

The American Lutheran Church Today

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In preparing this paper it was assumed that the program committee had in mind an investigation of recent trends in the doctrinal position of the American Lutheran Church, rather than a broader consideration of the life and work of that church body. Information as to what the ALC actually believes and teaches today, it is hoped, may be of some value to members of the conference as they seek to answer questions of their members as to how the ALC differs from our own synod, and when dealing with prospective members coming from the ALC.

Literature

Comments here on the literature used can take the place of a formal bibliography. There is material in abundance on the antecedent bodies of the present ALC. Documentation of the most recent trends is less abundant. Wolf's *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) provides the handiest access to synodical and intersynodical documents. E. Clifford Nelson's *Lutheranism in America: 1914-1970* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) gives a broad view of the developments in all the large Lutheran bodies. A series of theological conferences of theologians representing the ALC, LCA, and LCMS under the aegis of LCUSA was held from 1972 to 1977. This yielded the most useful materials for this study. John Reumann has edited a set of fifteen major essays from these conferences under the title: *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). LCUSA'S Division of Theological Studies issued a booklet entitled: *The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church* (New York: LCUSA Division of Theological Studies, 1978). Some fifteen shorter essays seek to isolate what the three church bodies see as necessary for achieving unity and to spell out more precisely what divides them. Finally, upon the request of the 1979 LCMS convention the joint ALC/LCMS Commission on Fellowship drew up a joint statement that summarizes the issues on which the ALC and LCMS disagree together with quotations of documents from both synods presenting their specific views on the contested subjects. This is entitled: *A Statement of Doctrinal Differences*. (n.p.: n.n., 1980) Copies were mailed to all LCMS pastors by Pres. Preus and offered to all pastors of the ALC.

It is evident that the literature listed gives one an insight only into the current theological position of the ALC theologians. We gain no information concerning the beliefs and attitudes of the "average" pastor or "average" layman in the ALC. On the positive side, what is being taught at a seminary is likely to give a pretty clear indication of the direction a church body is likely to take in the immediate future.

The ALC Yesterday

Before beginning to examine the current position of the ALC it may be useful to remind ourselves that the present ALC traces its history from no less than ten antecedent church bodies that were involved in three splits and five mergers on the way to becoming the present church body. Of these antecedent church bodies the Ohio Synod (1818-1930), the Buffalo Synod (1845-1930), and the Norwegian Synod (1853-1917), could be called strict confessional synods. Two of them belonged to the Synodical Conference until the election controversy. The Iowa Synod (1854-1930) might be described as representing a mediating type of confessionalism, not

speaking out as strongly for agreement in doctrine as a prerequisite for the establishment of fellowship. The Hauge Synod (1846-1917) and the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod (1870-1890) stood for a pietistic type of church life on the pattern developed in Norway by Hans Nielsen Hauge, emphasizing repentance and sanctification, lay preaching, and non-liturgical forms of worship. The Danish Lutheran Church Association (1884-1896) and the Danish Ev. Luth. Church of North America (1894-1896) which united in 1896 to form the United (Danish) Ev. Lutheran Church (1896-1960) represented a similar type of pietistic church life with strong lay participation which had developed in the so-called "Inner-Mission" movement in Denmark. The Norwegian-Danish Augustana Conference (1870-1890) and the Anti-Missourian Bretherhood (1887-1890) held a middle-of-the-road position caring neither for the extremes of Haugean pietism or the confessional strictness of the Norwegian Synod. Through the mergers of 1890, 1896, 1917, 1930, and 1960 Germans, Norwegians, and Danes, representing various shades of confessional orthodoxy, pietism, and mediating positions became one church. Looking at the theologies of the antecedent bodies one might expect with some degree of optimism that the resultant body would be a somewhat conservative church somewhat to the right of center in the spectrum of Lutheran church bodies. What the actual results have been is what this paper is intended to examine.

