

Pastor Oscar J. Naumann: a Legacy of Leadership During the Break with Missouri

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By

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THE PRESIDENT AND HIS FAMILY

Front row: Mrs. Naumann, Pastor O. Naumann, Paul, Peter, Myrna
Back row: James, Thomas, Philip, Martin

When describing the men who have served the Lord and his family of believers as presidents of the Wisconsin Synod, certain leadership qualities and God-blessed achievements stand out. John Muehlhaeuser, although a "New Lutheran" and thus not particularly concerned with adhering to a strong confessional stance, goes down in history as one of the founders of the Wisconsin Synod and its first president. John Bading, Muehlhaeuser's successor as president, is fondly remembered as the staunch leader of Wisconsin who guided the young synod from its relative confessional indifference (when compared to the Missouri) and into the ardent confessional position that has characterized the Wisconsin Synod ever since. He is also remembered for founding the synod's seminary. It has been said that "If it weren't for John Muehlhaeuser, the Wisconsin Synod wouldn't exist. If it weren't for John Bading, we wouldn't want to be in the Wisconsin Synod."

Although serving only a short time as president, Gottlieb Reim helped in guiding the Synod to its strong confessionalism and showed a concern for the synod presidency by not letting it get a tarnished image. William Streissguth's similarly short tenure was characterized by his leading of the synod into the General Council and advocating that the synod presidency be a full-time position. Philipp Von Rohr, the man who followed Bading's second stretch as president, pastorally steered the synod as the federation of the Wisconsin and Minnesota and Michigan Synods became a reality. Gustav E. Bergemann guided the Wisconsin Synod into the Joint Synod and gave the new Joint Synod its organizational form. John Brenner's presidency followed the Great Depression and extended past WWII. In those crucial years when money was short and after Lutheran bodies made overtures toward union on unscriptural bases, Brenner earned the reputation of being "firm, fiscally sound," and who "ruled with an iron fist."¹ He is admired for retiring the synod's debt and keeping

¹Interview with Pastor Norman Berg

the Wisconsin Synod confessional.

When John Brenner stepped down in 1953, Reverend Oscar J. Naumann was elected to the position of Wisconsin Synod president. By this time the more than one hundred year old Wisconsin Synod was in the middle of a struggle that would eventually sunder ties between it and its "big brother", the Missouri Synod. Missouri's once adamant stance on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions had begun to soften, which deliberations for fellowship between the ALC and the LC-MS were revealing already in 1938. Fifteen years later the great debate with Missouri was reaching its climax. The question on everyone's mind was whether the new president could fill the big shoes left by his predecessor and continue to guide the Synod in the way of Scriptural truth and doctrinal purity as it strove at the same time to reclaim an erring bigger brother.

The aim of this paper is not to present a complete account of the presidency of Oscar J. Naumann. That would be a full task indeed. Rather it will focus primarily on the first eight years of his presidency as he led the Wisconsin Synod to break fellowship with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Pastor Oscar J. Naumann's legacy of leadership of the Wisconsin Synod during its break with Missouri was critical in Wisconsin Synod history and will not soon be forgotten.

Setting the Stage: 1938-1939

In order to set the stage for Naumann's first election to be the leader of the Synod, a somewhat brief account of the prior quarter century is in order.

The God-pleasing union of the Lutherans in America has always been the dream of those who call themselves Lutherans in this country. Unfortunately some Lutherans would go to extensive lengths to achieve such an amalgamation, even at the expense of sacrificing Scriptural principles and

doctrine--thus making it anything but a God-pleasing union. Since its founding in 1847, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had always been known as the leading voice of confessional Lutheranism in America. In its early years Missouri had admonished the Wisconsin Synod for its unconfessional character in espousing the "New Lutheran" mindset which supported the Prussian union and its unionistic ways. Led by President John Bading and the theologian Adolf Hoenecke, the Wisconsin Synod soon left its unconfessional nature behind and entered fellowship with Missouri. Yet already during the 1930s the tables would be reversed, and Wisconsin would be the confessional voice calling out to its Missouri brethren to remain true to its long and treasured heritage--Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

In 1928, Missouri's strongly rooted confessionalism was still intact. The LC-MS demonstrated this when the *Chicago Theses* were drawn up by representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. Many regarded the *Chicago Theses* as a possible solution to the election controversy. That controversy had plagued Lutherans in America as a point of contention for decades, and it had been a major cause of their disunity up until that time. Missouri ended up rejecting the *Chicago Theses* in 1929 as an inadequate basis for union because it allowed for an interpretation of the election *intuitu fidei* and so opened the door for synergism. Since this didn't solve the issue, the *Theses* could not serve as the basis for fellowship. Thus Missouri once again endorsed its position on fellowship: complete unanimity of all doctrine and practice was necessary for church fellowship. Unfortunately, Missouri would abandon this position in practice and eventually doctrine in the near future.

As a result Missouri decided to produce a document that briefly stated their position on Scriptural doctrines. This *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod*, which

Missouri accepted in 1932, was regarded as the starting point for any overtures of fellowship received from other Lutheran church bodies. Only its complete acceptance would result in church fellowship. The WELS unofficially praised the *Brief Statement* of Missouri as a correct presentation of the Scriptural doctrine. In 1935 the United Lutheran Church in America (known for its severely unconfessional stance) and the American Lutheran Church (whose position was only slightly better) approached the LC--MS to establish closer ties. In 1938, and again in 1941, however, the LC--MS reported that it was simply not able to enter into fellowship with the ULCA because discussions had broken down already at the basic doctrine of inspiration.

Discussions with the ALC, however, continued to proceed where those with the ULCA came to a halt. After thoroughly discussing the *Brief Statement*, the ALC representatives declared that they would need to add a supplement to the *Brief Statement* on certain articles in which they viewed Missouri's *Brief Statement* to be inadequate. The ALC's supplement became known as their *Doctrinal Declaration*. The separate union committees of each church body presented Missouri's *Brief Statement* and the ALC's *Doctrinal Declaration* to their respective synods in 1938.

The LC-MS synod convention was held at St. Louis and resolved that the *Brief Statement* of the Missouri Synod, together with the *Declaration* of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report . . . be regarded as the doctrinal basis for *future church membership* between the Missouri synod and the American Lutheran Church.² (*italics in original*)

The Missouri synod in its 1938 convention also stipulated that "this whole matter must be submitted for approval to the other synods constituting the Synodical Conference."³ In order to calm the fears of the other members with the Synodical Conference, the convention resolutions added that no

²*Missouri Synod Proceedings*, 1938, p. 231.

³*Ibid*, p. 232.

fellowship was to be practiced between the LC-MS and the ALC until fellowship was officially declared by the president of the Missouri Synod; otherwise it would be overlooking "the fact that we [the LC-MS and the ALC] are not yet united."⁴ This would be a significant and controversial statement in years to come when numerous examples showed that fellowship between these bodies was being practiced even though they were "not yet united" officially, or for that matter, doctrinally.

The American Lutheran Church's convention at Sandusky, Ohio, in 1938, also approved of the two doctrinal documents as sufficient grounds for fellowship. However, the resolution was made at Sandusky to accept the *Brief Statement* as "viewed in the light of our Declaration."⁵ Even though the ALC said they interpreted the phrase as meaning a simple supplement and not in contradiction to the *Brief Statement*, the phrase raised much objection--not only from the Wisconsin Synod, but also from within the Missouri Synod itself. And rightly so, for the phrase could give the ALC as much latitude in interpreting the Missouri's doctrinal position as a *quatenus* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions would give in interpreting Scripture. Basically, it left the door open for interpreting the *Brief Statement* and Scripture however the ALC wished. This phrase "viewed in the light of our Declaration" showed that the unity in doctrine between the LC-MS and the ALC based on the *Brief Statement* and the *Declaration* was simply non-existent. A further quote of the Sandusky resolutions confirmed it: "We are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines."⁶

Both of these statements contained in the Sandusky Resolutions did not escape the notice of

⁴Ibid, p. 232.

⁵American Lutheran Church Proceedings, 1938, p. 255.

⁶Ibid, p.255.

the Wisconsin Synod, which was reviewing these declarations toward fellowship with great interest, and, in most cases trepidation. As a result, President John Brenner set up a committee following the LC-MS convention of 1938, consisting of the Conference of Presidents and the seminary faculty, to study and discuss the *Brief Statement* and especially the *Declaration*. The committee found that "the terms of the '**Declaration**' were considered as not stating the truth clearly, nor excluding error, in the controverted doctrines."⁷ The anxiety caused by Missouri's proposed fellowship with the ALC was heightened when "American Lutheran Church representatives on February 13, 1939, in Pittsburgh reached an Agreement with the representatives of the United Lutheran Church of America on Inspiration, the wording of which is such that a clear confession to the inerrancy of the Scriptures is lacking."⁸ The Wisconsin Synod's Committee on Intersynodical Relations recognized that such an agreement (called the *Pittsburgh Agreement*) between the ALC and ULCA, on the very article which Missouri and the ULCA *could not* agree upon, revealed the ALC's duplicity in dealing with Missouri. The ALC was merely set on union with other Lutherans, regardless of doctrinal and confessional position. As a result of the *Pittsburgh Agreement* and previously mentioned activity, the Committee of the Wisconsin Synod made the following report to the 1939 Wisconsin Synod convention held at Watertown:

The doctrinal basis established by the Missouri Synod and by the American Lutheran Church, particularly in view of the proviso by the American Lutheran Church that the Missouri **Brief Statement** must be viewed in the light of the American Lutheran Church **Declaration**, is not acceptable. Not two statements should be issued as a basis for agreement; a single joint statement, covering the contested doctrines thetically and antithetically and accepted by both parties to the controversy, is imperative; and, furthermore, such doctrinal statement must be made in clear and

⁷Ibid, p. 59.

⁸Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1939, p. 60.

unequivocal terms which do not require laborious additional explanations. The sincerity of any theoretical statement must also be evidenced by a clean church practice.⁹

The final sentence of the Committee's report was particularly significant because it seems to indicate that there was already emerging evidence that Missouri Synod practice was not in keeping with its fellowship position in the *Brief Statement*.

The Committee on Church Union Matters went even further in warning the Missouri Synod to cease negotiations with the ALC, holding that

the Sandusky resolutions and the Pittsburgh Agreement have made it evident that there was no real doctrinal basis for church fellowship between the Honorable Synod of Missouri and the American Lutheran Church; [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.¹⁰

As the 1930s were coming to a close, the Missouri Synod began to go down the road that would eventually result in the dissolution of the Synodical Conference, which until this time had trumpeted the certain sound of doctrinal purity to American church bodies clamoring for humanistic ideologies instead of reliance on Scripture alone.

The years 1938-1939 were very significant in our Synod's dealings in the Synodical Conference because in 1938 it was already becoming evident that the Missouri Synod was suffering from the infiltration of liberal elements into its seminary. Until this time Missouri was looked on as the champion of scriptural truth. The desire for post-seminary graduate work in the Missouri Synod (as well as other church bodies) had resulted in many of their pastors being trained in liberal

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 61.

seminaries and universities. After these students received their doctorates, they were seen as natural choices for seminary professorships. Certainly not all the seminary professors were liberal, and certainly not simply on the basis of holding a doctorate. That would be too simplistic of an analysis, and also unfactual. Yet the few liberals (who were classed as merely "moderates" by some in the Missouri Synod), who were espousing their liberal, historical-critical method of interpreting the Bible and passing it on to Missouri Synod pastors, were evidently having their effect. By the early 1970s, it would be evident how serious the situation had become at Concordia Seminary St. Louis. I have included these crucial years somewhat extensively because of their importance on subsequent events. The problems in Missouri that first became evident in the late 1930s would eventually mushroom until they reached the critical point in the mid 1950s. The final thirteen years of President Brenner's presidency showed that these problems were not isolated and would not go away.

