

**How the Military Chaplaincy Led the Missouri Synod into Unionism
and
Thus was a Major Factor in Her Downfall**

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In 1961 the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod terminated fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. The long standing unity of the two church bodies had been disintegrating for more than twenty years. There were several interlocking reasons for the break in fellowship. Basically, Missouri simply failed to exercise doctrinal discipline. But one development had more of a profound affect on the Missouri Synod than many realize. That development was Missouri's involvement in the military chaplaincy.

In this paper I intend to show how Missouri's involvement in the military chaplaincy led the Synod into unionism and thus was a major contributing factor in her downfall.

Prior to the 1930's there was no military chaplaincy problem in either the Missouri or Wisconsin Synod. Both synods made use of a camp pastor system -- a system similar to the civilian chaplaincy now employed by the Wisconsin Synod. The pastors were called, salaried and placed by the synods, not by the government.

In the 1920's the Missouri Synod took a strong stand against the military chaplaincy. They clearly saw the scriptural principles which the chaplaincy violated. Prof Dau points out the violation of the separation of church and state and the doctrine of the church and ministry.

It is no part of the government's business to provide religion for its employees. That is the business of the churches and should be embraced in the various mission endeavors of the churches. The government, however, by its regulations, blocks the way of the churches to their own people in the army and the navy. Any church in this country can do mission-work anywhere after its own method, except in the United States Army and Navy; for the army and navy chaplain is an officer of the State and as such amendable to the authorities of the State. Where is there covering for such practise in our Constitution? (TM vol 5, 1925, p. 52)

In commenting on a news item involving the military chaplaincy, Prof. Mueller made these remarks:

None, however, pointed out the real reason why the chaplaincy business might be regarded as an unholy alliance. Put into plain words, the objection would read: What right has the State to appoint preachers for its soldiers? (TM vol 5, 1925, p. 78)

The 1927 Concordia Cyclopedia said that features of the military chaplaincy had "become a positive nuisance." (p. 125)

Yet by the middle 30's there was an evident shift in the thinking of the Missouri Synod. The Atlantic District of the Missouri Synod assembled at Albany, New York, in June 1934, drafted a memorial to the Synod to set up an Army and Navy Commission to recommend men to the United States Government for service as military chaplains. The South San Joaquin Valley Pastoral Conference of the California and Nevada District submitted a similar memorial.

In May of 1935 the American Lutheran reported an official request sent by the Government to the Missouri Synod for chaplains. (Vol XVIII, #5, May 1935, p. 10). This was perhaps the first official overture to the Missouri Synod from the government.

The 1935 convention of the Missouri Synod resolved to look into the possibility of participating in the chaplaincy program.

Report of Committee 8: --

We have been warned, on the one hand of the difficulties attaching to this service, and, on the other hand, we have been assured by brethren that our principles will be honored by the government.

Resolved that the President at once appoint a committee which is to verify the assurances given us; and if the findings of this committee are favorable, the President and the Vice-Presidents shall forthwith appoint an Army and Navy Board for our Synod, such as Army regulations require. This board is to consist of five men who will make sure that the men appointed for service will uphold the high principles of our Church.

Action of Synod. This resolution was adopted.
(Proceedings - 36th Convention of Missouri, p. 133-134)

It is interesting to note that no mention is made of the Scriptural principles which the military chaplaincy violated. There is a caution that

Missouri's principles might be compromised in the chaplaincy program. But there is no mention of Missouri's former position that the military chaplaincy involved a violation of the doctrine of the church and ministry and the separation of church and state.

By the time of the 1938 Missouri convention, the Army and Navy Commission for chaplains was in operation. Missouri already had 2 Army chaplains, 2 Navy chaplains, 4 chaplains in CCC Camps, 1 in the Coast Guard and 26 in the Army Reserve.

The 1938 convention adopted the Army and Navy Commission's General rules, Regulations for Chaplains, Regulations for Commission and Duties of the Commission. Section C - Regulations for Commission, pt. 5 stated: "The Commission will endorse only such applicants as will not violate the principles of separation of Church and State nor be involved in unionistic practises." (Proceedings - 37th Convention of Missouri, p. 160)

It was really a contradiction to adopt this regulation. For the military chaplaincy by its very nature was unionistic. The Government appointed chaplains and assigned them to a particular camp, squad or outfit as the pastor for that group of men. He was responsible for the religious care of all the men in that group, regardless of their denomination. That is expressly stated in Circular letter #266, dated 1/15/43, by Wm. R. Arnold Chief of Chaplains, Office of the Chief of the Chaplains - Washington, D.C.