The ALC and The Historical-Critical Method

If we begin our investigation by examining the ALC constitution we find some rather promising evidence. Article IV (Confession of Faith), Sec. 1 reads:

"The American Lutheran Church accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life." (Wolf, p.532)

The statement is remarkably strong and clear on inerrancy. But a consideration of some remarks by E. Clifford Nelson in this regard will temper our enthusiasm. In a section of the book referred to above, a section entitled, "The Changing Theological Climate," Nelson points out that in the period after World War II Lutheran theologians in America could all be classified either as "old-Lutheran" or "neo-Lutheran." Of the "old-Lutherans" he says:

"They sought to preserve true Lutheranism as it had been interpreted by the classical dogmaticians. They sought to uphold biblical inerrancy and generally to repristiniate orthodoxy." (Nelson, Lutheranism, p. 161-2)

Neo-Lutherans are described in these words:

"(They) sought to relate contemporary theology and the Luther renaissance to American Lutheranism...(and) tried to understand true Lutheranism by the application of new hermeneutical principles to the study of Scripture and by a historical approach to the Lutheran confessions." (op. cit. p. 161-2)

Nelson continues:

"although there were 'new-Lutherans' in most of the National Lutheran Council churches by 1940, the 'old-Lutherans' who formed the American Lutheran Conference on the basis of the Minneapolis Theses continued to hold the upper hand in the negotiations that merged the American Lutheran Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and, later, the Lutheran Free Church into the new American Lutheran Church." (op. cit. p. 162-3)

A bit later Nelson informs us:

“‘Neo-Lutheranism’ began to manifest itself in the United Lutheran seminaries as early as the 20’s. At Augustana Seminary the break with ‘old-Lutheranism’ began in 1931. (At) Luther Theological Seminary (ELC) ...a discernible change appeared about 1947 when some professors began to approach the Scriptures theologically and historically, rather than with the a priori of inerrancy and verbal inspiration. What was a small voice in 1947 became a large sound within a decade. By 1956, when the proposed constitution of the new American Lutheran Church was voted on by the ELC, several, if not most, of its professors of theology were teaching a view of Scripture at variance with the statement on the Bible in the new constitution. That is, while the church administrators sought to uphold ‘old-Lutheranism,’ many college and seminary professors were teaching ‘neo-Lutheranism.’” (op. cit. p. 163-4)

In other words, before the ink had dried on the new constitution it was well on the way to becoming a dead letter. Not surprisingly, opposition soon arose to ‘neo-Lutheranism’ and the introduction of the historical-critical method into the seminaries and colleges. Nelson comments:

“It was evident that a theological ferment of some magnitude had come on the scene ...There was an unfortunate ecclesiastical backlash ...Alarmed ‘defenders of the faith’ in all churches began to form to protest the encroachment of ‘liberalism.’ ...(Soon) publications like the Confessional Lutheran and Lutherans Alert were flinging charges of ‘neo-orthodoxy,’ ‘existentialism,’ ‘heresy,’ and ‘modernism.’” (op. cit. p. 165)

A climax of sorts was reached in the mid 50’s when three ULCA pastors were placed on trial for heresy and one was convicted. Among the charges against the convicted man: he denied the Virgin Birth, the physical resurrection of Christ, the presence of the actual body of Christ in the Sacrament, and the historical authenticity of the miracles. Nelson blames the heresy trials not on the doctrinal deviations of the pastor or on the historical critical method, but on “inadequate or even careless communication of the new understanding of Lutheranism.” (op. cit. p. 165) Old-Lutherans still had some strength even in the ULCA in 1956. But time was not on their side.

In spite of opposition, some of it quite strong, the inroads of “neo-Lutheranism into large Lutheran synods continued unabated. Nelson describes the process:

“After the war numerous pastors and seminary graduates did advanced theological study and research in the graduate schools of America, Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia. Many of these men, who found their way into teaching positions in major colleges and seminaries of the Lutheran churches, had been exposed to contemporary biblical research ...to contemporary theologians... and to the Luther research of the Swedes, Germans, Englishmen, and Americans. One result was that in the course of time students were being exposed to a new brand of Lutheranism that was remarkably similar in all the schools, whether in Chicago, Philadelphia, the Twin Cities, or St. Louis.” (op. cit. p. 165)

Nelson admits that “neo-Lutheran” theology is indebted to neo-orthodoxy and dialectical theology. He notes that it brings a changed conception of the nature of Revelation from one of “the communication of sacred information about God” to the “judging and redemptive action of God, his self-disclosure in history.” Theology no longer is a once-for-all “revealed theology” to be accepted or rejected. Theology had become dynamic and changing.

