

My dear Brethren in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nigeria, Fellow-Pastors and Missionaries:

First of all I want to thank and praise our heavenly Father for bringing us safely into your midst. I want to thank the Board of Directors, the missionaries and pastors, their wives, and every one who has received us with so warm a welcome. We must say that we feel at home in your midst. It was a privilege to worship with three of your congregations on Sunday.

I am also thankful for the Word of God which your president, Pastor A. T. U. Ekong, read to us this morning. It contained these two passages: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." II Timothy 3:14.15. It is our purpose and the purpose of our visit to help, if we may by God's grace, that you should continue in what you have learned.

The words of Jesus are the motto of our Synod recorded in John 8:31.32: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

About 30 years ago you and your fathers asked the Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America to bring to Nigeria the preaching of the Gospel in all its saving truth and power. Many missionaries from America have since that time brought the Word of God to you. Among them were also men from our Synod such as Dr. William Scheweppe, Pastor George Baer, Professor Norbert Reim, Pastor Edgar Greve, Pastor Alvin Werre, Pastor William Winter and others.

The Lord visibly blessed the work which the Synodical Conference did here and gave a large harvest of souls for Christ. This work is continuing and your own sons are being trained more and more for the holy ministry. We attended an ordination service Sunday of another pastor from the Ev. Lutheran Church of Nigeria.

Meanwhile, since we are still in this sin cursed world, the church has faced problems, struggles, and heartaches. This is true both here in Nigeria and in America. As you know, our Wisconsin Synod felt compelled by God's Word to suspend fellowship with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod three years ago. At its convention last year our Synod was convinced it had to withdraw from the Synodical Conference. We had failed in our attempt to bring about a peaceful and orderly dissolution of the Conference.

Because of its great size and its many votes The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was able to keep the name of the organization for itself. It might appear that the Wisconsin Synod has left not only the Conference organization but the doctrine and confession which the Conference formerly held. This is not the case.

We consider the Lutheran Church of Nigeria our daughter church. We are concerned about her welfare. When our further support of your church was turned back by the Missionary Board, we did not want you to think that we were forsaking you. We felt we owed you an explanation of our action. That is why we wrote you a letter and said we were ready to explain our action to you in person if you so desired.

You did invite us and now we are here. Professor Lawrenz, chairman of our Commission on Doctrinal Matters, and Professor Siegler, Secretary of our Commission will tell you the reasons for our action. We will show you that after many years of brotherly, loving admonition, we were compelled by our consciences, bound in God's Word, to withdraw.

We do not expect that you should give us a quick answer. You must have time to consider this matter carefully.

We look upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nigeria as one united church body. It is our hope that you will continue together as one church. It is our hope that you will work out your problems in the light of God's Word, under the leadership of your pastors, missionaries, teachers, professors, and officers. This is pleasing to God. You have elected and called these men and have promised in their calls that you will obey them when they lead you according to God's Word.

It is not our purpose to divide your church or to try to split off some parts of it. If there are grievances, you know from God's Word that you should speak to your brethren to try to settle these. So we spoke to our brethren for over 20 years in America. If any one believes that he is being neglected spiritually, his plea again should be directed in an orderly way to his Church through its officials. You owe it to your brethren, as we owe it to ours, to admonish them and to turn them back to Christ and His Word if they go astray.

Before leaving the United States I wrote a letter to every pastor and professor in our Synod, I asked them that they and their congregations should pray our heavenly Father to give us His Holy Spirit to guide us. We pray Him to let us speak only such words as will honor our God and will help to strengthen and unify His Church. Some of our brethren in Rhodesia to whom this letter was also sent, are today dedicating the first Bible School in Northern Rhodesia.

As brethren in Christ we ask you to help us carry out this our purpose. It is our hope and our prayer that you and we will continue faithfully in God's Word.

At this time I consider it a great privilege to make some presentations on behalf of our Synod and our Northwestern Publishing House. I have here copies of our Wisconsin Synod Quarterly, which contain the history of our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Last year we celebrated the 100th birthday of our Seminary.