The work of the chaplain is very much the same as that of a pastor of a church with the exception that he is responsible for the religious care of all the men, regardless of denomination, instead of the men of a particular faith. The Protestant chaplain arranges for worship services for Catholic and Jewish men; Catholic and Jewish chaplains do the same for men not of their faiths. Where chaplains of the following major faiths are present, Catholic chaplains hold services for Catholic men, Protestant chaplains for Protestant men, and Jewish chaplains for Jewish men. Specific activities of chaplains include public worship, instruction, training, various types of daily or midweek services, pastoral

duties, conferences, and visitation of men sick in the hospital or confined for infringement of regulations. As a member of the staff of the commanding officer, he also makes recommendations and reports relative to the moral and religious welfare of the command. (Exerpts from page 2, 1st paragraph)

When a soldier is assigned to a permanent unit, the chaplain without favoritism because of national origin or religious denomination becomes his pastor, his confidant, and his friend. Freed by regulations from assignments that take his time away from religious ministry, the chaplain distributes Testaments, advises on personal problems, gives religious counsel, and holds worship services. He is always welcome in the officer's quarters, the hospital ward, and the guardhouse. He accompanies his men on maneuvers and ministers to them on the field of battle as well as off. (Excerpt from page 4, 1st paragraph)

The military chaplain was required to ~~to~~ conduct worship services for the command to which he was assigned. Generally he was to conduct two services -- one for the members of his own denomination, the other for all of the other men of the command. A unionistic service! The Government appointed the chaplain to conduct a religious service for all the men regardless of denomination -- this is unionism even though the chaplain had complete control over the conduct of the service. Missouri's chaplains were placed into compromising situations regarding burial practises, especially in combat zones.

43^c Chaplains are expected to conduct services for the benefit of the commands to which they are assigned and to hold religious services at the burial of officers and others who are the members of or are associated with the military service. It is, moreover, demanded that the chaplain shall diligently perform these sacred offices with the same dignity and reverence as are required by the canons of his church in civil life. A chaplain on duty should hold divine services at least once each Sabbath, except in case of exigency which would prevent, and such services, by announcement, should be for the personnel of the entire command. In other words, the regulations require that an opportunity be afforded to all the members of the command to attend religious services on Sunday. Custom and conscience demand of the chaplain more than the mere legal and military requirement. It is usual what the chaplain's denominational allegiance may be. Such services as are required by the tenets of his church normally come first, and second, such additional services of a general character as may be calculated to instruct, to give inspirational incentive,

to improve the moral standards of the worshippers, and tend to inculcate in all a reverence for God and truth. (Training Manual 2270-5, Section V)

The chaplain was to avoid a narrow sectarian spirit. In other words, he was to avoid any kind of doctrinal controversy or dogmatical stand that might offend men in the command.

43, d. Three important thoughts should pervade all religious work in the post of the army:

1) The good taste, devotion, and enthusiasm of the chaplain must be depended upon to make the place of worship and service attractive.

2) Many soldiers have come into the Army from devout homes and churches, but others have never had this privilege, hence the necessity that the appeal be made in a manner calculated to reach all.

3) The chaplain is the servant of God for all, and no narrow sectarian spirit should color his utterances, nor should his personal work assist only a special group. (Training Manual 2270-5, Section V)

Although the Government did try to safeguard the convictions and principles of the chaplains through many regulations, nevertheless they hindered the purpose of those safeguards by setting up conflicting regulations. This was pointed out by Wisconsin Synod representatives during the years of controversy.

At this point it may be well to state that we are aware and appreciative of the numerous statements in the regulations that permit and, in fact, require chaplains to abide by their convictions and the rules of their denominations. "No chaplain is required to conduct any service or rite contrary to the regulations of his denomination" (Manual, p.3) is just one of many similar stipulations. Concerning them the Wisconsin Synod Committee Report of 1951 says: "The strenuous efforts of the military in protecting the consciences and convictions of the individual chaplains are commendable, noteworthy and, in view of the normal rigidity of military regulations, remarkable." (Wisconsin Proceedings, 1951, p. 69) But when the vex regulations which contain these safeguards stipulate duties which conflict with cherished convictions and Scriptural practices, then one would scarcely have the right to accept appointment with the reservation that convictions are safeguarded. Then the honorable course would be, on the basis of the guarantees, to have all such objectionable duties eliminated from the assignment before accepting it. (Pastor Edward C. Frederick, The Military Chaplaincy and Scouting, 1954)

Even with the safeguards and governmental assurances that the chaplains would not have to do anything contrary to their consciences, nevertheless the chaplaincy in practice breathed an air of unionism. This was especially true during the war. Prof. Reim noted this in a news comment which appeared in the Quarterly in 1945.