The Road to Crisis - 1940-1953

Only a cursory glance at the years following Wisconsin's strong reaction in 1939 to Missouri's attempt at establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church will show that Wisconsin's efforts went unheeded for the most part. Therefore, the next thirteen years will be dealt with briefly until the time Oscar Naumann became president of the Wisconsin Synod in 1953.

The Missouri Synod realized it could not base its fellowship with the ALC on two doctrinal statements, not only because of numerous memorials written to the Missouri Synod Fort Wayne Convention in 1941 which protested the wording of the ALC's *Declaration*, but also because of the

numerous Wisconsin's protests mentioned above.¹¹

Therefore, the LC-MS Fort Wayne convention of 1941 asked that LC-MS and ALC representatives formulate a single union document that would serve as the basis for fellowship between the two. With this action, the Missouri Synod ignored the Wisconsin Synod's admonition to forego further relations with the ALC. During 1941, Missouri began to cooperate with the ALC in relief work done by the National Lutheran Council of orphaned foreign missions caused by World War II. It also cooperated with this body in providing pastoral care to servicemen. Although Missouri claimed this cooperation was only in externals and thus not an infringement of fellowship principles, the cooperation soon became involved with internals when a chaplain was allowed to commune those not belonging to the chaplain's synod in case of emergency.

In 1944 Missouri abandoned its former position on scouting. It now declared that individual congregations would have to decide the issue of allowing congregation members to have their children join scouting troops. Since this was such a practical application of fellowship principles, or lack of them, many people in the Wisconsin Synod looked on scouting as the primary issue of conflict between the two synods.¹²

Another point of contention that had been developing during this time was prayer fellowship. In 1944 Missouri tried to distinguish between joint prayer and prayer fellowship. Wisconsin contended correctly that Scripture makes no distinction in the matter. On the basis of its position on

¹¹Missouri Synod President John W. Behnken mentions the letters from concerned Missouri Synod members in *This I Recall*, but, interestingly, he fails to mention any protest or influence made by the Wisconsin Synod that caused Missouri to seek a different route to fellowship with the ALC. pp. 169-170.

¹²From interview with Dr. Wayne Borgwardt.

the doctrine of church and ministry, the LC-MS claimed that joint prayer was allowable at intersynodical conferences and did not break fellowship principles as long as it didn't "imply denial of truth or support of error."¹³ Their reasoning goes this way: Congregation is church and yet synod is *not* church. Therefore, when synods not in fellowship meet at conferences, joint prayer would not be breaking fellowship principles because the church is not present. The long-standing Synodical Conference position was that prayer fellowship practiced with any persons or bodies not in complete doctrinal agreement violated fellowship principles. Fredrich says that this issue "became sharply debated . . . in the next years and finally provided the 'impasse' that halted the Synodical Conference discussions and paved the way for the body's dissolution."¹⁴

Also at the 1944 Missouri convention, a single document for establishing church union was proposed. The LC-MS and ALC representatives eventually came up with the *Doctrinal Affirmation*, which was the *Brief Statement* and the *Declaration* combined in one document. But neither church body accepted the document because Missouri thought it sounded too much like the ALC's previous document, and the ALC thought it sounded too much like Missouri's. Finally in 1950 the Missouri and ALC representatives presented the *Common Confession*--Part I. Part II would come out in 1953. The Wisconsin Synod's reaction to the first part of the *Common Confession* was noteworthy but consistent:

After careful consideration and mutual discussion [of the *Common Confession*] we find ourselves constrained to report that in our judgment this Agreement involves an actual denial of the truth, since it claims to be a settlement of doctrinal differences

¹³Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1944, pp. 251-252.

¹⁴Fredrich, p. 201.

which are not settled in fact.¹⁵

The evaluation, "a settlement of doctrinal differences which are not settled in fact," had always been a point of contention and would continue until the severance of fellowship because the LC--MS was walking further down the path of unionism not only in its practice but now more clearly in its doctrine as well.

In the pamphlet wars that were waged between the synods at the end of John Brenner's term as president, other important aspects in the whole controversy came out. The laity of the Wisconsin Synod were becoming more aware of the whole issue. Also, there were emerging signs that this was not a controversy dealing only with fellowship. It was becoming clear that this controversy involved the very foundation of Christian faith. It dealt with *doctrine* not just *practice* as many believed.¹⁶ It didn't just deal with the doctrine of fellowship; it dealt with the basic doctrine of inerrancy and many others. It wasn't dealing with mere differences of opinion, open questions or trivial matters, as some may have thought; it involved doctrine and practice of God's holy, immutable Word.

In closing this portion which brings us to the end of the Brenner years and to the beginning of the Naumann years, a quote by President Brenner from the Wisconsin 1951 convention would suffice. When referring to a report given by the Wisconsin Synod's Committee on Church Union, he proclaims:

It would become evident that we have dealt patiently with our sister synod. Since 1939 we have met many times with the various groups that represented it and have practiced Christian admonition. In this case we have consistently followed the orderly

¹⁵*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1951, pp. 143-144.

¹⁶From interview with Dr. Wayne M. Borgwardt.

course and have refrained from any agitation that is contrary to brotherly love.¹⁷

Brenner knew how hard he had fought to deal patiently and in love with a weak and erring (but not yet deemed persistently erring) brother. He also knew that his time to step down from the presidency had come, and he had promised as much to his wife, who undoubtedly had also felt the strain.¹⁸ He further knew that the struggle would continue, even though he may well have guessed where it would end. He would continue to fight on the Committee for Church Union, but no longer as chairman and president. But Brenner, this "outstanding man and champion of the truth,"¹⁹ also knew another thing. His successor was also a champion of the truth, which he would soon show.

The Character of the New President: Seelsorger of the Wisconsin Synod

The story has been widely told that at the 1953 Watertown convention former President John Brenner congratulated the newly-elected Pastor Oscar J. Naumann and jokingly told him that "he had been hearing talk about a change in Bible thought with the election of a new president." To this Pastor Naumann replied, "God forbid it!"²⁰ After this, the well-respected John Brenner made Oscar Naumann's transition into the presidency an easy one.²¹

In 1953 some WELS members (and others as well) may have thought of two questions when

¹⁷*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1951, p. 16.

¹⁸From interview with Reverend ^KCarl A. Gurgel.

¹⁹From interview with Reverend Karl A. Gurgel.

²⁰*Milwaukee Sentinel*, Saturday, October 7, 1978, part I, p. 11. The article was written on the occasion of Naumann's 25th anniversary as president of the WELS. The article also adds after Naumann's exclamation that "he has kept his word since then."

²¹From an interview with Reverend Karl A. Gurgel.

Naumann was elected president: "Who is this Oscar J. Naumann?" and more importantly "In what course will he take the Synod?" The first question is rather easily answered: he actually was well known to the synod when he was first elected because of where he had served and the impressions he made with whomever he came into contact. He had tutored at Northwestern College for two years and had taught at Dr. Martin Luther College for six years, so he had gotten to know quite a few graduates who were now serving in the public ministry as pastors and teachers. In his years at the colleges he would have had more than a passing acquaintance with the faculty members of both institutions. He had also served as a pastor for four years in Toledo, Ohio, and had been serving for seven years in St. Paul, Minnesota. Thus he would have been known well in three different districts. He had also served as president of the Minnesota district for the last five years prior to his election to the synod presidency.²²

As Minnesota District President, Naumann distinguished himself as being staunchly confessional when problems in the Twin Cities that involved encroaching modernism came up. He was also known for his childlike faith in the Lord. One example as Minnesota President occurred when the Synod for the first time was confronted with a budget of over one million dollars. Each district president was asked his opinion on whether it would be wise to keep the proposed budget or to cut back in some areas. At that meeting, Pastor Naumann came out most strongly in favor of keeping the budget as-is and said, "We need to put our trust in the Lord and go!"²³ Remaining

²²The autobiographical facts are taken from a paper entitled "From the Life of Pastor Justus H. Naumann". Pastor Justus H. Naumann was Pastor Oscar J. Naumann's father who had been president of the Minnesota Synod during World War I. Pastor Oscar Naumann and his mother Maria wrote the paper for an anniversary of one of the congregations Pastor Justus Naumann served.

²³From an interview with Professor em. Ernst H. Wendland.

faithful to the truth on the one hand and trusting in the Lord with mission zeal on the other would come to characterize Naumann's presidency. So Pastor Oscar Naumann would have been well known to pastors and teachers in the Synod because of where his pastoral duties had taken him.

Yet even more important than *where* he had served was *how* he had served. How he had served was demonstrated in a number of ways. Pastor Naumann had an amazing ability to remember names of people--even names of those whom he had met only once--which showed that he had the desire to know those with whom he came into contact.²⁴ This assertion is substantiated by several anecdotes. Professor emeritus and missionary Ernst H. Wendland tells the story of when Pastor Naumann took the time when he was president to personally see him and his wife off at the airport before he left for Africa. This could be regarded as an isolated incident, or only as a result of his great zeal for missions were it not for other similar cases. The story has been told of a pastor fresh out of the seminary who needed a ride to Mitchell International Airport from Mequon. No students were around to give the young man a ride. But President O. J. Naumann was. He gave the young pastor a ride to the airport without thinking twice about it.²⁵ Pastor Naumann did not think of himself as being on some high echelon. He preeminently thought of himself as a pastor and on the same plain as any other pastor, whether a newly-ordained pastor or the seminary president.

Pastor Naumann's attitude of service was not only known by those in the public ministry, however; it also was known by the laity as well. He always liked "hob-nobbing" with the rural farmer and never tired of saying that he would like to get back into the parish (after the

²⁴From an interview with Prof. Daniel Deutschlander.

²⁵From an interview with Pastor Kenneth E. Bode.

presidency became a full-time position) to serve as Seelsorger on an individual basis.²⁶ Such a person had now become Seelsorger of the entire Wisconsin Synod. By showing such pastoral care in his previous ministry, many public ministers and much of the laity would have known the man who had been elected; and if they didn't already know about his pastoral care and his character, they soon would. Even after he had been president of the synod for more than a score of years, he would still answer the phone as "Pastor Naumann" and referred to himself as "a pastor of pastors."²⁷

So the first question that many Wisconsin Synod members may have been asking, namely, "Who is this Pastor Oscar Naumann?", was already answered for them or would be soon. But the second question, namely, "In what course will he take the Synod?", would not be answered for some time yet. The situation in 1953 demonstrated that the question in many minds was not *whether or not* the Wisconsin Synod would break from Missouri, but *when* the certain break would occur; in other words, how long Pastor Naumann would patiently tolerate Missouri's error.²⁸

The actions of the Wisconsin Synod convention held at Watertown in August of 1953, the last year of Brenner's presidency, were based on what had followed the 1952 Synodical Conference convention in St. Paul. Since nothing was accomplished in the 1950 and 1952 Synodical Conference conventions but the heightening of tension and ill-feelings, and since Missouri had refused to change its position, the Wisconsin representatives issued a formal protest "immediately following the St. Paul convention of the Synodical Conference. The August 1953 Wisconsin Synod convention approved

²⁶From an interview with Mrs. Myrna R. Borgwardt.

²⁷*Milwaukee Sentinel*, Saturday, May 17, 1975, on the occasion of Pastor Naumann's fortieth anniversary in the ministry.