Such far-ranging changes do not give Nelson and his fellow theologians in the ALC cause for concern, or induce them to examine the fruits of the new theology they had introduced into their church. Nelson is confident:

“It is generally held that the historical-critical approach to the study of the Bible is not only helpful, but a theological necessity if one is to understand the Word of God as being ‘in, with, and under’ the Holy Scriptures. (op. cit. p. 165)

Duane Priebe, Wartburg Seminary systematician sounds the same note

“If theology is to be faithful to a strict commitment to the normative function of Scripture in its literal grammatical-historical sense, then in our day the historical-critical method is not optional, but necessary. (*Function of Doctrine and Theology*, p. 81)

In spite of the fact that this so highly praised method of studying the Bible has led to the denial of many of the central doctrines of Christianity, we hear no words of concern or caution, no warnings against going too far in applying critical approaches and methods. Warren Quanbeck, late Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, sees only good coming from the system:

“The historical-critical study of the Bible, set in motion by the Renaissance and the Reformation, has made great contributions to the understanding of the biblical message. It has underscored and reinforced the teaching of the Reformers at many points, but it has also added new perspectives and insights and, at some points, even corrected the Reformers interpretations. ...New techniques of study, form, tradition, and redaction criticism, for example, have given an ampler understanding of the way the Scriptures have come into being, and it would be foolish to deny ourselves the benefits made available in this way.” (*Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics* p. 182)

Theologians of the ALC today are firmly and fully committed to the use of the historical-critical method.

The ALC on Scriptural Inspiration and Inerrancy

We will move on now to examine how the historical-critical method affects ALC teaching in several specific doctrines. We noted the fine statement in the ALC constitution that the Scriptures, the canonical books of the Old and New Testament are as a whole and in all their parts the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God. We also heard Nelson’s statement that this was the position of the “old-Lutheran” old guard in the church bodies that merged to form the ALC, a position that would soon be altered.

In 1966 Frederik A. Schiotez, first president of the new ALC wrote an essay entitled: “The Church’s Confessional Stand Relative to the Scriptures.” He presented this essay at two district conventions that summer and it was printed for wider distribution by resolution of the ALC Church Council. Schiotez avows his indebtedness to two essays on inspiration by Hermann Sasse. He asserts that the Bible does not explain the *how* of biblical inspiration. He claims that it was the early church fathers who equated inspiration with textual inerrancy. He lists several scripture passages as examples of alleged contradiction and even error in the Bible. He says the church made a mistake in times past in trying to demonstrate that the Bible is a perfect book.

Coming to the ALC constitution he asserts of the statement on inerrancy:

The ALC holds that the inerrancy referred to here does not apply to the text, but to the truths revealed for our faith, doctrine, and life.” (op. cit. p. 7)

To defend this contradiction of the plain sense of the constitution he offers the argument that none of the constitutions of the antecedent churches used the word “inerrancy.” The *United Testimony on Faith and Life*, the document which provided the doctrinal basis for the merger of 1960 calls the Bible “the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christians doctrine and life.” (Wolf, *Documents*, p. 501) We might note in passing that the constitution of

the Synodical Conference did not mention inerrancy either, but that was not proof that the member synods did not teach it. Schiotez quotes the *United Testimony* further: “We reject all rationalizing processes which would explain away either the divine or the human factor, in the Bible.” (op. cit. p. 501) He himself comments: “Any position that turns away from the paradox of a divine-human book our church labels rationalizing.” (Schiotez, *Church’s Confessional Stand*, p. 7) Schiotez assumes that the human element in the writing of Scriptures, of necessity requires that there be errors. Did the Holy Spirit move the writers to produce the alleged errors? Schiotez does not take up the passages that speak of inspiration.