RELIGION ON THE BATTLEFIELD. -- SECTARIAN LINES VANISH AS PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC, AND JEWISH CHAPLAINS HOLD SERVICES FOR MEN AND WOMEN OF ALL FAITHS IN MIDST OF WAR.

Under this headline and subtitle an Associated Press Feature Article appeared in the Milwaukee Journal, from which we glean the following, with occasional emphasis by this editor.

"A new trend in religion is emerging amid the stresses of wartime: a trend toward church unity and eradication of sectarian lines.

"It is evident at home, even more so on the battlefields. Chaplains have found that, without sacrifice of principle, they can work with clergymen not only of other denominations but of other faiths. The effect of such unity of effort has not been lost upon the men. . .

Perhaps the chief influence for the future is the close association of the war chaplains. . .

The young men who now form the bulk of the chaplaincy will be coming to the front in church life 15 to 20 years hence. They are growing very impatient of the denominational trammels in which they formerly lived and worked. . .

It will be a tragedy for the churches if 11 or 12 million returning men fail to find the equivalent of what they found out here. . .

He (the serviceman) wants a broader religion. (WLQ vol 42, p.204)

It was reported that in the war zones denominational lines were frequently crossed. Even if individual Missouri chaplains did not participate, they were exposed to that spirit of false unity and the downplaying of doctrinal differences.

Rabbis, priests and Protestant clergymen frequently pinch hit for one another in the army chaplain corps, the war department disclosed Saturday night. If a rabbi isn't handy when Jewish service is indicated, a priest will carry on. If a priest is lacking for a Catholic service, a Protestant will preside. Interdenominational harmony was the main theme of a recent report made to the war department by Rabbi Jacob Rothschild of Pittsburgh after 19 months' duty in the south Pacific. "I believe I was the first Jewish chaplain assigned to the south Pacific theater," Rothschild said, "but I never visited a unit there where a Jewish service had not been held before my arrival. (The Milwaukee Journal, Feb. 13, 1944)

Out here, religion does not follow established patterns. Ministers, priests and rabbis preach from the same altars. There is great unity of purpose. Whatever the differences there may be at home, the churches must maintain the spirit of this unity. I believe this unity can be continued without sacrificing a single worthy loyalty. But that's a job for the home church. It will be a tragedy for the churches if 11 or 12 million returning men fail to find the equivalent of what they found out here. (The Milwaukee Journal, Aug. 19, 1944)

It is not surprising then that there were also Missouri Synod Chaplains caught up in the spirit of cooperation that pervaded the armed forces and that they participated in unionistic practices.

An article in the Lutheran Witness in 1941 maintained that Missouri's Chaplains were upholding their Synod's confession and practice.

The prophets of dire doom who have been forecasting the collapse of professionalism in our circles would have been disappointed had they attended the conference. The chaplains did not need to be exhorted to give their Lutheranism distinct expression; as experience after experience was recounted by chaplains on duty, it was plain that it is not only possible for a chaplain to be uncompromisingly Lutheran, but that our chaplains have been and are unwaveringly loyal to our Church's confessional doctrines and Scriptural practices. (Lutheran Witness, Feb. 14, 1941, p. 56)

Yet despite the glowing report of 1941, reports of unionistic practices of individual chaplains were also made. The Lutheran Standard printed this report of one of their ALC chaplains in 1945.

This is not the end of the story. My orders stated to proceed also to APO so and so for the purpose of attending a chaplains' conference. Again I ^{was delayed but} arrived just in time to take part in a Lutheran Communion service. Here I was deeply impressed by the fact that in far-away Assam a missionary from Madras, a former Buffalo Synod brother, a Missouri Synod chaplain, two Lutheran enlisted men, and I, American Lutheran, could kneel side by side to receive the Lord's Supper. (Lutheran Standard, June 23, 1945, p. 5)

An unidentified clipping in the WLS Library vertical file reports that Chaplain Martin L. Scharlemann, on duty with the American forces in Italy, was also serving a Waldensian congregation in that country.

