quoted exactly from *The Manual* should be read and compared carefully.

On the one hand:

Each chaplain conducts such services and rites as his denomination requires.
(p. 3, 7)

No chaplain is required to conduct any service or rite contrary to the regulations of his denomination. (p. 3, 8)

But on the other hand:

The chaplain is morally obligated to provide for the religious needs of the entire command. (p.2, 4)

The chaplain serves the military community . . . by endeavoring to render assistance to those in need . . . and, where such personnel are affiliated with a religious denomination, by assisting them as necessary in establishing and maintaining contact with representatives of their denomination. (p. 8, 18)

Do these statements not clearly indicate the unionistic character of the Government chaplaincy, and, what is basic to our problem, the inability of the Government to recognize the religious unionism it is fostering? The Lutheran pastor who is faithful to Christ and Scripture can have no religious fellowship with those who are not one in faith and confession with him. But here he is officially obligated to assist the adherents of any religious denomination, Jewish or

Christian, Catholic or Protestant, “in establishing and maintaining contact with the representatives of their denomination.”

Whether such “establishing and maintaining contact with the representatives of their denomination” is an altogether innocent and harmless courtesy, or whether it does not rather conflict with the fundamental principles of a faithful Lutheran ministry the following examination of statements from *The Manual* will show.

Where the general responsibilities of the chaplains are discussed, *The Manual* states (p. 2,4):

The chaplain is morally obligated to provide for the religious needs of the entire command . . . As the need warrants, he assists members of other denominations in securing clergymen and providing times and places for, and public announcement of, their services . . . (Emphasis ours)

To be noted here is that the moral obligation of the chaplain includes that he assist in actually securing the services of clergymen for all members of the command, no matter to what heterodox or heretical religious organization they belong. Here we find the chaplain obliged not only to suggest (which in itself could be considered reprehensible) but actually to engage the services of false prophets on behalf of servicemen committed to his care.

Furthermore, on the first page of *The Manual* under Introduction, where the Mission and Functions of the Chaplains are delineated, one of the “principal functions” listed is:

Positive encouragement of military personnel to engage in organized religious fellowship and personal devotions.

In the above statements from *The Manual* we find expressed the Government’s spirit and intent in establishing the chaplaincy. Here is stated plainly what the Government really expects of its chaplains in regard to all the personnel in their charge, without any distinction as to their religious affiliation. The chaplain will not be meeting the expectations of the Government honestly unless he accepts the responsibility for “positive” encouragement and promotion of religion among all men in his charge.

Certainly, the Government has in mind more than the extension of common courtesies where it speaks of “assisting [affiliated personnel] . . . in establishing and maintaining contact with representatives of their denomination.” On the basis of *The Manual*’s own plain statements, this quotation means that it is part of the official function of the military chaplain to encourage men of all persuasions to attend and take part in the services of any religion or denomination to which they belong. By such action the chaplain can only strengthen the general impression that other

religions or denominations are as good as his, the only difference being that they bear different religious labels.

Can such unionistic action honestly be reconciled with words of Scripture like these: “Mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.” (Rom. 16,17) “Beware of false prophets.” (Matt. 7,15) “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds.” (2 John 10- 11)

If still further proof is sought for the unionistic character of the military chaplaincy in its present form study the following statement from *A Report*, p. 11:

In one respect, the chaplain’s pastoral duties differ somewhat from that of the civilian clergyman. Chaplains are required to provide religious services for men of all faiths. On the battlefield especially, chaplains have an opportunity to serve all

men and demonstrate the essential unity of all races, faiths, and groups. (Emphasis ours)

This honest and straightforward interpretation by the President's own Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces describes the unionistic character and tendencies of the military chaplaincy as we have it in the United States.

Even though the Government during the last ten years has tried to protect the religious principles of every denomination and to guard the conscience of everyone entering the chaplaincy, the unionistic character of the chaplaincy has remained essentially unchanged.

Again, the following statements in *The Manual* should be examined carefully.

On the one hand:

No chaplain is required to officiate jointly in a religious service with a chaplain or a civilian clergyman of another denomination. (p. 3, 9)

But on the other hand:

AR660-10 authorizes the commanding officer to direct the chaplain to arrange and/or participate in patriotic ceremonies . . . usually held on days of national significance such as Memorial Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, anniversaries of victories of arms, etc. (p. 8, 16)

Ceremonies are not religious services, but they may contain religious elements such as invocation, prayer or benediction. (p. 8, 17)

A comparison of the above statements makes clear that the Government considers "ceremonies" and "religious services" two distinct and essentially different observances, even though the ceremony may contain invocation, prayer or benediction. This arbitrary distinction does not, of course, change anything for the Lutheran pastor who regards the sacred acts of prayer and benediction as religious service.

A Lutheran pastor who has entered the chaplaincy confident that "no chaplain is required to officiate jointly in a religious service with a chaplain or a civilian clergyman of another denomination" may find himself suddenly confronted by a situation like the following.

In the interest of morale among the men on a large military post, the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish chaplains are asked by the commanding officer to appear together at an Armistice Day ceremony, where invocation, prayer, and benediction are employed. The Government says it is a ceremony. The faithful Lutheran pastor knows it is a religious service. That Lutheran chaplain must either plainly confess his Lutheranism and refrain from taking part, or he must violate his own conscience by participating in the flagrantly unionistic affair. He cannot escape, he must do one or the other, for he is here face to face with the unionism that pervades the military chaplaincy.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The evidence thus far considered indicates that the military chaplaincy in its present form is still unionistic in essence and practical tendency. Despite the fact that during the last ten years the Government has come to recognize officially the Church as the body that authorizes and places chaplains at the service of the Government; and although it has likewise endeavored to guarantee the right of conscience to Church and chaplain: it still retains its directive authority over the religious work in the chaplaincy, tending to crowd the military chaplain into unionistic activity.