²⁸From an interview with Pastor Karl A. Gurgel.

the Protest which declared that

in order to guard our own faith and remain true to our God, that, though we do not at this time disavow our fellowship with the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference, yet, because the confessional basis on which the synods of the Synodical Conference have jointly stood so far has been seriously impaired by the Common Confession, we continue to uphold our protest and to declare that the Missouri Synod by retaining the Common Confession and using it for further steps toward union with the ALC is disrupting the Synodical Conference Thus while we await a decision by our Synod in this grave situation we continue our present relationship with the Missouri Synod only in the hope that it may still come to see the error of his way.

Hence we find ourselves in a STATE OF CONFESSION (theologically expressed, IN STATU CONFESSIONIS).²⁹

The strong wording of this Protest was the reason for the serious situation when Oscar Naumann was elected as president.³⁰ The 1953 convention also asserted that "the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has brought about a break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister Synod."³¹

The 1953 Watertown resolutions caused a great stir in the Wisconsin Synod. Some pastors and laity assumed that the Protest and its official acceptance had officially severed fellowship with Missouri. But the instances were not limited to parish pastors and laity. In a specific case, Minnesota District President George Barthels, who had filled O. J. Naumann's recently vacated office, accused Wisconsin Synod officials of breaking fellowship principles. Missouri was accused of being "persistently heterodox" according to the 1953 Protest, and since Wisconsin was still

²⁹*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1953, p. 104.

³⁰At second glance, maybe the words of Brenner to Naumann when Brenner handed over the office of president weren't said very jokingly after all.

³¹*Proceedings*, 1953, p. 104.

practicing fellowship with her, then Wisconsin was guilty of sin.³²

The Committee's response was a rebuttal showing how Scripture had been taken out of context or misapplied. It denied that "our Synod ever employed the harsh term . . . 'persistently heterodox.' Never! . . . On the contrary, Synod rejected the much milder term 'persistently erring,' saying, 'The Missouri Synod is an erring body, but not a persistently erring body.'"³³ The Committee then submitted an argument for dealing patiently with Missouri that is indicative of those who wanted to recall Missouri to its former confession character:

We have been at one with them these eighty years and have prayed together. Those who now wish to break off this practice must show beyond shadow of a doubt that that is the thing that must be done under the law of love. . . . Let us recall that the Synodical Conference is a group that the Holy Spirit knit together. . . . Shall we please God by hastily breaking up a union He brought about? And have we already done all in the spirit of love to preserve it? Have we not just begun?³⁴

President Barthels eventually left the Wisconsin Synod to join the number of pastors and churches that formed the Confessional Lutheran Church.

The issuance of Barthels' letter to the Union Committee resulted from an "open letter" sent to a number of pastors who were concerned about opening prayers or common prayers at intersynodical meetings between members of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. Pastor Naumann wrote to them to inform them of the decisions that were being discussed by the Union Committee.

Naumann writes:

³²Confer "Addenda--1" to see the letter dated Dec. 18, 1953 from Barthels to the Union Committee at the end of this paper for the full document with its argumentation. The next few letters are also found in the vertical file at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library.

³³Confer "Addenda--2", the rebuttal letter from the Union Committee to President Barthels dated Dec. 30, 1953, p. 1.

³⁴Ibid., p. 2.

Our members will realize the difficulty of the position into which one is placed in making a decision in the matter of opening the January meetings with prayer or not. Some officials have stated that they cannot for conscience sake join in such prayers. Others definitely feel they can and want to do so . . .

The Conference of Presidents will further study this matter before the January 12 meeting with the Missouri presidents.³⁵

This matter shows the strong feelings that existed when Pastor Naumann became president. It also *shows* the extent to which he went to inform people interested in having more input from those who were more directly involved.

In 1953, the Wisconsin Synod had enough evidence to break fellowship, ^{as?} and many believed firmly on the basis of Scripture (Romans 16:17 Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.") and wanted to put this passage into practice. For the most part this desire to break was based on Missouri's practice which, in essence, shows the true doctrinal stance of a church body, despite what it claims its position is. For fellowship purposes, doctrine equals practice, and practice reveals doctrine.

What is evident from the previous correspondence with Minnesota District President George Barthels, however, is that there were more who were willing to show a loving patience toward their erring brothers in order to bring them back to a Scriptural position. This is also Scriptural (James 5:19-20 "If one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."). Both positions are Scriptural. Both are expressions of love. The problem is determining the point at which patient admonition of a weak brother ends and public avoidance of a persistent

³⁵From a letter written by O. J. Naumann on January 2, 1954. It is also in the vertical file.

errorist begins. In 1953 the majority chose the former course.

The convention at Watertown in August of 1953 was recessed until October at Bethesda congregation in Milwaukee because the August convention had a recommendation from the Secretary of the Synod, Winfred Schaller, to break fellowship ties with Missouri. The recessed convention accepted this momentous recommendation, provided that the Synodical Conference would spend all of its efforts in the 1954 convention debating the issue in the hope that this course could be avoided. Many still believed that Missouri was seriously attempting to right itself as it was sailing into dangerous, unscriptural seas; Wisconsin's role was to hold the rope that attempted to pull the great ship of Missouri back to its former scripturally safe haven.

Pastor Naumann appointed two young pastors from the Michigan District to present essays for this convention. Edward C. Fredrich and Ernst H. Wendland, both of whom would later become professors at the Seminary, presented essays on scouting and the *Common Confession*, respectively.

Both essayists believed that Naumann's apparent purpose in appointing such young, unknown pastors in such a critical situation was to show that the younger pastors of the Wisconsin Synod recently graduated from the Seminary agreed with their synod's leadership regarding its assessment of Missouri.³⁶ Unfortunately, the Synodical Conference convention resolved nothing. The ship of the once confessionally moored church continued to sail to its doom.

By the time 1955 came around, more of the patient "rope holders" who were trying to keep Missouri from its deadly course had begun to realize that it was time to let go of the rope so that Wisconsin wouldn't be pulled along with Missouri toward an anti-scriptural and unconfessional

³⁶From interview with Ernst H. Wendland and Fredrich's *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 203.

watery grave.

One cannot surmise whether or not Pastor Oscar J. Naumann knew that the Wisconsin Synod Convention of 1955 held in Saginaw would be the most significant convention with regard to inter-synodical matters since 1868. Yet we can be sure to know that he knew things were at a crisis point from his opening address:

The Lord our God through His apostle Jude exhorts us that we should earnestly contend for the faith. That, of course, means that we should not only hear the Word of God, but also keep it, guard it, and oppose everything that would surrender, becloud, or compromise any portion of the Bible doctrine...Differences in practice have increased and multiplied, making our ministry, particularly in the field of evangelical admonition, extremely difficult . . . I believe it can truthfully be said that we have been growing apart instead of being drawn closer together...The differences that have arisen between us, which we have been trying to face honestly and soberly, and to remove in an evangelical manner by the application of God's Holy Word brother to brother, have not been removed. They have increased. We have reached the conviction that through these differences divisions and offenses have been caused contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. And when that is the case, the Lord our God has a definite command for us: "Avoid them!"...For those of us who have been closest to these problems, it appears quite definite that we must now obey the Lord's Word in Romans 16:17.³⁷

The report of the Floor Committee No. 2 declared to the Saginaw convention of 1955 what Pastor Naumann had alluded to. After speaking about the "long standing divisions and offenses" caused by Missouri in "her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference," the Committee stated that they had affirmed the action of the 1953 convention that the Wisconsin Synod "should now declare itself on the matter."³⁸ The committee declared the following:

Out of love for the truth of Scripture we feel constrained to present the following resolution to this convention for final action in a recessed session in 1956:

³⁷*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1955, p. 13.

³⁸*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1955, p. 85.

RESOLVED, that whereas the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has created divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture, we, in obedience to the command of our Lord in Romans 16:17-18, terminate our fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.³⁹

Cancer can involve a long, drawn out and terminal battle. But even after such a long, drawn out battle, when the end finally does come, the actual termination of life seems to come suddenly and, in a sense, unexpectedly. The war for Missouri's confessionalism had been waging for almost two decades, yet even today the words "terminate our fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod" does not have to be highlighted to get them to jump off the page at us. Such strong words showed how serious the Wisconsin Synod was and how strained relations with Missouri had become. But the first sentence in the above statement and the two recommendations immediately following the resolution show that fellowship was still not severed--at least not yet.

We recommend this course of action for the following reasons:

1. This resolution has far reaching spiritual consequences.
2. This continues to heed the Scriptural exhortations to patience and forbearance in love by giving the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod opportunity to express itself in its 1956 convention.⁴⁰

The 1955 Wisconsin Synod convention was a crossroads. It wanted to show that Wisconsin was still serious about its 1953 convention recommendation to break fellowship. Since then, relations had become even more strained. But it also wanted to hear Missouri's reaction to the 1953 recommendation. Therefore, the Saginaw convention of 1955 "adopted by a standing vote of 95 to 47" the resolution "calling for a recessed session of the Convention in 1956 to take final action on

³⁹Ibid, p. 86.

⁴⁰Ibid.

the resolution to terminate fellowship."⁴¹ The Wisconsin Synod needed to see Missouri's reaction to Wisconsin's decision in 1953 to break fellowship, and it needed it soon.

How did synodical members regard the new synod president's leadership as he conducted these important, historically-significant conventions? An eye-witness and member of the floor committee No. 2 on doctrinal matters at the 1955 convention comments that the 1955 convention

was conducted in a fair manner The same is true of the 1956 and 1961 meetings. These were certainly difficult synod meetings for a new president to be thrust into, especially in 1955. President Naumann with a faith deeply rooted in Scripture guided the synod to what we certainly consider the correct decision during a time when inconsistent leadership could have destroyed the synod.⁴²

"Consistent leadership" was certainly necessary going into the 1956 special Wisconsin Synod convention, when the synod was "a house divided" on the issue of breaking fellowship. Other leaders in the synod were also divided. Some saw promise for a change of Missouri's position at the LC--MS 1956 convention; others saw none. The latter thought enough patience had already been extended to Missouri. Professor Edmund Reim, president of the seminary at that time, was among their number.

President Reim had been involved with intersynodical relations since the ULCA and ALC had proposed closer ties with the Wisconsin Synod in 1935. He thought that almost twenty years of admonition was enough. But the length of time wasn't the main issue. He now saw no use in further admonition. It would go undeeded as it had until this time. He was so strong in his position that he had decided at the 1955 convention to continue in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod "only under

⁴¹Ibid, p. 87.

⁴²From letter from former Seminary President Armin W. Schuetze.

clear and public protest."⁴³ Because of his view, he realized that he could no longer serve as Secretary of the Synod's Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union. He also tendered his resignation as seminary president to the synod and the seminary board. The convention unanimously urged him to continue in both roles.⁴⁴

Reim's view changed drastically after the Missouri Synod's 1956 convention. As was mentioned earlier, the Wisconsin Synod needed to see a dramatic change in Missouri's attitude, and they needed it soon because of the fevered pitch that the dealings with Missouri were making in Wisconsin--and in the ELS, which broke fellowship with Missouri in 1955. Reim and others got what they needed in Missouri's 1956 convention. They saw that the convention showed a ray of hope in what appeared to be Missouri's genuine attempt to put its house in order. The 1956 Missouri convention at St. Paul, MN, made three important decisions: it resolved,

I. "that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod respectfully decline the invitation to become a member of the Lutheran World Federation;"

II. "that hereafter the *Common Confession* (Part I and II) be not regarded or employed as a functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowships with other church bodies;" and

III. "that we express our regret over any lovelessness or lack of brotherliness on our part in our intersynodical relations, and that we ask God graciously to forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior."⁴⁵

Not all those who wanted to break with Missouri at that time saw much promise in those words. For them, it was too little, too late.

⁴³*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1955, p. 87.

⁴⁴Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 204.