The military chaplaincy also led the Missouri Synod into cooperation with the National Lutheran Council. According to Missouri officials, this

merel involved a "cooperation in externals". This cooperation was to be limited to physical relief programs, service centers and work among the men in the armed forces. The first contact between Missouri and the National Lutheran Council was officially made on January 20, 1941, in Columbus, Ohio. The Lutheran historian Clifford Nelson saw the meeting as accomplishing a minor breach in the wall of the Missouri Synod.

Despite Behnken's backing into contact with fellow Lutherans, the Columbus Conference accomplished a minor breach in the wall of the Missouri Synod. This was seen in three ways: (1) The meeting marked the first time in history that the Missouri Synod had joined in prayer with National Lutheran Council Lutherans; (2) it revealed that the Missouri Synod was open to coordinating efforts in support of orphaned missions; and (3) it prepared the way for dovetailing council and Missouri work among Lutherans in the armed forces, especially in locating service centers. But at the same time it revealed Missouri's traditional caution: "spiritual welfare work in the interest of members of the Missouri Synod" would be done by Missouri pastors. As Wentz says, formal agreements with Missouri were little changed from the World War I pattern, but a more cooperative spirit was in evidence. Before the war was over the Missouri Synod did make contributions to Lutheran World Action and signed a formal agreement with the National Lutheran Council to establish a common Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War. (Clifford Nelson, The Lutherans in North America, Fortress Press, 1975. p. 478)

The Columbus Conference led to an agreement between the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council. The text of the agreement appeared in the Lutheran Companion, April 24, 1941. It was quoted in the WLQ vol. 38, 1941, p. 303-304.

- A. That it be the general policy that only one Lutheran Center be built wherever necessary.
- B. That the Administrative Committee of the Service Men's Division of the National Lutheran Council, and the Army and Navy Commission of the Missouri Synod determine in consultation with each other, in the vicinity of which camp the one or the other church group will build and maintain a Lutheran Center, in order to avoid duplication.
- C. That in all cases where the one group establishes a Center, the other group will contribute an agreed sum toward the maintenance of the Center.
- D. That the Army and Navy Commission of the Missouri Synod and

the Service Men's Division of the National Lutheran Council instruct directors and staff members in charge of Lutheran Centers to respect the confessional position of the Missouri Synod and of the National Lutheran Council bodies.

E. That the spiritual welfare work in the interest of members of the Missouri Synod be done by pastors of the Missouri Synod, and that the spiritual welfare work in the interest of the members of the National Lutheran Council be done by pastors of the National Lutheran Council.

To this the Lutheran Companion editorially adds the following comment. (Emphasis throughout is mine, except in one case. M.)

It may be noted that this is the first (Italics by Luth, Comp. -- M) working agreement ever reached between the Missouri Synod and an organization which represents practically all other Lutherans in America. In fact, it affects all of the Lutheran groups who were represented at the Coloumbus Conference, totaling approximately 4,600,000 members. Truly this achievement marks a notable milestone in the history of American Lutheranism. (WLQ vol. 38, 1941, p. 303-304)

In January of 1951 this "cooperation in externals" was extended to spiritual services. The full text of the agreement reached between the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council was reproduced in the WLQ.

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

1. This agreement is made with eagerness to render our full duty to our country in a time of great emergency, to our Church in a time of severe testing, and to those members of our respective church organizations who in these perilous times more than ever need the consolation, guidance, and assistance of the church of their faith, and the Savior of their souls; and is drawn in full recognition of the position, rights, doctrinal expressions of each of the parties to the agreement.
2. The parties agree to cooperative conduct of service to Lutherans and others in the armed forces.
3. This service shall be concerned principally with a spiritual ministry, with major emphasis upon the preaching of the Word and the administering of the sacraments, and on personal contact and counseling; and with the largest possible use of existing congregational facilities.
4. In this service, all those cooperating shall respect the confessional position of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod and/or the National Lutheran Council churches.
5. As far as possible in each local situation, the spiritual welfare work in the interest of members of the Lutheran Church --

Missouri Synod; and the spiritual welfare work in the interest of the members of the National Lutheran Council churches shall be done by chaplains and pastors of the churches of the National Lutheran Council.