Schiotez rather carefully and gently let his constituency in on the “fact” that the Bible in official ALC view is not inerrant, that only the truths in the Bible are dependably true. Fourteen years later K.E. Christopherson, a professor at Pacific Lutheran University, felt he could be considerably less circumspect and mild in his comments on inerrancy. In an article in *Dialog* (vol. 19, summer, 1980) he, in effect, complains year after year that students and parents still become upset when he seeks to convince them that the Bible does contain errors. He finds fundamentalism, a combination of literalism and inerrantism, a pervading heresy in our American culture. His article gives advice on how to root this “heresy” out among students and the parents and pastors back home.

The ALC and Biblical Authority

Luther and the Lutheran confessions rejected the papal claims to infallibility and the position of highest spiritual authority and court of last resort on all questions of faith and doctrine. Instead they looked to the Scriptures as the highest authority, the last word, God’s Word in all spiritual matters. The ALC constitution upholds the Reformation’s *sola scriptura* principle with the words:

“The American Lutheran Church accepts all the canonical books...as the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.” (Wolf, *Documents* p. 533)

The ALC commissioners on the joint ALC/LCMS Commission on Fellowship altered this to make the Gospel the highest authority:

“Luther and the Lutheran confessions came out clear and strong for the final and exclusive authority of the Gospel. The right and power to determine matters of Christian faith and life is the Gospel as the preached and living Word.” (*A Statement of Doctrinal Differences*, p. 19)

Somewhat later they comment:

“The ALC tends to understand religious and doctrinal authority as something that can only be exercised in a broken human manner. ALC does not believe that such a stance leads to relativism but that it does demand a posture of certain open questions.” (op. cit. p.19)

Herald H. Ditmanson, professor of Religion at St. Olaf College writes in his essay, “Perspectives on the Hermeneutics Debate:”

“If the grace of God manifest in Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority, Christians should not speak of an infallible book, an infallible church, or an infallible experience. ...The interdependence of Bible tradition, and experience ought to caution us against ascribing final authority to any single witness. ...The authority of the Bible is intertwined with other authorities—church, liturgy, conscience, reason. Protestants have been quite clear that the principle of *sola scriptura*, has never actually worked.” (op. cit. p. 101-104)

John Reumann is a member of the LCA and a professor at the LCA seminary in Philadelphia and so, strictly speaking, his comments are not pertinent to our discussion. But a remark of his on this subject catches in a memorable way the actual attitude of the ALC and LCA who do not disagree on this subject:

“*Sola scriptura* may nowadays be punctuated with a question mark, or employed as merely: *prima scriptura*.” (“The Augsburg Confession in the light of Biblical Interpretation,” in *LWF Report*, no. 9, June, 1980, p. 4)

The authority of the Scriptures is being demoted, other authorities are being elevated.

The ALC and Confessional Subscription

We have noted the discrepancy between the ALC constitution’s article on Scripture and the theologians’ actual position. A similar discrepancy may be noted with regard to the article on the Lutheran confessions. The constitution reads:

“As brief and true statements of the doctrines of the Word of God, the Church accepts and confesses the following Symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members, both congregations and individuals:

- 1) The ancient ecumenical Creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian;
- 2) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luthers’s Small Catechism.

(Sec. 3) As further elaboration of and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, the Church also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: ...and recognizes them as normative for its theology.

(Sec. 4) The American Lutheran Church accepts without reservation the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran Church, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and summary of the faith of the evangelical Lutheran Church.” (Wolf, *Documents*, p. 533)

All clergy of the ALC are required to subscribe to the ecumenical creeds, the Augsburg Confession, and Luther’s Small Catechism. Subscription to the confessions has always been understood to mean acceptance of their content and a declaration of one’s conviction that the confessions agree with the doctrines of the Word of God. But Harold H. Ditmanson asserts:

“ALC representatives maintain that exegesis cannot be bound by the Confessions in the sense that its results are already fixed in advance by the doctrinal affirmations of the Confessions. The Confessions can be given that sort of authority only on the assumption that they present an infallibly and exhaustively correct interpretation of Scripture.” (*Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, p. 92,94)

Duane Priebe’s attitude is put into these words:

“The Enlightenment and the subsequent development of historical methodology, coupled with the emergence of historical consciousness in its modern form, have made us much more aware of historical relativity and historical distance. It is no longer possible for many people today to assume that we can preserve any past theology, whether that of the Bible or of the Reformation, by simply repeating formulations. Nor is it possible to identify our theology with that of Scripture or the Reformation in a simple way.” (*Studies in Hermeneutics*, p. 301.)