⁴⁵*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1956, there are no page numbers for the special 1956 recessed convention.

Pastor Oscar Naumann, as chairman of the Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union, and Oscar J. Siegler, as Secretary, presented the following evaluation and suggestion of the 1956 Missouri resolutions on behalf of the Committee to the 1956 Wisconsin Synod convention:

It is our conviction that the resolution (No. 13) "that hereafter the Common Confession (Parts I and II) be not regarded or employed as a functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies" in essence supplies the action which our Synod specifically requested in its objections to the Missouri Synod's 1950 resolutions on the Common Confession...

. . . We are heartened by the frankness with which it is acknowledged that strained relations exist between our Synods because there are very obvious differences of interpretation and practice, but even more by the conciliatory tone which pervades the entire report . . .

. . . In making this acknowledgment we bear in mind, however, that many of the controversial issues . . . of our Synod's 1953 resolutions in themselves still remain wholly unresolved by this reply of the Missouri Synod. . . . It is also our conviction that while we prayerfully await the outcome of these added efforts at attaining unity on these issues, we hold the judgment of our Saginaw resolutions in abeyance . . . Since the Missouri Synod's 1950 resolutions concerning the Common Confession, which threatened the purity of our doctrinal position, have been set aside, we hope and pray that the Word of God will also resolve the remaining differences as they affect doctrine and practice.⁴⁶

The 1956 recessed convention adopted the Committee's report. It was very optimistic and heartened by Missouri's attitude. Even Prof. Reim saw a ray of hope in the Missouri proceedings.

Some were not as optimistic as Reim, however,⁴⁷ and the Standing Committee knew especially that this would only be the beginning of better relations if the Missouri resolutions actually said what they looked on paper to say. Furthermore, they still mentioned some differences that needed to be addressed that had not been resolved. Yet two items in the Standing Committee's report stood out:

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Pastor Gravasius Fischer was the first to pull his congregation out of the Wisconsin Synod already in 1956.

1) the LC--MS would "set aside" the *Common Confession* as a document for establishing fellowship and 2) the Wisconsin Synod would "hold the judgment of our Saginaw resolutions in abeyance."

In order to ascertain whether the Missouri Synod meant what it said, the Standing Committee was told to continue to watch developments closely. Meetings between the union committees of each of the synods were called which made discussion even easier. It was decided that the best way to see whether Missouri meant what it said was to send six questions to the praesidium of the LC--MS so they could clarify any ambiguities. Unfortunately, the result was disheartening. Their answers showed that the promising things mentioned in Missouri's latest convention in 1956 were maybe not as promising as they had seemed.

After presenting the questions to the praesidium of Missouri, a subcommittee of Wisconsin's Union Committee remarked in early 1957 that they had

studied the answers given by the Missouri Synod Praesidium in reply to the questions which had been submitted by us. We feel constrained to point out that these answers have seriously impaired the basis on which our 1956 Synod Convention held its 1955 resolution in abeyance and resolved to enter into further discussions with the Missouri Synod.⁴⁸

Further questions were raised to Missouri representatives at another Joint Union Committee in April, but replies were again regarded as inadequate. Moving toward the 1957 convention, the Wisconsin Synod became divided regarding the Missouri Synod's answer to these questions.

One side regarded the Missouri explanations as a step in the right direction but that the Synod couldn't judge the matter with finality because the individual synods comprising the Synodical Conference would soon be coming up with their own statements of belief. Then the matter could be

⁴⁸*Reports and Memorials* of the 1957 convention, p. 70.

judged rightly. Until then, Missouri's responses still gave the Wisconsin Synod "reason for hope."⁴⁹ This side also mentioned that finally the *doctrine* underneath the whole issue was being addressed. Whereas before mainly the doctrine of fellowship had been the point of contention, at least in the minds of most people, now the *Scriptures themselves* were being discussed. They wanted to view a statement by Missouri on their doctrines of Scripture (especially inerrancy), then we would know exactly where Missouri was coming from--either a true or false view of Scripture. Many of this group at that time thought that there was still no doctrinal issue by which one could definitely place Missouri in one camp and Wisconsin in the other.⁵⁰ They also mentioned that finally the Missouri Synod would deal with specific doctrines thetically and antithetically, which was something that Wisconsin had requested of them since 1939, but was only now starting to be done. Yes, the progress was slow, but progress was being made.

The other group saw the answers given by Missouri as a lower point than before, and this was probably added to the fact that their hopes from the last convention had been dashed. They saw Missouri as only giving them false hopes in the 1956 convention. They maintained that Missouri's position had never changed. Therefore, they said that they reason they had held the decision to break "in abeyance" was no longer valid. They needed to break immediately. They brought it to the attention of the synod that there was a difference within the Wisconsin Synod as to how to interpret Rom. 16:17,18. They also held the same position as this memorial to the convention given by the Nebraska District Pastoral Conference states:

The continuance of our sister synod's unscriptural practices is creating constant

⁴⁹Ibid, p. 71.

⁵⁰From an interview with Dr. Wayne M. Borgwardt.

offense; it is threatening to destroy the cherished purity of doctrine and practice of the Wisconsin Synod; it will undermine faith. I Cor. 5:6 "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

Therefore, since The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod tolerates, advocates, and persists in error, and since it is obvious we are no longer walking together, we urge our Synod to carry out the above-mentioned Saginaw resolution.⁵¹

In the midst of such heated debate, the floor committee for the 1957 convention recommended a break by a four-to-one margin. The voting delegates were nearly equally divided. When the vote was counted, 61 had voted to break fellowship while 77 voted to continue in fellowship. Some of the most ardent supporters of the "break fellowship with Missouri" position broke with Wisconsin after the 1957 convention. This group included Prof. Reim, who had been hoping that Missouri was coming around, but discovered that he had been deluded. They said, "Actions speak louder than words." They thought that Missouri's word games were showing that this synod was a persistent errorist and needed to be "avoided" according to Rom. 16:17,18. Many of them would argue that the split should have occurred back in 1953. The 1957 convention held at New Ulm had "started the hemorrhage."⁵²

During the time after the 1957 convention and until the 1959 convention, many measures were being used to try and heal the breach before it became too big to mend. One avenue was for Wisconsin representatives to attend Synodical Conference meetings in formulating doctrinal statements. Pastor Oscar J. Naumann and eight members of the Standing Committee attended six 3-day meetings of the Joint Union Committee of the Synodical Conference as it worked out doctrinal statements on various subjects. However, the work came to a halt on the doctrine of fellowship, with

⁵¹*Reports and Memorials*, 1957, p. 75.

⁵²From an interview with Dr. Wayne Borgwardt.

Wisconsin holding to a "unit concept" of fellowship, and Missouri taking a "levels of fellowship" approach. By 1959 the discussions were beginning to grind to a halt.

Meanwhile, Synodical Conference theologians were being consulted from all corners of the globe to try and help solve the deteriorating situation. This "Conference of Theologians" was for the most part ineffectual.

Also during this time the practice of Missouri was again seen as intolerable. President Naumann was compelled to write to President Behnken of the Missouri Synod regarding Dr. H. Leupold of the A.L.C.

The announcement of the '1959 Summer Sessions' of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has as the first name on the list of lecturers Dr. H. Leupold of Columbus, Ohio, a prominent A.L.C. professor. Dr. Leupold is listed as teaching a theological course (Ecclesiastes) in Concordia Lutheran Seminary. Is this cooperation in externals? It is bad enough when some local pastor is lured into a unionistic service, but when a leading theological school of the Synodical conference officially and openly takes such a step, we realize more fully how far our several paths have gone apart.

If these things go on unreprieved, I can see no purpose in our further discussions in the Joint Union Committees. We have urged our members to be patient and to await the fruits of our discussions and admonitions. Quite a number of brethren have left our midst, because they are convinced in their consciences that we have not been firm enough and should have terminated fellowship before this.

You can well understand why these announcements again place us at the crossroads. Is it not time to take a different turn lest our failure to do so be understood as approval or at least acquiescence?⁵³

As can be seen, Pastor Naumann was getting to the end of his long and patient arm of brotherly admonition. The synod was as well. Many appeals were written to him and included in the 1959 and 1961 *Synod Proceedings*. Churches and pastors were trickling out of the Synod and going to what eventually became the Confessional Lutheran Church. It was becoming more and more obvious that

⁵³Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1959, p. 166.

a break would occur soon. And all the 1959 convention could do was to say that the Church Union Committee was to "continue and accelerate the discussions in the Joint Union Committees to bring about complete unity of doctrine and practice in the Synodical Conference" and "until agreement in doctrine and practice has been reached , or until an impasse is reached and no such agreement can be brought about."⁵⁴ Eventually, the Synodical Conference meetings were at a stand still and an "impasse" was declared in May of 1960. Following that declaration, the word "impasse" was on everyone's lips, and people realized that something had to break.

By the time of the 1961 Wisconsin Synod convention held at Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee, the break was almost a foregone conclusion. The "impasse" had continued in the Synodical Conference discussions because of the unscriptural stance that Missouri took. Nothing had changed by the time the Wisconsin Synod's 1961 convention was held. President Naumann had only a few things underlined in his personal copy of the 1961 *Proceedings*. One of them was a few lines of the doctrinal position that the Wisconsin Synod's Commission on Doctrinal Matters had written. It refers to the two principles regarding outward expression of Christian fellowship:

. . . particularly two Christian principles need to direct us, the great debt of love which the Lord would have us pay to the weak brother, and His clear injunction (also flowing out of love) to avoid those who adhere to false doctrine and practice and all who make themselves partakers of their evil deeds.⁵⁵

President Naumann probably knew these lines by heart with the amount of time he had in dealing with his weak Missourian brethren. But now he would have to focus on the second of the two, as difficult as that would be. At the fateful 1961 Wisconsin Synod convention, by a count of 124-49, the

⁵⁴*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1959, p. 195.

⁵⁵*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1961, p. 193.

delegates voted

that we now suspend fellowship with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17,18 with the hope and prayer to God that The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself.⁵⁶

With these words, a fellowship that had begun almost ninety years earlier was officially ended. The voting was 2½-to-1, the numbers showing that it was by no means unanimous. Many times the voting went by areas within the Synod. For example, in certain places in Michigan the Missouri Synod pastors were quite confessional, sometimes even more so than the Wisconsin Synod pastors.⁵⁷ As a result, many of the Wisconsin Synod pastors in those areas did not want to break with Missouri even in 1961.⁵⁸ Yet the majority in 1961 thought it was time to break, and that is what happened.

Many self-styled prophets in the Missouri Synod said that the Wisconsin Synod would die after the break. They said it was too dependant on Missouri to survive on its own. The leadership in the Wisconsin Synod as well realized that it would be difficult to adjust. Missouri supplied them with most of their published materials; Missouri held more overseas missions; Missouri was more established and just plain bigger than Wisconsin in almost every respect. But Wisconsin would not die. Oscar Naumann especially realized that since the Wisconsin Synod was now on its own, that then it ought to act on its own. Wisconsin cut its apron strings to Missouri and never looked back.

That independent action of the synod was ^{reflected} chiefly in foreign missions. Pastor Naumann was always ready to employ his childlike faith and vast knowledge of Scripture when it

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁷From an interview with Dr. Wayne M. Borgwardt.