ADMISSION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

6. In the matter of admission to the Lord's Supper, the rule shall be recognized by representatives of both groups: the normal procedure shall be that members of each group attend the Communion Services conducted by the representatives of that particular group.
7. Just as in our civilian church life, there are exceptions to the usual procedure in the administration of the Lord's Supper, thus exceptional cases arise in dealing with the men and women in the armed forces.
8. In exceptional situations, where a member of one group earnestly seeks admission to the Lord's Supper conducted by a representative of the other group, the individual case in each instance will be considered by the pastor concerned. It is agreed that in such cases particular synodical membership of a Lutheran in the armed forces shall not be a required condition for admission to the Lord's Supper.
9. It is agreed that the chaplain or pastor may commune such men and women in the armed forces as are conscious of the need of Repentance and hold the Essence of Faith, including the doctrines of the real presence and of the Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace, and profess acceptance thereof.
10. Chaplains and pastors are encouraged, furthermore, to insert regular notices in bulletins, etc. announcing the celebrations of the Lord's Supper which are scheduled by the representatives of both the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, thus adhering to the principles set forth in the above paragraphs, and avoiding multiplication of exceptional cases.
11. In the administration of the Lord's Supper, chaplains and pastors are encouraged in all cases to take a sympathetic and evangelical attitude toward the men and women in the armed forces. Washington, D.C. January 5, 1951 (WLQ vol. 48, 1951, p. 142-143)

This agreement, unfortunately, was able to be understood in different ways by different people. It never really defines what an exceptional case really is. Point #9, while hitting fundamental points of agreement between the various Lutheran Churches, ignores the doctrinal issues which separated those churches. Since joint participation in the Lord's Supper is an act of fellowship, this agreement opened the way for more unionistic practices on the part of individual chaplains. In his introduction to the

text of the agreement as it appeared in the Quarterly, Prof. Reim pointed out that at least some religious leaders in the various Lutheran Church bodies saw the agreement as removing some of the former barriers to fellowship.

ANOTHER "AGREEMENT": COMMUNION. -- When it was reported recently that representatives of the National Lutheran Council and of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod had reached an agreement according to which their respective members in the military service are to be received for communion regardless of their synodical membership, and when this agreement was subsequently ratified by the Praesidium of the Missouri Synod, it was immediately clear that this was a step of far-reaching importance.

Religious News Service quoted Dr. Rees Edgar Tullos of Springfield, Ohio, one of the authors of the agreement, as saying, "We wanted one idea in there -- and it's there. That is that no one seeking to partake of the Lord's Supper shall be denied it because of his synodical connections." A similar note of exultation may be noted in The Lutheran (ULCA): "It has been traditional among Missouri Synod churches not to administer communion to members of National Lutheran Council Churches. The tradition is disregarded by some Missouri Synod pastors, but strictly enforced by others." To which the editor adds his significant comment: "The new agreement drives a wedge under the old wall of separation." The Lutheran, February 14, 1951. (WIQ vol 48, 1951, p. 141-142)

Even before this agreement in 1951, there was cooperation involving unionistic practices between the chaplains of the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council. The March 8, 1949 Lutheran Witness reported a second pastoral conference was held at the Swedish Lutheran Church in London on January 25 & 26. The article was printed under the headline -- BUILDING A NEW LUTHERANISM IN GREAT BRITAIN. Meditations were presented and devotions held by representatives of the German Luth. Church, the Polish Luth. Church, the Latvian Luth. Church and the Estonian Luth. Church. The conference was sponsored jointly by the Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council and the reporter made this observation concerning it:

The most noticeable aspect of the conference was the spirit of unity which pervaded all the sessions. As problems were brought up, solutions were presented from the Lutheran point of view. Not Lutheran as a political organization, but Lutheran as a spiritual force taking its power from an intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ. (Lutheran Witness, March 8, 1949, p. 76)

As early as 1944, the Wisconsin Synod protested actions which went beyond "cooperation in externals." The Proceedings of the 28th convention of the Synodical Conference contains a letter from President Brenner of the Wisconsin Synod concerning these matters.

We feel constrained to state at this time that we have been seriously perturbed by numerous instances of an anticipation of a union not yet existing, or, as it has been put, not yet declared, which in our opinion is in conflict with the above agreement and contrary to the best interests of the Synodical Conference.

It will suffice to adduce only a few:

Co-operation with the National Lutheran Council in the work among the prisoners of war; participation with others in the dedication of service centers, Washington and others.

Attendance at conferences of professors of theology and membership in committees that clearly did not concern themselves merely with externals, but whose deliberations, planning, and work dealt with doctrine and the things of Christian life (Lutheran Committee on Scouting). (Proceedings of the 28th Convention of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference of North America, 1944, p. 102)

Reports of unionistic activities by chaplains of the Missouri Synod with representatives of the National Lutheran Council continued in the 50's.