Wartburg Seminary’s President William Weiblen calls on Lutherans to admit that:

“every single one of our treasured theological formulations is always an expression of our brokenness and separation as well as a declaration that God has redeemed us.” (*The Lutheran Standard*, Feb.6, 1979, p. 22.)

LCMS President Bohlmann, I think points up the weaknesses of the ALC attitudes well when he says:

“We should note the inadequacy of contemporary notions of confessional subscription that regard the Confessions as being only historically correct or treat them only as symbols of a movement, companions in our venture into an unexplored future, or expressions of the ‘spirit’ of Lutheranism. Such postures make confessional subscription a waxen nose. They are also untrue to the very notion of subscription evident in the confessional writings themselves. For confessional subscription, then, as well as now, was a pledge to uphold the doctrinal content of the Confessions, not merely to honor it or to regard it fondly as a position once viable but no longer valid.” (“Confessional Interpretation: Some Basic Principles.” *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, p. 191.)

The ALC and Church Fellowship

The LCUSA theological discussions of the 70’s also dealt with the doctrine of Church Fellowship. All three church bodies accept Article VII of the Augsburg Confession as the basic principle: “For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” (Tappert p. 32). There has, of course been a long standing debate over the extent of the key phrase: *consentire de doctrina evangelii*. The “Synodical Conference” position has understood the phrase *doctrina evangelii* in a broad sense to include all the doctrines of God’s Word. Missouri’s CTCR statement: “Gospel and Scripture” puts it like this:

“Every question about what Scripture says or teaches is already a ‘Gospel question’ simply because it is a question about Scripture given to us by God for the sake of the Gospel.” (p. 414)

Opponents understand “Gospel” in AC VII in a narrow sense described by Warren Quanbeck in this way:

“The majority of ALC theologians would understand this to mean agreement in the actual proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. ...A relatively small group in the ALC would understand this (consensus) to mean agreement in every article of the Christian faith from the pre-existence of the Logos to the second coming, from the doctrine of the Trinity to matters of pastoral practice. ...The majority regard the position of the minority as untenable.” (FODT, p.18)

What now is only a small minority once included the whole Ohio and Norwegian Synods. How the ALC understands the implications of this “narrow view” of the term “Gospel” in AC VII was spelled out by President David Preuss to the 1974 ALC convention:

“The ALC is convinced that basic unity in faith and doctrine is a fact among U.S. Lutherans. We believe that acceptance of the Lutheran Confessions is sufficient witness to that unity in faith and doctrine.” (“Report of the General President,” *Reports and Actions*, p. 778)

The old ULCA was offering to talk merger with the antecedent bodies of the ALC on these same terms ever since its 1920 Washington convention. No questions are to be asked as to how the Confessions are understood or to what extent practice lives up to the teachings of the Confessions.

One reason why ALC theologians no longer are striving for any great degree of doctrinal unity as a condition for the establishment of fellowship is the loss of the concept of the unity of Scripture and scriptural doctrine. Duane Priebe asserts:

“The historical interpretation of Scripture has made it clear that there are more or less diverse, if not contradictory, theologies in the Bible itself. As such, this awareness is not entirely new, but it has been intensified by Ernst Käsemann’s argument that denominational diversity is related to theological diversity within the canon.” (“Theology and Hermeneutics,” *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, p. 307)

If the Bible legitimizes various theological traditions, so will the ALC. The old rule no longer applies: “Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only.” The 1978 convention of the ALC adopted a new “Statement on Communion Practices.” Among its provisions:

“It is the responsibility of our churches to teach clearly this Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s Supper and to witness to it in dealing with other churches. Fulfilling the obligation to the truth in this way makes it possible to express the unity of the church at the Lord’s Table with those who affirm the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament but who use formulations to describe it other than those used in the Lutheran Confessions. Accordingly the *Recommendations for Practice* provide guidelines for admission of others than Lutheran to the Sacrament and considerations for Lutheran participation in intercommunion. Within these provisions the responsibility for decision about communing is placed upon the communicants.” (Sec. V, 2. “A Statement on Communion Practices,” *Report and Actions*, 197u, p. 908)