⁵⁸From an interview with Pastor Ernst H. Wendland.

came to foreign missions. He knew the Lord had commanded his church to preach the gospel and had promised to be with his church to the end. With this knowledge and trust in the Lord, he was always very positive in his outlook of new foreign mission fields.⁵⁹

Even as pastors comfort the sick and dying with the words from Rom. 8:28, so the words that say "all things work for the believer's good" apply to groups of believers as well. And so it was with the Wisconsin Synod after it broke with Missouri. The break was devastating. In fact, the complete impact of the severance of fellowship is too recent a development to assess fully even today. Nevertheless, through it all, the Wisconsin Synod remained confessional and doctrinally pure. But another blessing came about as well because of the break: mission work. By cutting off the apron strings, the Wisconsin Synod now focused on home and especially foreign missions like it had never done before. Furthermore, the time was right to expand. And expand is what the Wisconsin Synod did. Instead of dying or running back to the Missouri Synod with its tail between its legs, the Wisconsin Synod, under the leadership of Pastor Naumann, expanded to the four corners of the globe. Therefore, the two main things for which President Naumann is most remembered were tied to each other: the break with Missouri caused us to cut our apron strings and reach out to the world with the gospel.

When we look at the Wisconsin Synod during the 1950s, we see three main viewpoints regarding Missouri, and these viewpoints changed sometimes quite rapidly. At one end of the spectrum is the "pro-Missouri" group. This small group really didn't see what all the commotion was about in the Wisconsin-Missouri debate, or maybe didn't choose to see, or maybe didn't care. Some in this group wouldn't break with Missouri no matter what happened. The second group was the

⁵⁹From an interview with Pastor Ernst H. Wendland.

large middle-of-the-road group. This large middle position probably realized that Wisconsin would eventually break with Missouri, but they were not yet willing to cut off the historical ties to Missouri. Their brothers might come back, but it would take time. On the other end of the spectrum was another group that early on had become convinced that there was no hope for Missouri and became increasingly "anti--Missouri" in its statements. They thought that they already should have broken from Missouri back in 1953 or before. In 1957 the "pro-Missouri" and middle groups ended up voting together to retain ties with Missouri, but for different reasons. The "anti-Missouri" position didn't have enough votes in 1957, but they were close. They also had something in common with the large middle group--they knew they should break with Missouri. But in 1957 the big middle group wasn't ready to call it quits with Missouri, so in 1957 the "large middle" voted with the "pro-Missourians." After the 1957 convention, some "anti-Missourians" broke fellowship with Wisconsin and later formed the CLC. Yet even with the loss of some of their number, by 1961 the middle group had shifted to a conviction that the time for continued patience was now over. This gave them the votes needed to finally break with Missouri.⁶⁰

Assessment of the Naumann Years

In assessing Pastor Oscar J. Naumann's legacy of leadership during the break with Missouri, one notices the pastoral care Naumann took with both his Missouri brethren and also with the brethren within his own synod. Although he was not alone in his leadership role, he would be the one to blame if there was a perceived lack of patient admonition shown to those in the Missouri Synod. Yet he would be to blame as well if Wisconsin was still in fellowship with a persistently erring church

⁶⁰From an interview with Dr. Wayne M. Borgwardt.

body. The main problem for Pastor Naumann and the synod was deciding how much patient admonition was needed before "marking" the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as a heterodox church body and then "avoiding" them.

Throughout Naumann's first ten years as synod president, he had people on both sides of the issue telling him the course he had to take. Before 1961 he had to deal with those who wanted the break with Missouri immediately or would leave the Wisconsin Synod if the break did not occur. Eventually, many did leave the Wisconsin Synod over this issue (especially from 1957-1961) and later formed or joined the CLC. But those who never wanted a break with Missouri reacted as well. After 1961 a handful left the Wisconsin Synod to join the Missouri Synod. These would have counselled Naumann that whatever patient admonition was given wasn't enough, and even what was given was not even necessary.

Naumann found himself between a rock and a hard place, but he was by no means alone. Pastor Naumann knew that this was not his personal battle. The decision to break with Missouri could not be only a decree from the top; it had to be a decision that was held by the majority of Wisconsin Synod members, and understood by them as well. To make sure the people knew the issues, numerous articles were written in the Northwestern Lutheran and the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, just as had been done in Brenner's time. The professors at the seminary did most of the writing. Prof. Reim was especially active in writing these articles because he had been involved since 1935 already. When Prof. Reim left the seminary presidency and the synod in 1957, Prof. Carl J. Lawrenz took his place in leading the Wisconsin Synod through those turbulent years. By surrounding himself by such outstanding theologians, and even though quite capable in doctrinal matters himself, Naumann was by no means a lone leader in guiding the synod because he worked

closely with the Conference of Presidents and also the seminary faculty.⁶¹

Some important matters must be brought in when discussing Pastor Naumann's dealing with the seminary presidents Edmund Reim and Carl Lawrenz. First of all, with regard to Professor Reim, it was very difficult for President Naumann to deal with the fact that the head of the seminary would resign his important positions as secretary of the synod's Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union and as seminary president. Reim^{had} been involved in the discussions with Missouri for twenty years. He was looked to as one of the spiritual and doctrinal leaders of the synod. He had written much about the controversy in the synod's periodicals. No doubt he put pressure on Naumann to break with Missouri sooner than the rest of the synod was ready to do. But losing him had been a terrible blow to the synod, and also personally to Oscar Naumann.⁶²

When Reim left the synod in 1957, he had convinced others that it was also the time to break not only with Missouri but also with their own synod. But even as Reim left a gaping hole, it was quickly filled by another man of profound influence in the synod, Prof. Carl Lawrenz. Just two years after Reim left the synod, the synodical convention appointed a Study Committee to help out with the growing tensions in the synod. The situation was grave. People were understandably worried about their seminary's president resigning and leaving the synod, but the synod had not followed his lead. In some people's minds the synod should have followed his lead, and this sentiment was growing as the years went on. In certain places fires began to spring up that demanded immediate attention. People were confused and angered against the action the synod was taking. To counteract this growing tension and confusion, the 1959 Synod Convention proposed that the

⁶¹From an interview with Pastor Armin Schuetze.

⁶²From an interview with Pastor Ernst H. Wendland.

Conference of Presidents appoint some men to deal with this concern by studying in detail with objectors what Scripture has to say about the boundary between patience and termination of fellowship. In September of 1959 the Conference of Presidents appointed three men to this "Study Committee." They were Carl Lawrenz, Oscar Siegler and Oscar Naumann.

The primary function of the Committee was "to discuss and study the principles of church fellowship with any members of our Synod who expressed misgivings regarding the Synod's position of church fellowship and who indicated a desire to meet with the Committee."⁶³ Anyone in the synod who wished to discuss the doctrine of fellowship could do so. But the Committee was also set up to talk with those who had suspended fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod or ^{were} was about to do so. This attempt to diffuse potentially and already dangerous situations within the synod showed to what lengths the synod would go to keep the laity informed and congregations on the same page during the debate with Missouri. These great lengths are especially long when considering who these three men were. Carl Lawrenz was President of the Seminary. Oscar Siegler was Secretary of the Synod. And, of course, Oscar Naumann was President of the Synod. Yet these three men took the time to race around the synod in order to help keep the Wisconsin Synod together.

The three men were nicknamed "The Midnight Riders." One or two of the men had been known to arrive late at night at the house of the third member of the group. Then, without making a stir, the two or three of them would be gone before the light of dawn brushed the eastern sky. By the time most common folk awoke, they would be long gone and on their way to another meeting. Sometimes no one would know that they had ever been there. Just the fact that these three busy men would take time out of their already packed schedules to discuss these matters with anyone is

⁶³*Reports and Memorials*, 1961, p. 102.

amazing in and of itself. But the *number* of meetings that were made make it even more remarkable. The report to the 1961 convention commented that "between October 1959 and May 1961, [the Study] Committee met on 27 different occasions in various parts of the Synod."⁶⁴ When the Conference of Presidents wanted something done and done right, they brought out their big guns. The "Midnight Riders" were active until the mid 1960s. By that time most of the fires had been put out, so there was no more need of the "Riders."

With everything else that Oscar Naumann did during those years, one can imagine how seldom he was at home. Even after the presidency became a full-time position, Pastor Naumann's sense of duty kept him away from home. But even when he did make it home for a meal with the family, he would often talk in German with his wife Dorothy so that the children wouldn't be able to understand.⁶⁵ Yet, even then, the conversation would come back inevitably to the dealings with Missouri or the CLC.

The battles that were fought between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods in those years were heart-wrenching and far-reaching. But for ~~the~~ Pastor Naumann and many others the battles were not only fought on convention floors or at intersynodical meetings--they were fought within the walls of their own homes. Pastor Oscar Naumann had a cousin, Professor Martin Naumann, who was in the Missouri Synod and remained after the split. Most of his brothers and sisters became members of the Missouri Synod by marrying a person from the LC--MS and simply switching membership. It was as if they didn't see much of a difference between the LC--MS and the WELS, where their brother Oscar saw all the difference in the world.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 103.

⁶⁵From an interview with Mrs. Myrna R. Borgwardt.

But the worst episode in dealing with divisions in his own extended family came not with a relative in the Missouri Synod, but with Oscar's nephew Bert Naumann, a member of Oscar's own Wisconsin Synod. Bert would live with the Oscar Naumann family frequently over the summers and during breaks from school. When the discussions with Missouri were reaching their height in the mid-fifties, Bert was going to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, training to be a pastor. Bert was of the opinion that Wisconsin should break with Missouri, and he let his uncle Oscar know it. The two would talk behind closed doors for long stretches of time. Bert would try to explain to the president of the synod how he ought to break with Missouri and how it was so clear that anyone could see it. At such times, the usually mild-mannered, calm, even-handed gentleman Oscar J. Naumann would yell at the impetuous seminarian at the top of his voice with all the pent-up mix of frustration and rage he could muster. No one wanted to be in the house when Oscar "talked" with his nephew Bert.⁶⁶ Bert Naumann eventually broke away from the Wisconsin Synod and joined the Confessional Lutheran Church. Nothing ever got under Pastor Naumann's skin like his dealings with the CLC.

Presidential Correspondence

As was mentioned already, when it came to writing to inform Wisconsin Synod members of the state with Missouri, Pastor Oscar Naumann left let the bulk of the responsibility to the more than capable seminary professors. Yet, as President of the Wisconsin Synod, Oscar Naumann carried on much official correspondence with the Missouri Synod through LC--MS presidents. John W. Behnken was President of the Missouri Synod when Pastor Naumann was elected in 1953. Behnken

⁶⁶From an interview with Mrs. Myrna R. Borgwardt.

was by that time a veteran of the office since he had been president of Missouri since 1935. Interestingly enough, that was about the time that the Missouri Synod started to lose its strictly confessional character. Behnken, a cousin of Prof. John Meyer of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, had been a "grand champion of the truth" when he was President of the Texas District. However, when he became LC-MS President, he began to bend over in order to appease the liberals in the synod.⁶⁷ Even though Behnken and President John Brenner of the Wisconsin Synod knew each other quite well and respected each other as individuals, there was not so much warmth between them when it came to the burning Missouri-Wisconsin fellowship issue. Brenner would say it like it was, and sometimes Behnken would get quite upset about it.⁶⁸

When Oscar Naumann became President of the Wisconsin Synod in 1953, Behnken may have thought he would be able to have more success with a younger and less experienced president. But this was simply not the case. Naumann's correspondence was cordial, but he held to the same unbudging confessional line to which his predecessor had held.⁶⁹ Naumann was not at all afraid to tell Behnken how it was. He would not deal in any underhanded way.

Behnken was misled by the President of the American Lutheran Church Dr. Schuh,⁷⁰ but Brenner and Naumann were not. Oscar had no problem telling Behnken what the ALC had done to Missouri and was trying to do to the Synodical Conference. Yet by the time Oscar Naumann began

⁶⁷From an interview with Reverend Karl A. Gurgel.