Twenty-five Lutheran Army and Air Force Chaplains and civilian pastors from the United States gathered for a semi-annual retreat in the Bavarian mountain resort of Garmisch-Partenkirchen on November 6 and 7. The group consisted of pastors from the member bodies of the National Lutheran Council and from the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod. Those present were Lutheran pastors from the United States who are now in the employ of the Lutheran World Federation, and U.S. chaplains serving in Germany and adjacent countries. The meeting took place in the beautiful army chapel at the foot of the Bavarian mountains. A communion service was conducted by Col. Martin Poch (Mo. Synod), chief of air force chaplains in Europe. (WLQ vol. 49, 1959 p. 61-62)

It isn't surprising that the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod declared fellowship with the American Lutheran Church in 1969. For fellowship had been practised by Missouri Synod chaplains with representatives various other Lutheran bodies for over 20 years. Some isolated instances were even reported in Missouri Synod periodicals without any note of condemnation.

Three former chaplains (Piepkorn, Scharlemann & Coiner) received positions on the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Prof. Scharlemann had served a Waldensian congregation during his service as a chaplain and, no doubt, brought his unionistic spirit with him to the Seminary. One can only conjecture what influence these men exerted on numbers of St. Louis graduates.

During World War II, 253 Missouri Synod pastors served duty as chaplains. The majority of those men returned to the Missouri Synod pastorate in the years following the war. They brought with them attitudes which had been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the spirit of the "armed forces religion". The lack of emphasis on doctrine and confession, and the emphasis of unity and the break down of denominational barriers influenced them in ways which would be hard to measure. Not a few had become involved in practices which were clearly unionistic.

On the grass roots level, large numbers of Missouri Synod boys in the armed forces were exposed to the unionistic practices and the de-emphasis on doctrine which was characteristic of the military chaplaincy. Having become accustomed to seeing their own Missouri Synod chaplains involved in questionable activities, they would not be shocked by those practices in civilian life.

Historically, the most easily documented involvement in unionism caused by Missouri's participation in the military chaplaincy was the contact with the National Lutheran Council -- contact which the military chaplaincy really occasioned. For this contact was made to coordinate activities directly associated with the chaplaincy. This involvement led from "cooperation in externals" to "joint prayer" to participation in joint worship services and an agreement to serve communion to members of churches not in fellowship with Missouri. It also brought about closer contact and working agreements

between the officials and theological professors of the Missouri Synod and those of the other major Lutheran Churches.

As was stated before, the Denver convention in 1969 only recognized and made official what had been practised for years.

How did Missouri get involved in the military chaplaincy and the unionism connected with it? It's hard to give a definite answer. There was the concern in the country over world affairs and the threat of war in the mid 30's. Perhaps there was a desire in the Missouri Synod to cooperate with the government in order to overcome a reputation of being a "German church." Certainly, Missouri's leaders were deceived by assurances that the government would respect and protect the confessional position of their chaplains. Missourians saw the great number of their boys in the armed forces whom they would not be able to serve without the chaplaincy. They saw great mission potential in the institution of the chaplaincy. -- All these things were undoubtedly underlying causes.

Yet the fact remains that the Missouri Synod ignored its former doctrinal position. Missouri's leaders ignored the fact that they had once seen the chaplaincy as a violation of the principle of the separation of church and state and the doctrine of the church and ministry. They ignored the fact that the chaplaincy is unionistic by its very nature.

Once they began to ignore Scriptural principles, the door was opened for more involvement in unionism and further doctrinal aberrations. In the 40's and the 50's the leaders of the Missouri Synod never really defended their position on the chaplaincy on the basis of the Scriptures, but on emotional appeal.

There is a warning for all confessional Lutherans in the Missouri Synod's experience with the chaplaincy. Beware of the emotional appeal of the tremendous opportunities for mission work when those opportunities

involve the ignoring of Scriptural principles. Beware of beginnings which seem innocent yet have the potential for developing into problems -- problems which finally become uncontrollable. Resist the beginnings of questionable practices. Never rush into anything without determining what Scriptural principles apply to the matter.

The Wisconsin Synod is often criticized for being slow to change. Yet I hope that our Synod always keeps the policy of stepping back and taking a good, long look before entering into anything new. That is how our Synod handled the problem of the military chaplaincy. Missouri should not have been quite so hasty. Hasty action often brings disastrous results in the long run.

I hope that we can learn that lesson from Missouri's experience and avoid similar problems in the years to come.