At the same time we published a commentary on Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, written by Professor John Meyer. Professor Meyer has taught at our Seminary for 42 years. He has trained all the missionaries we have sent to you. He has trained the three of us. Professor Meyer is 91 years old and by God's grace he is still able and willing to continue to train pastors and missionaries. I consider it a great honor and privilege to present one volume of the Commentary and History to your President for the president's library, to Pastor A. T. U. Ekong I want to present one to the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary of Nigeria, and one to the library of your Teachers Training College. The name of this commentary is "Ministers of Christ." May the study of this commentary help all of us to become ever more faithful and devoted ministers of Christ.

Oscar J. Naumann

August 25, 1964

Concerning the Confessional Position and the Confessional Action
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

(Guidelines for a Communication to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nigeria)

Close to thirty years ago you sought the fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference that it might help and guide you in building up a Christian church among your people which would be firmly grounded in all of its teaching and practice on the saving Word of God. You were convinced that only through the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth in God's inspired and infallible Word would your people be assured of the enjoyment of salvation now and hereafter in heaven. At that time the four synods of the Synodical Conference were still united in the Scriptural position of their founding fathers.

About a hundred years ago these founding fathers of the Synodical Conference had themselves grown up in churches which were indifferent to the pure teachings of God's Word and let human reason rather than God's Word guide them in their teaching and practice. Through bitter spiritual struggles these men came to know their Savior and His precious Gospel of pardon and eternal life as a pure gift of God's grace to helpless sinners. Since they had won this precious Gospel and the peace and hope that it gave them from the Holy Scriptures, the Bible was very precious to them. They knew that only by clinging to every word of the Scriptures would their precious treasure of salvation through Christ remain sure for them. In the founding of the Synodical Conference they were therefore concerned about forming a federation of Lutheran synods which were united in clinging to every truth of the Scriptures as God's inspired and infallible Word. They realized that every error, every departure from God's Word, which is permitted in any church body brings with it the danger of losing ever more of God's Word and finally the very heart of the Scriptures, the Gospel of our Savior. They also saw clearly that if a church body is willing to join in common worship and church work with other churches and church bodies who teach or permit false teachings in their midst, it will find it impossible to keep out and purge out these errors when they arise or threaten to arise in their own midst. Two concerns were therefore a basic part of the position of the Synodical Conference from its beginning: 1) For the sake of the Gospel the Synodical Conference upheld strictly all the teaching of the Holy Scriptures as God's verbally inspired and infallible Word, and 2) It was willing to practice church fellowship, that is, to engage in joint worship and church work, only with such individuals, churches, and church bodies with which its own synods were fully united in doctrine and practice.

In these two basic concerns and principles the synods of the Synodical Conference were still officially united when they began to serve you in Nigeria with the Word of God in 1936. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had only a short time before, 1932, very forcefully set forth these principles in drawing up the so-called Brief Statement of its doctrinal position.

As early as 1938 our Wisconsin Synod, however, saw signs in the official resolutions of the Missouri Synod which caused our synod to fear that its sister-synod was beginning to weaken on these basic principles of the Synodical Conference. Our synod saw these signs in the fact that the Missouri Synod was ready to declare on the basis of three different documents that it was now in doctrinal agreement with another Lutheran synod in the United States, the American Lutheran Church. On the basis of these three different documents it was, however, impossible to come to certainty that the errors which the American Lutheran Church had taught and upheld for a long period of time were now really

given up and rejected. One of the three documents also stated that it was not necessary to agree on all points of some of the lesser doctrines of God's holy Word. In a brotherly manner our synod therefore expressed its fears to the Missouri Synod, even as this was also done by many members in its own midst. As a result, further efforts were made by the Missouri Synod to work out one satisfactory document to reach doctrinal agreement with the American Lutheran Church. For some years these efforts did not meet with success, however. The American Lutheran Church expressed itself quite clearly that it was convinced that it was neither necessary nor possible to agree in all nonfundamental doctrines, that it recognized areas for an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God.