⁶⁸Confer "Addenda-3" and "Addenda-4" for an example of a rather heated exchange between Presidents Behnken and Brenner.

⁶⁹Confer "Addenda-5,-6,-7" for an example of Naumann's correspondence soon after he had become president.

⁷⁰From an interview with Reverend Karl A. Gurgel.

correspondence with Behnken, it was already too late for the Missouri Synod.⁷¹

Even though President Naumann knew that he was more or less the official voice of the Wisconsin Synod to Missouri and the world, yet he could never be described as a politician. He was a pastor. He especially didn't like the way that President Jacob A. O. Preuss worked. President Preuss, in Pastor Naumann's estimation based on his dealing with him as Wisconsin Synod President, always seemed to involve political intrigue in intersynodical dealings and work the synod machinery for his own advantage.⁷² That was the kind of "working the system that really bothered Pastor Naumann. After all, if a parish pastor shouldn't resort to political intrigue to bring about his own ends, how much more a "pastor of pastors" as synodical head?

As an example of Missouri's political maneuvering aimed at Pastor Naumann, this writer heard of a true story that will raise a few eyebrows. During the height of the Wisconsin-Missouri conflict in the mid 1950s, President Naumann was approached by Dr. Lohe, the President of Concordia Seminary in Adelaide, Australia. Dr. Lohe offered President Naumann an honorary doctorate. This was not all that uncommon in those days. Many presidents of church bodies who hadn't earned a doctorate themselves were sometimes offered an honorary doctorate when they became president. it would add to his prestige as a leader and the church body's prestige as well. President Naumann thanked Dr. Lohe for the kind gesture, but said that he could not accept the doctorate on the grounds that he had not earned it.

President Naumann forgot the whole incident until about fifteen years later when he met Dr.

⁷¹Confer "Addenda-8" and "Addenda-9."

⁷²From interviews with Pastor Peter Naumann, Mr. Martin Naumann, and Dr. Wayne Borgwardt.

Lohe at another function. As they were talking, Dr. Lohe asked President Naumann, "Do you remember that honorary doctorate that I offered you fifteen years ago?" Pastor Naumann said, "Yes, I recall." Dr. Lohe responded, "You know, don't you, that the doctorate I offered you was not from the seminary in Adelaide, Australia? That doctorate was being offered to you from St. Louis." In other words, the president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Dr. A. O. Fuerbringer, had told Dr. Lohe to offer Oscar Naumann a doctorate and see if he would accept it. If he would accept the honorary doctorate, Dr. Fuerbringer would then contact him and extend the doctorate to him. In this way, Missouri would always remind him that they had given him something quite precious if he would go against them in some way. It was simple bribery. Yet in recounting the story to his son, Oscar Naumann said, "The Lord was sure with me that day!"⁷³

I mention this story to show what power and high position can make of a person. But Oscar J. Naumann was never made into anything by the position he held as President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Pastor Oscar J. Naumann never wanted any other title for himself than "pastor." He has been described as even-handed, faithful, respected, humble and having a childlike faith. He is very comparable to the previous Presidents of the Wisconsin Synod. He will go down in history as one whose standstill on doctrine made him a guardian of orthodoxy and whose progress in missions made him a herald of the everlasting gospel.⁷⁴ Yet with all the praise that the Wisconsin Synod could heap upon this great man and has, he would want none of it. He would be content to

⁷³From an interview with Pastor Peter Naumann. Also, as an interesting sidelight, Kurt Marquardt in his book, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, cites L. Fuerbringer's *Briefe von C.F.W. Walther* in which Walther was offered an honorary doctorate from the University of Goettingen. Marquardt says that "The humble and faithful Walther declined politely--because of the Goettingen Faculty's compromising attitude toward the orthodox Lutheran church." p. 22, and note 46.

⁷⁴*Milwaukee Sentinel*, Saturday, October 7, 1978, part 1, page 11.

be your pastor and tell you about how Christ has lived, died and rose again to forgive your sins. We would have to agree that the Lord of the Church chose Oscar J. Naumann to lead the Wisconsin Synod during the darkest period of its existence. He was the the right man at the right time. He shepherded his flock in the fear of God. And we would have to join in the words of the present Seminary President to Pastor Naumann on his 25th anniversary as president of our synod, "Your 'own congregation,' our WELS, thanks God for giving us a humble shepherd like you."⁷⁵

⁷⁵From a letter written by Pastor David Valleskey to President Naumann, Dec. 5, 1978. Cf. "Addenda-10".

Works Cited

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St. Louis, Missouri, 1938.

Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1944

Wisconsin Synod Proceedings of the conventions held at:

Watertown, Wisconsin, 1939.

New Ulm, Minnesota, 1951

Watertown, Wisconsin, 1953.

Saginaw, Michigan, 1955.

Watertown, Wisconsin, 1956

Saginaw, Michigan, 1959

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1961

Reports and Memorials of the Wisconsin Synod 1957 and 1961 Conventions

Interviews

Pastor Norman W. Berg, 1½ hours (former Michigan District President from 1962-1968;
former Executive Secretary for Board for Home Missions from 1968-1988)

Pastor Kenneth E. Bode, 5 minutes

Mrs. Myrna R. Borgwardt, 1 hour (daughter of Oscar J. Naumann)

Dr. Wayne M. Borgwardt, 5 hours (son-in-law of Oscar J. Naumann)

Professor Daniel M. Deutschlander, 2 minutes

Pastor Karl A. Gurgel, 2 hours

Mr. Martin Naumann, 20 minutes (son of Oscar J. Naumann)

Pastor Peter J. Naumann, 1½ hours (son of Oscar J. Naumann)

Pastor Armin W. Schuetze (former seminary president)

Pastor Ernst H. Wendland, ½ hour (former seminary professor)

Other:

Milwaukee Sentinel, Saturday, May 17, 1975.

Milwaukee Sentinel, Saturday, October 7, 1978.

Paper entitled "From the Life of Pastor Justus E. Naumann" prepared by Mrs. Maria F. Naumann and Oscar J. Naumann upon request of Pastor Richard P. Albrecht for the 75th Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church of Wolsey, South Dakota, June 12, 1960.

Various letters and correspondence from verticle file, personal files and the archives.

Addenda-1

Red Wing, Minnesota
December 18, 1953

THE SEMINARY LIBRARY
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Mequon, Wisconsin

To The Committee on Church Union
The Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin a.o.S.

Dear Brethren:

I am extremely disturbed about the announcement in President Naumann's "Open Letter" of November 20, 1953, that the meeting of Missouri and Wisconsin presidents called for January 12 - 15, 1954, is to be opened with joint prayer. I have twice called this to his attention, and he informs me that many of our District Presidents are entirely in accord with that procedure.

Brethren, I surely don't want to break our ranks as we are now called upon to give testimony for the Truth and to renounce error. However, I cannot but state my firm conviction that to practice joint prayer with the Missouri Synod leaders now is positively contrary to God's Word in Romans 16, 17, Titus 3, 10, and Ephesians 5, 11. Our synod has recognized and marked the "official voice" of Missouri as persistently heterodox when it said in the Milwaukee Resolutions, Point I, b: "We declare that the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod . . . by its persistent adherence to its unionistic practices (then listing them) has brought about the present break in relations" etc. Regardless of what these resolutions say after this part, they have here stated something that is a fact which no one can deny, because it is based on the factual, historical survey which precedes. If we do not now follow the above passages of God's Word and do not cease joint prayer with that group of heterodox leaders, then we ourselves are transgressing the Word of God, which is sin, and inviting certain failure upon our efforts, because the Lord's blessing could not then rest upon those efforts, be they ever so well planned according to our human wisdom and judgment. Furthermore, the same argument that would induce us to pray together with them now would be valid as long as Missouri is willing to "listen" to our talking.

I have not yet heard one Word of God adduced that bids us that we must pray together at such a meeting. I don't believe any such Word of God exists. It therefore could not be wrong or sinful to have our own private devotions instead of joint prayer on such an occasion. The absence of joint prayer need not stop us from discussing these questions with the Missouri leaders. If Missouri would break off these discussions because we did not pray with them, then only they would be to blame.

The passage II Thessalonians 3, 15, cannot be pressed to mean that we must practice joint prayer when we "admonish him as a brother", for the contrasting word which sheds light on the meaning of "brother" is "enemy". Treat him not as an enemy: in a rough, unkind way, filled with bitterness; but admonish him as a brother: in kindness, in love, in concern for his soul, in the hopes of winning him. If we use this passage to contradict Romans 16, 17, Titus 3, 10, and Ephesians 5, 11, now; then it would also contradict those passages in every other case, and the Bible would contradict itself, a doctrine which neither you nor I are willing to confess.

If we begin this meeting with joint prayer, then we might as well yield President Frey's assignment on joint prayer, for our actions will have nullified our verbal testimony in that meeting even before it is given.

I have already pointed out to President Naumann that on the basis of Matthew 18, 19, in order to pray together we must agree on what we ask. If we and the Missouri leaders try to pray together in that meeting, we shall not be agreed on what we ask even if we use the same words. We of the Wisconsin synod shall be asking God to change the Missourians, and the Missourians will be asking God to change us. If the prayer is general, asking that

Addenda - 1 (cont.)

The Lord might bring both sides to follow His Word alone, that is thereby implying that we are not certain whether our position is based on the Holy Scriptures, and again it is thereby a yielding of the Truth.

I can no longer be satisfied with the position that since my conscience forbids me to pray along, it will be sufficient if I just absent myself while others of my brethren take part in that joint devotion. My conscience is bound by the clear Word of God, and since you and I are brethren I must expect of you that your conscience is bound by the same clear Word of God. It is no longer a case of varying human judgment. You and I are agreed that "official Missouri" has for at least fifteen years caused, and is still persistently causing, divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine that we have learned. You reported your convictions on this fact in the Supplementary Report of the Committee on Church Union of August 4, 1953, where the closing paragraphs state: "We hold that the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod . . . has disrupted the Synodical Conference and made it impossible for us to continue our affiliation (underscoring mine, G.B.) with the Missouri Synod and our joint labors in the service of the Lord". To date there is absolutely no promise or sign of a change. How we must consequently conduct ourselves over against them is clearly stated in the Word of God (see passages mentioned above), and no synodical resolutions can alter what that Word of God says. Here too I'm sure another Word of God applies: "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

I feel it is prohibitive for us to hold such a meeting with the Missouri leaders until we ourselves are united on this question of joint prayer. Furthermore, I have searched the minutes in vain for any evidence that the Joint Synod or the General Synodical Committee has officially decided to hold such a meeting of the Missouri and Wisconsin Presidents under the proposed plan. Our Committee on Church Union did make a recommendation to the General Synodical Committee, which was reported by Professor Reim, and which was very much different from what is now proposed (cf. Minutes, bottom of page 8); but neither that recommendation nor any other one was actually adopted, as I remember it, and as is borne out in the minutes. I was subdued only when President Naumann and Professor Kowalke spoke along the lines of not holding joint devotions at this proposed meeting; but nothing was adopted.

If ever there was a time that we in our generation must stand firmly on the clear Word of God, that time is now!

Faternally yours,

Geo. A. Barthels
Geo. A. Barthels

Copy to Secretary W. Schaller (for verification of minutes)
and to Vice-President E. Schaller, Minnesota District

Addenda-2

THE SEMINARY LIBRARY
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Mequon, Wisconsin

Dec. 30, 1953.

Pres. Geo. A. Barthels
Red Wing, Minnesota.

Dear Brother Barthels:

A copy of your letter of Dec. 18 addressed to the Committee on Church Union has come to my hands. Its approach to the grave problem confronting us, together with its conclusions, and its attempt to make them binding on others' conscience raise a number of questions.