Can therefore a church that is concerned about keeping Christ's Commission free from compromise and unionistic concession accept the military chaplaincy as it exists today?

On the basis of the Government's own statements of policy regulating the military chaplaincy, the church that enters upon the present chaplaincy program does so realizing that Christ's injunctions and the Government's directives may conflict in many situations that arise under present regulations. The faithful Lutheran pastor who accepts a chaplain's commission does so realizing that his loyalty to Christ may require him at times to balk at the Government's directive or even act contrary to it. To be honest, therefore in the acceptance of the chaplaincy program such a church and such a pastor should declare to the Government that under many foreseeable circumstances in the chaplaincy they will have to follow Christ and conscience contrary to expressed Government intention. This is the conviction of the Wisconsin Synod.

Such frank honesty on the part of the Church and its ministers could have a beneficial effect. To be sure, first of all it perhaps would bring from the Government a speedy refusal to grant chaplaincy commissions under such circumstances. But it could also induce the Government to review and perhaps further revise its directives and regulations in order to remove all reason for objection to the military chaplaincy.

Although for reasons of conscience and confession the Wisconsin Synod still refuses to take part in the Government's program carried on in the military chaplaincy the Wisconsin Synod is eager to serve its members in the Armed Forces through personal ministrations in the camps and on the battlefields.

If our Synod could call its ministers and at its own expense, without religious direction or regulation on the part of the Government, send them to preach the Gospel to all who would hear it, we would thank God for the opportunity thus to serve. Toward that unhampered opportunity we should work. Perhaps the Roman Catholic Church in its work among its cadets at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point suggests a mode of procedure.

From the very beginning of the chaplaincy at West Point every official cadet chaplain has been a Protestant. For that reason the Roman Catholic Church has gained permission to have at West Point its own priest, who conducts all services for Roman Catholic cadets in a separate Catholic chapel. The priest is paid by the Roman Church and is free to minister according to Roman teaching. This is stated in *A Report*, p. 35:

In practice, it appears that from the very beginning every official chaplain at the Military Academy has been either Episcopalian or Presbyterian, and since 1896, they have all been Episcopalian, although there is nothing in the law that prescribes this. All Protestant cadets must attend Sunday worship services. All Catholic cadets attend Catholic services and in a separate Catholic chapel conducted by a Catholic priest who is paid by the Catholic Church.

Apparently the conscientious religious objections of the Roman Church were recognized and sustained by the U. S. Government in the West Point instance. Why should not a similar procedure be possible in regard to our objections to the military chaplaincy as it is constituted today?

* *The Chaplain* Department of the Army Field Manual, FM 16-5, (1952) called *The Manual* in this tract.

The Military Chaplaincy, A Report to the President by the President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces, October 1, 1950, called *A Report* in this tract.

AR 660-10 and AR 660-20 — Army Regulations, under which the military chaplain works.

(All the above publications are obtainable from the U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.)

Notes On Tract Series: Continuing In His Word

Tract Number 1:

Regarding the ALC's Sandusky Statement of 1938, as it is quoted on page 6: "Today the American Lutheran Church, the merger group to which the former Iowa Synod belongs, still maintains: 'We are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines.'" It should be stated that the ALC in Detroit in 1940 offered an explanation of the statement. Since this explanation does not answer the question whether it is necessary or possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines, our Synod holds that this does not remove the original objection to the 1938 Sandusky statement.

Tract Number 6, page 5, 2nd last paragraph:

With regard to a report inaccurately attributed here to the Dakota District of the A. L. C., it should be stated that this was a report of a committee of the Dakota District of the ALC. This correction, however, does not change the point of the paragraph, since this report was not repudiated either by the District or by the ALC Fellowship Committee to which it was referred.

Tract Number 10, page 2, 35ff:

Matthew 18, 19 is not used as a proof passage for the correct principle that unity of faith is the basis for prayer fellowship. The passage merely presents a practical instance of prayer fellowship in which the principle will also certainly apply.

Ibid., page 4 16ff:

The same passage (Matthew 18, 19) is used as evidence in support of the principle that unity of faith must precede joint prayer. If the Lord expects His believers to agree even in the object of their joint prayer, so much the more does He "take for granted" that they will agree in the faith that moves their hearts to prayer.

Corrigenda

Tract Number 1:

Page 6, line 10, read "to agree in" instead of "to agree on."

Page 7, under AMERICAN LUTHERAN CONFERENCE the figure should read "2,214,961"(souls).

Tract Number 2:

Page 6 paragraph 4, line 8, delete "the."

Page 8 paragraph 4, line 1, read "Missouri's."

Tract Number 4:

Page 5, line 20, read "Missouri" for "Misouri."

Tract Number 5:

Page 4, 2nd line from bottom, read "Scripture in its 'entirety'" instead of "so-called 'totality of Scripture.'" "

Tract Number 6:

Page 1, 2nd paragraph, 4th line, read “believer” instead of “believers.”

Tract Number 7:

Page 4, line 8, read “activities” for “actitivities.”

Tract Number 8:

Page 6, line 17, read “relationships” for “relationship.”

Tract Number 10:

Page 7, line 30, read “is not only” instead of “it not only.”