In the meantime, however, further alarming signs became evident within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In 1944 it passed a resolution which for the first time sought to make a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer. With this distinction the Missouri Synod endeavored to make it possible to engage in joint prayer when it was meeting with representatives of the American Lutheran Church, even before doctrinal agreement had been reached. Before long such joint prayer was also condoned within the Missouri Synod in many more instances when its members, pastors, professors, and officials met with representatives of other church bodies with whom they were not in doctrinal unity. In an increasing number of instances such joint prayer and also joint worship which went beyond prayer was practiced at meetings when the matter of reaching doctrinal unity, for which the 1944 resolutions had merely approved joint prayer, did not even come into consideration.

Our synod found it necessary to be ever more urgent in expressing its fraternal admonition over against the Missouri Synod. The instances of unionistic prayer and worship showed themselves particularly also in the chaplaincy program which the Missouri Synod carried out among the armed forces of our country. In 1944 the Missouri Synod had also given a clean bill of health to the popular Boy Scout movement, against whose doctrinal errors prominent teachers of the Missouri Synod had before this time jointly testified together with men of other synods of the Synodical Conference. As a result also this issue was discussed with much patient effort between a series of committees from the two synods and even from the other two synods of the Synodical Conference. Great efforts were made to reach agreement once more in the former Synodical Conference position.

In 1950 the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church presented the Common Confession as a new document of agreement on the doctrines on which these two synods had differed in the past. The Missouri Synod itself asked our Wisconsin Synod as well as the other synods of the Synodical Conference to study this document as to its adequacy. The doctrinal commission of our synod carried out this request with conscientious care, and under its leadership our synod in convention thoroughly studied the Common Confession in 1951; but with sad hearts our synod felt compelled to tell its sister-synod, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, that the vital doctrines of conversion, of justification, of eternal election, of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and of the Antichrist were not properly safeguarded in this Common Confession against the errors which the American Lutheran Church had taught in the past on these doctrines and against the errors on these matters which were still appearing in the periodicals and books of the American Lutheran Church. The matter was all the more serious since the American Lutheran Church was in full or partial fellowship with other Lutheran church bodies, such as the United Lutheran Church, which openly denied the

verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures and permitted false teaching on conversion, justification, and eternal election.

Through its doctrinal commission and through its synodical representatives our synod again and again brought its fraternal warnings before the Missouri Synod on all these issues as they arose and began to disturb our fellowship in the Synodical Conference. Our synod studied all these matters very thoroughly at its general and district conventions and in its conferences and let its testimony be heard through official representatives and through lengthy formal letters at the 1947, 1950, and 1953 conventions of the Missouri Synod. These matters were also thoroughly treated at all of the Synodical Conference conventions during this period.

Already at the 1953 convention of our own Wisconsin Synod it had to be noted, however, that the issues between our synod and the Missouri Synod on the Common Confession, on joint prayer and joint worship with errorists, on the Missouri Synod's communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, and on the many instances of unionistic cooperation with unorthodox church bodies in phases of church work had reached a point where they now threatened the very existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuation of our fellowship with the Missouri Synod. After this convention our synod therefore published a series of concise tracts by which all of its members could become informed concerning these serious issues, to prepare them for a break if this could not be prevented by our testimony. Our synod did not yet give up hope, however, and therefore agreed to have its district presidents and general presidents meet with the presidium and a similar number of district presidents of the Missouri Synod in the hope that through this measure the Missouri Synod might still be won away from its unscriptural position in the issues and from its course of establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church on the basis of the Common Confession. Other committees of the two synods continued to meet on specific issues in the hope of coming to unity in doctrine and practice.

When our Wisconsin Synod again met in 1955 it had to be noted that all these further efforts had not brought about the unity that was so earnestly sought. Many were convinced that obedience to God's Word would now require of our synod to break off its fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17,18. Yet by majority vote our synod resolved that before taking this far-reaching action it should still give the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod another opportunity to speak in its forthcoming delegate convention. Our synod did not want to act until it had been assured that the position taken by the officials and the official committees of the Missouri Synod in spite of our intensified testimony was really shared by the majority of the delegates from the Missouri Synod congregations throughout the country.