Again:

“The practice of intercommunion among Lutherans at home and abroad is encouraged. Participation as a visitor in non-Lutheran congregations, proper because of the universal nature of the church, places one in the role of guest. For Lutheran clergy to be involved as presiding or assisting ministers in the celebration of Holy Communion in other churches, a reciprocal relationship between the congregations and clergy involved should prevail. (op. cit. p. 909-910.)

Warren Quanbeck looks beyond a practice of free inter-communion among denominations:

“The differences that exist between the traditions are no longer seen as divisive, but as invitations to a broader and deeper understanding of the meaning of the sacrament. ...Reformed and Lutheran theologians have thus discovered each other within the ample boundaries of the traditional Christian witness to Christ. They can recognize each other as fully Christian and orthodox.” (Warren A. Quanbeck, *Search for Understanding*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972. p. 64,66-68.)

If we ask how it can come about after 400 years of fruitless attempts to settle the doctrinal controversies between Lutherans and Reformed, that such divisions suddenly disappear, here’s a clue from Harold Ditmanson:

“In contrast to the LCMS position, the ALC/LCA representatives deny that the historical-critical method is a direct transcript of the secularistic ideology of the Enlightenment. Hall writes: ‘I find all the various methods of interpretation employed and discussed here to be essentially neutral and their results open to revision.’ Quanbeck refers to the interconfessional character of present day biblical scholarship. The methodological objectivity of exegesis requires that one’s findings and arguments be verifiable by other

scholars as independently as possible of the exegete's own particular convictions. Thus the value of one's work will rest upon one's competence as a scholar. Current exegesis is therefore a cooperative venture and is no longer branded with denominational markings." ("Perspectives on the Hermeneutics Debate," *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, p. 87)

And once the process of obliterating the doctrinal distinctions between the various denominations has been completed is there reason to think that the process of doctrinal deterioration or obliteration will come to a sudden halt? Read Dr. Becker's review of the commentary on Roman's by Roy A. Harrisville. Here, apparently, is a Lutheran (?) theologian who is totally confused about the doctrine of justification.

The ALC Tomorrow

Historically the ALC and its antecedents have occupied a central position among Lutherans in America between the more conservative synods formerly in the Synodical Conference on the right and the more liberal eastern Lutherans on the left. Leaders of the old ALC saw themselves as bridge builders, as uniquely situated and qualified to be a unifying center for a hoped for unified Lutheran church on American soil. In the 1930's the old ALC had no less than three commissions busily working for closer relations and eventual union. One dealt with the ULCA, one with the other members of the American Lutheran Conference and one with the Missouri Synod. Only the second enjoyed success. The first did not fail because the ULCA was unwilling, but because the ALC was trying to get the ULCA to come together in the center. The last 25 years have witnessed major shifts in that old left-middle-right alignment. But not according to the ALC game plan. As has (I hope) been illustrated, the ALC has moved to the left so that today there is no appreciable difference between LCA and ALC, at least at the seminary level.

The late 50's and 60's saw the historical-critical method making itself at home also at 801 DeMun in St. Louis. The dream of a united church body including 95 percent of all Lutherans in the US seemed on the verge of realization. The year 1969 brought a major step forward. The ALC now was in fellowship with both the LCA and the LCMS—but Jack Preus was installed at 500 Broadway. 1974 saw the Seminex walk-out and the voluntary departure from the Concordia campus of all the advocates and practitioners of the historical-critical method. 1981 brought the termination of the ALC/LCMS fellowship and saw LCMS struggling with the task of formulating a biblical doctrine of fellowship that wouldn't tear it apart. The ALC dream has vanished.

And so, despairing of its ideal marriage, ALC moves into the waiting arms of the LCA on LCA terms. Were S. S. Schmucker here, he would be well satisfied, C. P. Krauth, disappointed. Grabau, Loy, Reu, Koren, Schmidt, and Sverdrup? They might very well weep.