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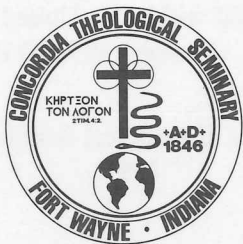
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# **"Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study": A Preliminary Report**

Samuel H. Nafzger

In 1981 the synodical convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod adopted a resolution requesting that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations prepare "practical guidelines . . . to assist the officials, pastors, teachers, congregations, and individuals in the synod, in determining which practices and activities are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved."<sup>1</sup> In response to this assignment, the CTCR developed a five-stage process for the preparation of the requested guidelines: (1.) the development of three case studies posing typical situations in which members of the synod frequently relate to Christians in church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS;<sup>2</sup> (2.) a joint meeting of the CTCR and the Council of Presidents for a pilot discussion of these case studies in the light of the scriptural principles of fellowship as understood by the synod over the years; (3.) discussion of these case studies in district and regional pastors' conferences throughout the synod;<sup>3</sup> (4.) the preparation of a preliminary draft of guidelines for synod-wide study and response to the CTCR; and (5.) the final report of the Commission on Theology presenting practical guidelines for inter-Christian relationships for use by the members of the synod. By means of this process the commission has from the very beginning of its work on this assignment sought to involve the entire synod in this project.

The commission has now completed the first four steps of this process. As it begins work on the last stage of producing the final draft of practical guidelines for inter-Christian relationships, it has decided to share with the synod a summary of the responses which it has received to its preliminary draft, together with a brief review of the nature of the assignment which it has been given, and a listing of the basic presuppositions underlying the commission's approach to this project. The Commission on Theology is grateful to *Concordia Theological Quarterly* for responding positively to its request to publish this article, and it is the hope and prayer of the commission that the members of the synod will find it useful as they continue their study and discussion of this extremely sensitive and

pressing issue.

### **I. Background and Context for the Assignment to Prepare Practical Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships**

#### *A. Sectarianism and Syncretism*

Article III of the synod's constitution lists the "objectives" or "purposes" for the formation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The very first of these objectives reads:

The synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall . . . conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy.<sup>4</sup>

Two of the "Conditions of Membership" listed in Article VI of the constitution are also pertinent here:

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the synod are:

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II.
2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:
  - a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by minsters of the church;
  - b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession.<sup>5</sup>

These two sections from the synod's constitution make reference to two dangers or errors concerning inter-Christian relationships against which the members of synod want to be on guard as they relate to other Christians: sectarianism and syncretism.

On the one hand, the LCMS on the basis of such Scripture

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references as Paul's words in Ephesians 4:3-6 and 1 Corinthians 1:10 recognizes that, properly speaking, there is only one church, the body of Christ. This is what is confessed in the Third Article of the Nicene Creed: "I believe one holy, Christian, and apostolic church." The constitution of the synod clearly indicates that this "one church" is not to be identified with the LCMS. One of the purposes of the synod is to "work toward fellowship with *other* Christian church bodies" (emphasis added). Thus, the error of sectarianism must be warned against. On the other hand, the LCMS recognizes, also on the basis of Holy Scripture, that it must provide a defense against heresy, *id est*, false teaching. The members of synod, therefore, renounce "unionism and syncretism of every description."

Down through its history, the synod has attempted to be faithful to both of these teachings of Scripture in its practice of inter-Christian relationships. Its members covenant with one another to seek to avoid syncretism (unionism) by agreeing with each other not to hold joint public worship services with church bodies with which the synod is not in doctrinal agreement or church fellowship. At the same time, the synod has also sought to avoid what is referred to as sectarianism (separatism) by working to resolve doctrinal disagreements with other Christian churches and by cooperating with them in various ways where this can be done without compromising the means of grace. It has sought to draw this distinction on the basis of the traditional principle "communion in sacred matters and cooperation in external matters" (*communio in sacris* and *cooperatio in externis*). It is on this basis that the LCMS has traditionally drawn a distinction, for example, between altar and pulpit fellowship on the one hand and prayer fellowship on the other.