The entire doctrinal commission of our Wisconsin Synod therefore attended the Missouri Synod convention of 1956. It saw a faint ray of hope at this convention. There seemed to be a real concern for preserving the fellowship of the Synodical Conference. It seemed that at least in part out of this concern the Missouri Synod convention declared that the Common Confession should no longer be used as a document on which church fellowship would be established with the American Lutheran Church or with any other church body. It was true, of course, that the American Lutheran Church was at that time engaged in a merger with several other Lutheran bodies by which it would cease to exist as a separate synod. This certainly played its part in the Missouri Synod's willingness to put

the Common Confession aside. At any hand, the Common Confession through this action ceased to be a burning practical issue for the time being. There was a further ray of hope in the fact that the Missouri Synod made a good declaration on the principles of church fellowship as it once more declined membership in the Lutheran World Federation at this 1956 convention. Very conscious that the further fellowship of the Synodical Conference was at stake, the Missouri Synod also passed resolutions which led to an arrangement whereby the doctrinal commissions of the four synods of the Synodical Conference would enter upon a further thorough study of all the issues that had arisen in the hope of settling them.

When our Wisconsin Synod met a few months later in the same year it therefore resolved to hold its judgment on the Missouri Synod in abeyance and enter in upon this program of study by the joint Synodical Conference doctrinal committees. Not to be misunderstood, our synod at the same time declared itself to be in a state of protesting fellowship because of the unscriptural positions practiced and still defended in the Missouri Synod while this study was going on.

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The/joint Synodical Conference committees, representing the doctrinal commissions of all four synods, were carried on from January 1957 to May 1960, a period of three and a half years. The work was done with great care and in a patient fraternal spirit. The committees met at least three times a year for three-day sessions in each instance, and the individual committee members and sub-committees did a great deal of patient work between the meetings. Some very sound principles were set up as a basis for this program of study. All who took part in them declared that they wanted to proceed from the conviction born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that Scripture is the final authority in all matters on which it speaks and that through the Scriptures God speaks clearly to us in all matters of faith and life. All declared their willingness to come to grips with all the issues that had arisen and to avoid hiding and evading any of them. All declared that it was their intention to show forth and condemn all matters contrary to the Word of God in doctrine and life with the purpose of removing what was not in keeping with the Word of God.

It was decided to take up all the doctrines on which the position of the Missouri Synod had become unclear to some by its adoption of the Common Confession and jointly to set up a confession that would speak clearly on all the points of these same doctrines so that it might again become clear to everyone where all the synods of the Synodical Conference stood on these doctrines. The doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, its inspiration and inerrancy, was first taken up, for how could there be agreement on other doctrines if there was not full agreement on Scripture, the source of all doctrine? Not only the committee members, but also people throughout our synod rejoiced when an extensive statement on Scripture was successfully drawn up which all the four synods of the Synodical Conference and then the Synodical Conference as a unit were willing to adopt as Scriptural. It was also heartening that the members of the joint doctrinal committees were finally able to agree on a joint Scriptural statement on the Antichrist. Later on, of course, it was disheartening for us when it became evident that no strong effort was made by the Missouri Synod committee members to promote the acceptance of the statement on the Antichrist on the part of their own synod. To this day it has never been submitted to a Missouri Synod convention for adoption. Work on a joint statement on justification likewise seemed very promising.