In your second paragraph you quote what you maintain are pertinent passages of Scripture, binding the conscience of all to follow your judgment. You lift Eph. 5, 11 completely out of context and apply it in a manner that the context - vs. 3-12 - show St. Paul never intended. We are not left to conjecture what "the unfruitful works of darkness" may be of which St. Paul speaks. I had thought that we Wisconsin men had learned to apply that prime principle of exegesis: to take the context into consideration. You have made a clear passage of Scripture murky by an unclear exegesis. We should be careful, Brother Barthels, not to bring our Synod into disrepute and to discredit its stand by patent misquoting of Scripture out of context, lest we fall under St. Paul's dictum, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

One should also consult the context of Tit. 3, 10 for an understanding of that passage, but the Greek text particularly. We should be careful not to adopt the Roman Catholic coloring of this verse, as the King James Version, sad to say, did. We should remember that airesis means 'party spirit', 'splitting up into factions', hence a airetikos anthrōpos is a factionous fellow. The type of faction is clearly stated by Paul in the 9th verse: "foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law". Considering its patent sense, must you not fear that this very passage may be turned against you as being of faction in our own Synod? "A factionous man after a first and second admonition refuse?"

As to Rom. 16, 17: the Report of the Floor Committee - which Synod adopted and which is therefore the present position of Synod - applies Rom. 16, 17 in an evangelical manner. It is the beginning of the process of turning away from the Missouri Synod's stand. But, Brother Barthels, the Missouri Synod has not yet been declared obstinate, nor even persistent in its error. Moreover, there exists a very large minority, if not actually a majority, within the Missouri Synod that are decidedly out of step with the trend of that body, many of whom protest openly against it. Would you cut them down also? And what about exercising the patience God's Word commands us to employ, I Thess. 5, 14? And the love? I John 4, 7-21.

Again, nowhere has our Synod ever employed the harsh term you do when you write, "Our Synod has marked the 'official voice' of Missouri as persistently heterodox." Never! Can you show any use anywhere of the term "heterodox"? On the contrary, Synod rejected the much milder term "persistently erring", saying, "The Missouri Synod is an erring body, but not a persistently erring body." Not only are you evidently in grave error here yourself, but unless

Addenda - 2 (cont.)

you correct it, will you not make yourself responsible for worse?

Dare it be categorically stated that we shall make ourselves guilty by reason of joint prayer with Missouri? We have been at one with them these eighty years and have prayed together. Those who now wish to break off this practice must show beyond shadow of a doubt that that is the thing that must be done under the law of love. That you have been unable to succeed with the major number of the praesides together with the whole praesidium of Synod should give you pause. Moreover, Synod did not resolve it; nor did the subsequent meeting of the Synodical Committee. The minutes of that Committee read only, "It was offered that our President would consult with Pr s. Behnken to agree on having no joint prayer but to begin with silent prayer." Nothing at all was resolved.

Has it occurred to you that Jesus joined in worship in the synagog? We are plainly told, "~~He entered the synagogue~~ He entered the synagogue was, into the synagog on the sabbath day, and stood up to read." Luke 4, 15.16. Prayer was part of the service in which He took active part. Even on the last day of His life He declared, "I ever taught in synagogs and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. Did He withdraw when prayer was said? And was not the synagog worlds further removed from the Christian faith than Missouri is from Wisconsin?

Do you believe your conclusion that we are not certain on our position on joint prayer is well taken? Do we concede uncertainty when we pray jointly with Missouri for God's grace to find a proper solution to the present impasse? Is not your conclusion in fact a pre-judging of the attitude in prayer on the part of both parties? Do you believe it impossible to pray solely for wisdom rightly to take up our task? Is not the whole impact of the model Lord's Prayer that God may lead us aright? And we need this prayer: just we Wisconsinites above all else. Let us beware of cocksureness, an abomination with God. Ought you not to search your letter and ask yourself if there be a hint of it there? And ought you not to go into prayerful reconsideration of the Word of God you adduce toward what may be a correction of your own conscience, to say nothing of trying to bind others'? Certainly it cannot be denied that you becould a clear word of God Eph. 5,11 by an unclear exegesis and application.

You say, "To date there is absolutely no sign of a change." Very strong language indeed, my Brother. The simple fact that Missourians propose to meet with us scuttles your "absolutely". And the "Confessional Lutheran" and the Chicago Study Club, etc.: are they not in existence and do they not contain a promise?

Finally, let us recall that the Synodical Conference is a group that the Holy Spirit knit together. There was little love between Wisconsin and Missouri at the time. Far from attempting union, as is now generally the case, they found that unity already existed, brought about by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. They did not rush into each other's arms; but with a degree of reluctance they joined in the Synodical Conference on the basis of the unavoidable conviction that they stood on common ground, unity of doctrine and practice. Shall we please God by hastily breaking up a union He brought about? And have we already done all in the spirit of love to preserve it?

Have we not just begun?

Very sincerely yours,

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Addenda - 3

May 21, 1952

Rev. J. W. Behnken, D.D.,
6724 Eichelberger Street,
St. Louis 9, Missouri.

Dear President Behnken:

Your letter of March 5th invites us to attend a special conference to be held at Oberursel or some other place which may be arranged by the brethren of the various Free Churches of Germany. This invitation has been submitted to our Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union.

We are conscious of our obligation to attend this conference even as we were when such a meeting was first suggested some two years ago. Our acceptance is, however, subject to one condition: Even as we stood ready to contribute our share toward such a conference two years ago, so we are ready now to do likewise.

We make this request in order that we may not find ourselves hampered in our testimony by being placed into a position where we might be speaking against our host.

We trust that you will understand our need for a clear definition of our status at this conference.

In order that our men may have time to get ready, we hope that we may have an early reply, also a copy of the agenda which is being prepared by Dr. Harms.

The Wisconsin Synod Committee on Church Union,

by

Signed: John Brenner, Chairman.

Dear President:

Please note that this criticism applies to the Church Union Committee, whose resolutions I sent as they were given me by the Secretary.

J.B.

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Addenda-4

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

210 North Broadway ST. LOUIS 2, MO. Telephone CHestnut 8001

May 27, 1952

The Rev. John Brenner
816 West Vliet Street
Milwaukee 5, Wisconsin

Dear President Brenner:

Your letter under date of May 21 was duly received.

I must say that your letter shocked and saddened me. The third and fourth paragraphs are very definitely an insult. I did not expect to get that kind of a reply from the president of any Church Body, much less from the president of a Church Body in fellowship with our Synod in the Synodical Conference. We invited you in good faith to attend the post-Hanover meeting which originally we had planned to be held at Oberursel, but which is now to be held at Uelzen. We were sincere in that invitation. We definitely wanted you to be our guests. And now we receive such a terrific jolt, such a slap in the face. I am sorry that you resort to something like that.

I could write a great deal about your answer, but let me limit it to this thought, that it is more than rude for you to insinuate that at the Uelzen meeting the representatives of the Missouri Synod will take a position in doctrine and practice (I would not know what else you could mean) which would compel you to speak against us. It's too bad that you manifest that kind of an attitude. I hope that your rude words are not meant as they read.

Our invitation to representatives of your Synod stands. We are inviting. We shall be the host. Please do not ask anything different of us.

Looking forward to an unqualified acceptance of our invitation, I am, with kindest greetings,

Cordially yours,

Signed: J. W. Behnken

JWB:HB

Addenda-5

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

210 NORTH BROADWAY • SAINT LOUIS 2, MISSOURI

TELEPHONE CHESTNUT 8001

OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT

September 14, 1953

The Rev. Oscar John Naumann
727 Margaret Street
St. Paul 6, Minnesota

Dear Brother Naumann:

On my return from the Holy Land and other parts of the Near East I learned that you were elected to the Presidency of the Hon. Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. Please accept my hearty congratulations and best wishes. My prayer is that the good Heavenly Father may graciously grant you wisdom and understanding for the important position to which you have been elected. May He guide and direct you in all your deliberations through His Holy Spirit. May your incumbency serve to cement the bonds of fellowship which God has graciously granted our Synodical Conference throughout the years of its existence.

Soon after my return, however, I also was informed about a matter which saddened me as few things have saddened my heart. Our men informed me that the Hon. Wisconsin Synod at its recent meeting had under consideration the proposition of severing relations with our Synod and that this matter was postponed until October when a special meeting of your Hon Synod is to be held in Milwaukee. I was told that this was done in order that your district conventions called especially for the purpose might give thorough study to this matter. In October you hope then to pass the final resolution whether or not to sever relations with us.

This matter is so sad and serious that it simply shocks me. My prayer is that the good Heavenly Father may graciously avert this serious step. Our College of Presidents in its meeting on Friday expressed similar thoughts.

Kindly inform me whether we may be privileged to attend your Synodical meeting in Milwaukee. I want to assure you that we certainly would appreciate it if you will grant us the permission to attend, and, if necessary, to speak. We feel that this is a matter in which we are deeply concerned and vitally interested.

With cordial personal greetings

Fraternally yours

THE REV. J. W. BEHNKEN, D. D.
PRESIDENT

THE REV. H. HARMS, D. D.
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

THE REV. W. F. LICHTSINN, D. D.
THIRD VICE-PRESIDENT

THE REV. M. F. ARSTMAN, D. D.
SECRETARY

THE REV. F. A. HERTWIG, D. D.
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

THE REV. A. H. GRUMM, D. D.
FOURTH VICE-PRESIDENT

W. H. SCHLUETER, LL.D.
TREASURER

Addenda - 6

September 18, 1953

The Rev. Mr. J. W. Bahnken, D.D.
President of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
210 No. Broadway
St. Louis 2, Missouri

Dear Dr. Bahnken:

Your letter of September 14th has been received.

Let me assure you that our conventions have always been held as open meetings and that we have extended the courtesy of the floor to every one who would not abuse it. Similarly we shall welcome you to our convention in Milwaukee next month and shall grant you the floor in proper order.

I do, however, think it is a bit late to realize that we of the Wisconsin Synod and our brethren in the Norwegian Synod were serious and in dead earnest all along when we raised our objections to such things as were disturbing our fraternal relations and were undermining the mutual confidence which in previous years characterized the relations between all members of the Synodical Conference. In the Committee on Inter-Synodical Relations we have sought to remove those things that strained our fellowship, but we have still to experience the first definitely corrective action.

Even in the matter of Lutheran Men of American Wisconsin your Houston Convention would not express itself, after the Synodical Conference last year adopted our committee's report unanimously. A definite resolution on the part of your convention would have strengthened the men in the Milwaukee area, who are reportedly dealing in the matter. This failure to speak out clearly and a seeming fear to incur any public disfavor was not the mark of the Missouri Synod of a quarter century ago.

All along we have urged that our efforts be bent toward mending our own fences and setting our own affairs in order in the Synodical Conference. We received little cooperation and now we wonder whether it is not too late.

May the guidance of the Holy Spirit be ours in rich measure.
Sincerely yours,

Addenda-7

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

210 NORTH BROADWAY • SAINT LOUIS 2, MISSOURI

TELEPHONE: CHESTNUT 8001

OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT

September 23, 1953

The Rev. Oscar J. Naumann
727 Margaret Street
St. Paul 6, Minnesota

Dear President Naumann:

Your letter under date of September 18 was duly received.

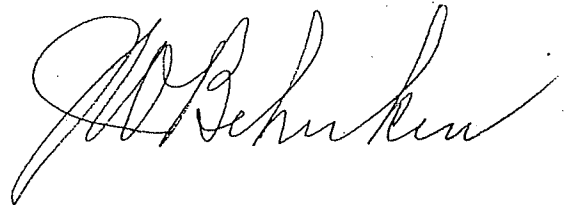
I want to thank you for your statement "We shall welcome you to our convention in Milwaukee next month and shall grant you the floor in proper order."