As these discussions proceeded it became quite evident that the basic issue was after all that of church fellowship. The representatives of our Wisconsin Synod became more convinced than ever that our synod had been right when it had stated that the real issue behind all the differences which had arisen with the Missouri Synod, also the issues of the Common Confession and of Scouting and of chaplaincy, was a unionistic trend, a weakening on the Scriptural principles of church fellowship--on the principle that had been so vital to the founding fathers of the Synodical Conference, the principle that the Lord forbids His believers to engage in joint worship and church work with persistent errorists, with those who teach and allow errors and want recognition for it. It soon became evident that none of the individual issues that had arisen in the Synodical Conference could really be settled if agreement could not again be reached on the Scriptural principles of church fellowship on which the Synodical Conference had been founded and which it had upheld for many, many years. It became more and more evident that one concession, one giving in, on these principles led to further concessions. It had started out, ^{in part} with distinguishing between joint prayer and prayer fellowship, and maintaining without any clear Scriptural proof that joint prayer was permissible between those who met to work for unity even if they were not yet clearly agreed in doctrine but upheld opposing positions. Gradually such joint prayer was considered permissible on many other occasions when representatives of church bodies not agreed in doctrine and practice, met with one another and doctrinal unity was not on the program. The next step was to place all prayer fellowship outside of the realm of the Scriptural principles of fellowship which were recognized to apply to pulpit and altar fellowship. It was maintained that prayer fellowship would have to be handled differently. Yet the weakening in the application of the Scriptural principles of church fellowship did not stop there. Gradually much joint worship with members and representatives of erring church bodies was allowed which involved more than prayer, which involved also the proclaiming, teaching, and explaining of the Word of God and which should really have been recognized as a form of pulpit fellowship. Such unionism was very much in evidence particularly in the chaplaincy program. Here also a weakening on altar fellowship made itself evident in the communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council. The weakening on church fellowship also involved various phases of church work carried out in cooperation with erroristic churches, e.g. in the field of Christian charity, Christian education.

Because all the members of the Synodical Conference joint doctrinal commissions soon realized in their joint meetings that a lack of unity in the Scriptural principles of church fellowship was at the bottom of the divisive issues in the Synodical Conference, full attention in these discussions was then directed upon a study of these principles. It became the main topic of discussion during the last six three-day meetings carried on over a period of two years. A lengthy and detailed presentation of the Scriptural principles of church fellowship by the Wisconsin Synod representatives was made the principal basis of these discussions. Every point in this presentation and the Scriptural support given for each point, was thoroughly discussed in a patient and fraternal atmosphere. When this part of the work was finished, the Missouri Synod representatives were urged to put down in writing where their convictions on church fellowship differed from those that had been so thoroughly studied and to set down in writing the Scriptural basis for such disagreement if there was any. While these discussions were going on it was quite evident to everyone, of course, that a great deal of church practice, also by men in high positions in the Missouri Synod, did not agree with the Wisconsin Synod presentation which its representatives on the

committee had set forth as the Scriptural and historical Synodical Conference position. These unionistic practices which were going on in the Missouri Synod without being disciplined greatly disturbed many members and pastors throughout the synods of the Synodical Conference, particularly within the Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synods. As a result, many pastors, members, and even congregations of these synods became impatient in their spiritual concern; they became so concerned that they felt that for conscience' sake they had to leave their own synods who were still carrying on admonition with the Missouri Synod and to declare themselves out of fellowship with the Missouri Synod because of its unionism. The majority of our synod's delegates, acting for the synod at its official conventions, felt that we should carry our testimony to an orderly conclusion in the Synodical Conference committee discussions before taking any action. These discussions still held out some hope when during the January 1959 meetings the doctrinal commission members and the presidents of all four synods of the Synodical Conference agreed in rejecting an invitation from the National Lutheran Council to take part in a reorganization of that Lutheran federation.

Since the National Lutheran Council consisted of synods with which the Synodical Conference was not in doctrinal agreement and since the program of this council included forms of joint church work and joint worship, the Synodical Conference synods had never felt free to join this council. When the invitation was discussed in the January 1959 meetings, it was decided to decline the invitation and to concentrate on reaching and restoring unity in the Synodical Conference before attempting to testify jointly before erroristic church bodies.

Hopes were again dashed, however, when during the course of the same year the president of the Missouri Synod, because of the opposition that his refusal of the National Lutheran Council invitation met ^{also} in many quarters of his own synod, reversed his stand and accepted the invitation in the name of his synod. The liberal trend in the Missouri Synod had shown its growing strength. The doctrinal unity committee now met with the representatives of the National Lutheran Council in the framework of common devotions to plan a new council, though it was admitted by all that this council would not require doctrinal unity among its members and that there was not doctrinal unity among those representatives who planned it.

From this time on no further progress was made in the Synodical Conference committee discussions to restore unity in the Scriptural principles of church fellowship. By action in the instance of the National Lutheran Council invitation rather than by a document the Missouri Synod representatives had given their answer to the Wisconsin Synod presentation on church fellowship.