Let me assure you that we shall certainly try to comply with your direction and when we desire to speak shall seek the "floor in proper order."

Your statement "I do, however, think it is a bit late" and again toward the close, "And now we wonder whether it is not too late" do not express much hope that any discussion may be fruitful and beneficial. Personally, I do not feel thus. I am rather inclined to believe that when all facts are weighed and considered God Himself will point out the way for us. Certainly we do not want the Synodical Conference to be torn to pieces, but on the basis of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions we desire the Synodical Conference to continue.

With cordial personal greetings,

Fraternally yours,



JWB:HB

THE REV. J. W. BEHNKEN, D. D.
PRESIDENT

THE REV. H. HARMS, D. D.
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

THE REV. W. F. LICHTSINN, D. D.
THIRD VICE-PRESIDENT

THE REV. M. F. KRETZMANN, D. D.
SECRETARY

THE REV. F. A. HERTWIG, D. D.
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

THE REV. A. H. GRUMM, D. D.
FOURTH VICE-PRESIDENT

W. H. SCHLUETER, LL.D.
TREASURER

Addenda - 8

November 10, 1953

Dr. J. W. Behnken, President
The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
210 No. Broadway
St. Louis 2, Missouri

Dear Dr. Behnken:

Your letter of October 28 in regard to Dr. Schuh's offer is at hand.

Dr. Schuh offers to aid you and your Synod in any way possible in the present trials that the Synodical Conference is undergoing, "even to having a meeting of our (ALC) committee and a similar committee of the Wisconsin Synod."

That Dr. Schuh is sincere and that we respect him as a gentleman who is willing to be of assistance wherever his services might be of value, need not be stated at length.

But that Dr. Schuh as head of a church body, which is committed to the principle that complete agreement is not needed for fellowship between church bodies, should be of assistance to two synods whose fellowship has always been based upon complete agreement is inconceivable. He could with the principles of fellowship to which he and his synod are committed at best try to persuade us that the matters which have shaken our fellowship in the Synodical Conference to the very foundations are not divisive, that they are at best differences of opinion or of application, but that they are not of a fundamental and doctrinal nature.

Dr. Schuh could be of great service to your Synod and ours as well as to his own by persuading them to reconsider and rescind the false principles of fellowship expressed in the Sandusky Resolutions and in the Friendly Invitation. Then we would have a common ground upon which we could begin to discuss differences with a view toward establishing unity and fellowship. That we are willing to carry on discussions we have stated in 1939 already and reaffirmed in 1949, Proceedings page 1b5, Point 1, b. We still stand ready to carry out that offer.

Sincerely yours,

Oscar J. Neumann

Addend-9

January 25, 1954

Dr. John W. Behnken
President, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
210 North Broadway
St. Louis 2, Missouri

Dear Dr. Behnken:

In the minutes of the Friday morning sessions of our Presidents' Meeting January 15th at Milwaukee, the following resolution is to be found: "The motion prevails that the earnest request of the representatives for a continuation of this meeting, in view of the fact that the business of the meeting has not been completed, be referred to the respective presidents for action". A number of our men are of the opinion that we should meet to complete the work assigned to us before Lent which begins March 3rd. The representatives of the Missouri Synod have promised us copies of papers to be prepared on the subjects that we assigned for the original meeting January 12th to 15th. I feel that we should have those copies in our hands before the next meeting to continue our discussions.

Furthermore, I believe we should have a definite statement from you as to your reaction or the reaction of your Praesidium to the following statement of Dr. Henry Schuh, President of the American Lutheran Church. I quote two paragraphs of a news release taken from the St. Paul Pioneer Press of Thursday, January 14, 1954:

"Dr. Henry Schuh, Columbus, Ohio, president of the American Lutheran church, Thursday gave full indorsement to the proposed merger of four Lutheran bodies.

"Speaking at a meeting of the 13th biennial convention of the Brotherhood of the Evangelical Lutheran church and the ELC Pastor's Midwinter convocation, Dr. Schuh said differences remaining to be ironed out have nothing to do with doctrine and practice but with technical and legal problems."

I believe this shows that our position has been correct all along that the American Lutheran Church does not understand the Common Confession as does the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and that the

Dr. John W. Behnken
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January 25, 1954

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adoption of the Common Confession on the part of the ALC was but a step in the direction of its appointed goal, union of as many Lutheran bodies as possible, even though this must be achieved without doctrinal agreement. I believe the time has never been more ripe for a statement from the Praesidium of the Missouri Synod that negotiations with the ALC are being suspended because of the doctrinal agreement between the ALC and other Lutheran bodies with which the Missouri Synod is by no means in agreement. Such a statement from your body would also tend to encourage the members of our Synod to believe that all hope is not lost for our continued fellowship with your church body in the Synodical Conference.

I would suggest the week of February 21st, possibly the 23rd to the 26th, Tuesday to Friday, for our next meeting. I would also suggest, if it meets with your approval, that we continue our meeting where it was begun--at the Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee. Awaiting your reply, I am

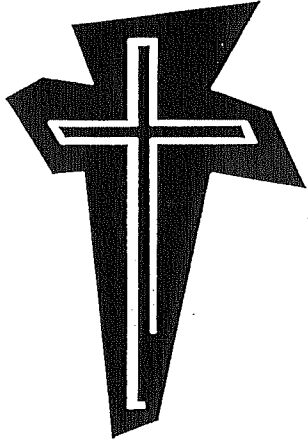
Very sincerely yours,

Oscar J. Naumann
President, The Ev. Lutheran Joint
Synod of Wisconsin and Other States

OJN:lk

Addenda-10

Apostles Lutheran Church and School



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December 5, 1978

President Oscar Naumann
3512 W. North Ave.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Dear President Naumann,

Some years back, when my father's congregation celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry (most of it, you know, in one congregation), I was unable to attend because of distance. So I sent a letter and in that letter included a quote from a book entitled, "The Care of Souls," by John Watson: "Ten miles away people did not know his name, but his own congregation regarded no other."

Upon your 25th anniversary as president of our synod, that quote came to my mind again. People around the world know your name, connected as you are with a synod that almost singlehandedly is championing conservative Lutheranism. But that has never been your concern--to be known and praised by men. I would imagine that Hermann Otten's suggestion that you be given an honorary doctorate embarrassed rather than pleased you. The Lord by His grace has truly kept you as Pastor Naumann, called to shepherd the large flock of our synod.

It is truly an amazing gift of God that your high office has not led you to become proud or distant. Your concern has been to be a faithful shepherd. And by the mercy of God that is what you have been. Your "own congregation," our WELS, thanks God for giving us a humble shepherd like you.

Your brother in Christ,

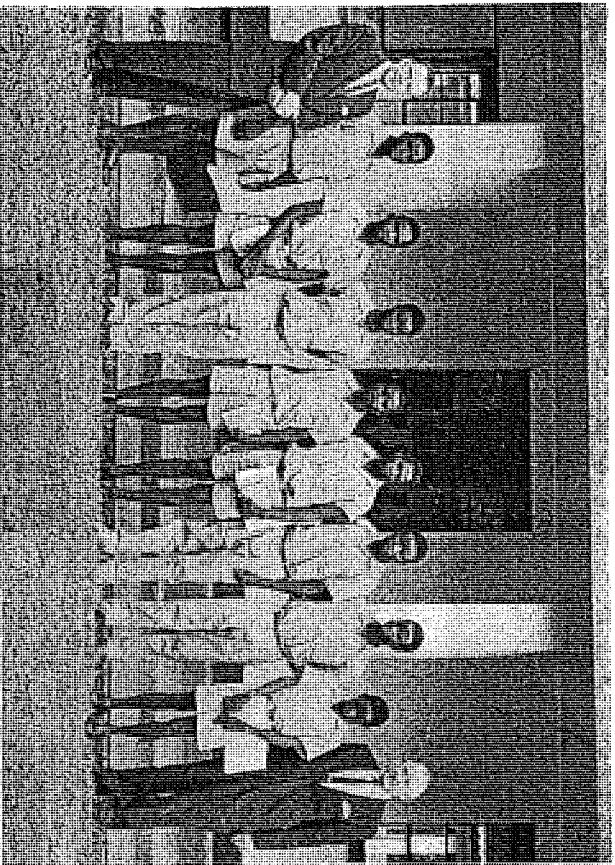
David Valleskey

DJV/jv

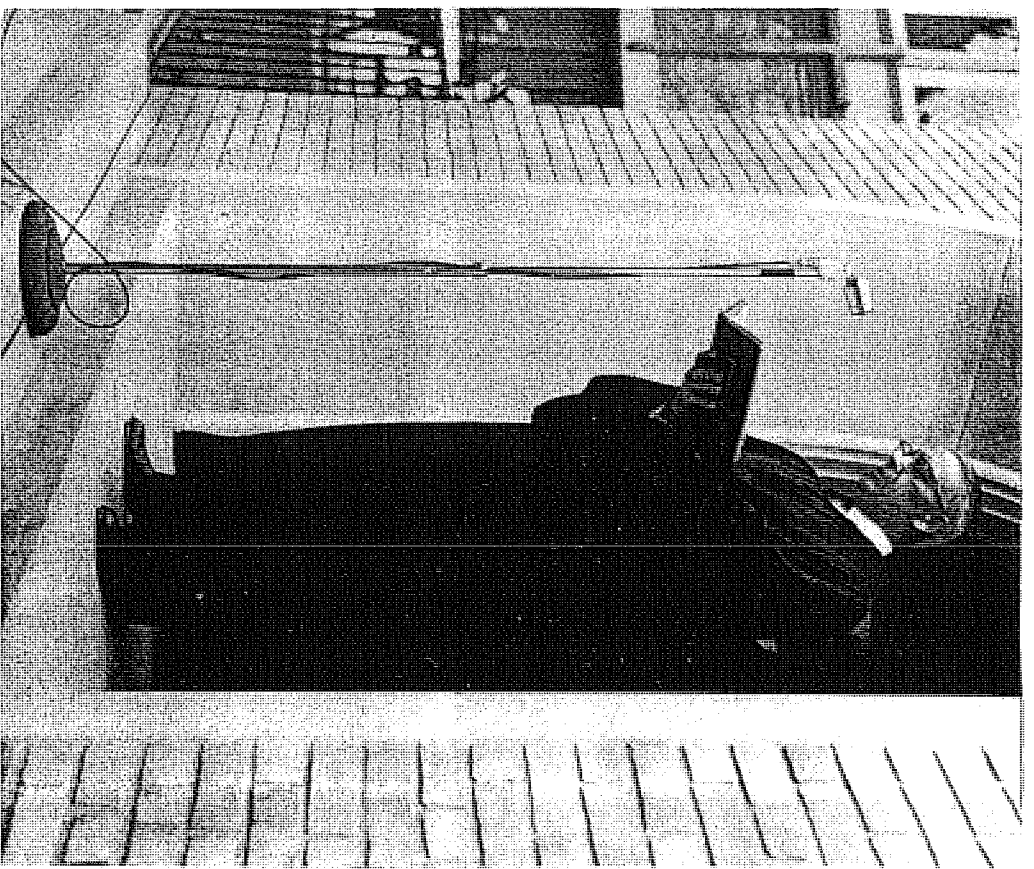
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Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Mequon, Wisconsin



With Benjamin Chindongo at the
Medical Dispensary at Lumano



With the instruction class at Munal
Secondary School just outside Lusaka



"IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY
GHOST" — The Synod President, Pastor Oscar Naumann, reads the rite through
which the new addition is dedicated to the service of God and His Gospel.