When in May of 1960 the members of the Missouri Synod doctrinal unity committee did finally present their fellowship principles in written form, it became evident also in this way that a dead end, an impasse, had been reached in the discussions of this final conscientious effort to settle the issues that were dividing the Synodical Conference. In substance, Part II of this document, called Theology of Fellowship, denied that God forbids all joint expressions of faith with those with whom we are confessionally in disagreement. The principal Bible passages on the basis of which the Synodical Conference had in the past ruled out all joint expressions of faith with persistent errorists were now called into question and interpreted in a new way. It was contended that the Scriptural principles governing pulpit and altar fellowship did not apply in the same measure to prayer fellowship and every other joint expression of faith. It was held that though ordinarily Christians unite to exercise the fellowship which

God's grace has bestowed upon them on the basis of complete doctrinal unity, there are also instances where joint expressions of fellowship between those not yet in full confessional fellowship, particularly in the matter of joint prayer, must be decided on the basis of the individual situation, and of the character, purpose, and effect of that joint prayer. This made it quite evident that our synod could no longer hope that the unionistic practices which were multiplying on the official and unofficial level in the Missouri Synod would be rebuked, disciplined, and stopped.

The Synodical Conference convention as well as committees from overseas churches in fellowship with the Synodical Conference still wrestled with the deadlock or impasse that had come about in the Synodical Conference. Yet they were not successful in overcoming the sad situation.

When our synod met in August of 1961 it took note of the fact that in spite of all of our earnest admonitory testimony, carried on since 1938, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had not retreated from the unionistic practices that had gotten a foothold in its midst and that these practices were now actually sanctioned and fully defended by the document, Theology of Fellowship, Part II, publicly set forth by the Missouri Synod doctrinal unity committee. Fully conscious of the awesome responsibility that it was exercising, yet out of fear and love toward God and in ready obedience to His Word, our synod therefore resolved to suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17.

For similar reasons the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the Synodical Conference had already suspended fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1955. Both the Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synods now memorialized the Synodical Conference to recognize that its four synods were no longer united in doctrine and practice and that for that reason it should now dissolve in an orderly manner as a federation of synods at its 1962 convention. At the same time both of these synods asked that this 1962 convention of the Synodical Conference be conducted without joint devotions and that its sessions be opened and closed with silent prayer.

Both of these formal requests were voted down at the Synodical Conference convention inasmuch as the Missouri Synod, because of its size, had the vast majority of voting delegates. Official devotions were held in which our Wisconsin Synod delegates could not take part for conscience' sake. Through the majority vote of the Missouri Synod delegates the Synodical Conference also passed resolutions to continue the Synodical Conference with various stipulations which our own Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod could not carry out without violating conscience and without annulling their suspension of church fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Thus our Wisconsin Synod had no other choice but to withdraw from the Synodical Conference at its 1963 convention. It did so in loyalty to our confessional position based upon the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions and in solemn protest against the departure of the Missouri Synod from the historical Scriptural position of the Synodical Conference.

If the Synodical Conference had remained with its historical, Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod would have had no thought of leaving it or of drawing back from any of its work, certainly not from the work which it had done all these years in your midst, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nigeria.

Even when our synod, for conscience' sake, was moved to withdraw from the Synodical Conference, it expressed its readiness to continue its regular share of support of the work in Nigeria until your church body had an opportunity to study the confessional position which the Wisconsin Synod had taken and its

confessional action more fully, and until it had officially expressed itself concerning both. The Synodical Conference Missionary Board, as presently constituted, however, refused our funds after our synod's withdrawal from the Synodical Conference.

At the beginning of this presentation attention was called to the emphasis which the founding fathers of the Synodical Conference placed upon the one hand on full faithfulness to the entire Scripture and all of its doctrines and upon the other hand on full faithfulness to the Scriptural principles of church fellowship. They firmly believed that one could not be maintained without the other, that when a church body would weaken on either of these principles, there would also be an inevitable weakening on the other.

Our synod continued to share that conviction. This helped to make the weakening on the principles of church fellowship in the Missouri Synod such a very earnest matter in the eyes of the members of our synod. The sad effects of that weakening are showing themselves in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod much sooner and in a fuller measure even than our synod had expected during all the years that it sounded its voice of warning and admonition against the growing unionistic trend of the Missouri Synod. We saw the Missouri Synod members, especially also many of its leaders, synodical officials, professors at its colleges and seminaries, joining in forms of worship and church work with members and leaders of other Lutheran churches who openly denied the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Holy Scripture, who advocated evolution and denied the Creation account of Holy Scripture. Some of these Lutheran leaders with whom Missouri Synod men joined in forms of worship and church work held high positions in the World Council of Churches where they joined in worship and church work with representatives of other Protestant and Orthodox Catholic denominations. Some of the Lutheran leaders with whom Missouri Synod men were joining in forms of worship and church work were openly known as advocates of neo-orthodox theology, which calls even the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin and the resurrection of our Savior into question as historical happenings. In earnest warning we asked: "How can your people and your leaders join in devotions and in any form of church work with men who teach and condone such errors and then discipline men in your own midst if they should begin to hold the same errors?" The answer that we received could not remove our fears.

The real answer lies before us in what we see in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at present. It no longer shows the strength to discipline those in its midst who have openly questioned the full inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures in all of its statements, those who deny that the details of the Creation account in Genesis are necessarily to be regarded as historical events.

In 1959 the convention of the Missouri Synod still passed a resolution which bound all of its pastors and professors to the teaching on Holy Scripture and its inspiration and inerrancy as clearly set forth in the Brief Statement. At the same convention the Missouri Synod also solemnly accepted the new statement which the Synodical Conference joint committees had set up on Scripture as to revelation, inspiration and inerrancy, and which unfolded the same truths found in the Brief Statement article on Scripture.

Yet at its 1962 convention at Cleveland the Missouri Synod rescinded its 1959 resolution to bind all of its professors and pastors to teach in accordance

with the Brief Statement. At the same time it reorganized and expanded its doctrinal unity committee as the new Commission on Theology and Church Relations and instructed this Commission to wrestle with the troublesome issues on revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy which had arisen in its midst. This new Commission has in the meantime issued a report, A Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy in printed form. On each of these three points this report distinguishes between Position One and Position Two. The Study itself defines Position One as the position heretofore held in the Missouri Synod on revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy. It defines Position Two as the new views that have been set forth by leading spokesmen in the Missouri Synod. While this study of the Commission does reject much of Position Two and desires to maintain most of Position One, it nevertheless makes it clear that Position One by itself is no longer adequate and that some elements of Position Two must be added to it to give the Missouri Synod an adequate statement on Scripture as to the subjects of revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy. Thereby the statement on Scripture which the Synodical Conference committee had so recently set up and which all of the four synods of the Synodical Conference had adopted in 1959 has lost its force and function. Yet this statement had been drawn up in a manner that was to meet all the issues of the present day, especially also with reference to the subjects of revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy. All who had a part in drawing up that statement, which included also four members of the present Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations, had pledged themselves to setting up doctrinal statements without hiding any issues or sparing any errors, statements which aim to come to grips with all the issues that had arisen and which intended to expose and condemn all matters contrary to the Word of God.

It is therefore the conviction of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has not only lost the sound Scriptural position and practice on church fellowship but as a sad result which was bound to come is also in the greatest danger of now losing its sound Scriptural stand on the Word of God. With the founding fathers of the Synodical Conference our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod seeks with God's gracious help to maintain its Scriptural stand both on the Holy Scriptures and on church fellowship. It is concerned about doing so for the same reason that made these matters so important and so dear to the fathers, namely this that the treasure of the Gospel is involved, the Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whom alone there is pardon, peace, and eternal life for us poor and helpless sinners. It is out of this concern that we have come to you upon your request to explain our synod's confessional position and its confessional actions and to exhort you likewise, dear fellow Christians, to remain faithful to the Savior and His Word.

August 24, 1964

Prof. Carl Lawrence