This understanding of what the Scriptures teach about inter-Christian relationships has resulted in the synod's insistence on "agreement in doctrine and practice as the basis for church fellowship."<sup>6</sup> But at the same time, its desire to "work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies" has led it to participate in all of the national bilateral ecumenical dialogues conducted by Lutherans in the U.S.A. since 1965. The concern to avoid the twin dangers of separatism and syncretism prompted the synod to be a founding member of the Lutheran

Council in the U.S.A. (LCUSA),<sup>7</sup> membership in which was held by the CTCR to be consistent with the synod's understanding of what the Scriptures teach about inter-Christian relationships.<sup>8</sup> But the synod has also repeatedly rejected membership in the Lutheran World Federation as conflicting with our principles of fellowship.<sup>9</sup> The members of synod reject the conducting of joint public worship services with church bodies with which it is not in church fellowship but, from the days of Walther and his participation in worship at free conferences, the LCMS has not rejected participation in joint worship in various festivals, observances, convocations, pilgrimages, and devotional situations of all sorts.

Not everyone in the synod has always been in agreement regarding all of the implications of these practical distinctions between "sectarianism" and "syncretism" in hard cases, but as long as the members of the synod were convinced that everyone was operating on the basis of the same basic scriptural principles of fellowship, difficult questions in the area of inter-Christian relationships were able to be handled on a case by case basis, and the benefit of the doubt was usually given to fellow-members of the synod in exceptional situations. But with the growth of our synod into a large church existing in a wide variety of situations, increasing tensions in this area have become evident, with the result that the level of confidence and trust among the members of the synod has decreased. More and more questions have been raised in the synod about inter-Christian relationships in recent decades, and in 1981 the synod formally asked the CTCR to prepare some "practical guidelines" to help the members of synod know how to determine "which activities are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved" (1981 Resolution 3-03A). This brings us directly to the commission's assignment to prepare practical guidelines for inter-Christian relationships.

### *B. The Assignment to Prepare Practical Guidelines*

In 1977 the synod, in the midst of discussing its relationship to the American Lutheran Church with which it was in church fellowship, reported that there was considerable confusion in the

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synod concerning "the nature and implications of the concept of fellowship."<sup>10</sup> Noting this, the synod asked the CTCR to do a comprehensive study of this topic.<sup>11</sup> After four years of study the commission published its report on "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship." In this document the CTCR begins by reviewing the New Testament use of the Greek term for fellowship, *koinonia*. Pointing out that a presentation on the nature of fellowship must necessarily include but not be limited to a study of this term, the commission went on to say that much is said in the New Testament about the concept of fellowship in sections where this word does not even appear (e.g., Ephesians 4; John 17; Romans 16). Moreover the word, *koinonia*, which means literally "joint participation in a common thing," is in itself a neutral term.<sup>12</sup> The New Testament uses it to refer to the common collection made by the Macedonians for the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:13). This term is used by the apostle Paul to refer to the relationship between wine and the blood and the bread and the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). It is used to describe the association of fishermen in the fishing business (Luke 5:10). It is even used to refer to participation in other men's sins (Ephesians 5:11). Most often, however, the word *koinonia* is used in the New Testament to refer to spiritual unity in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 John 1:3), and to the external manifestation of this unity (Acts 2:42, Galatians 2:19).<sup>13</sup>

In its report the commission summarizes what the Scriptures teach concerning the nature of fellowship in nine principles. The first three take up "spiritual fellowship" with Christ. This spiritual unity is a matter of "faith in the heart" and is therefore hidden from human eyes. This is a relationship which binds Christians together with Christ and with each other in the one, holy, Christian church in a spiritual unity which transcends external divisions of time, space, and denominations. This fellowship or unity comes into being with faith in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel in word and sacrament. It is therefore a gift from God and not the product of human effort. Here we are in the realm of the doctrine of justification.

The commission's next three principles turn to a consideration of

the role of the *confession* of the apostolic faith in connection with a discussion of the nature of fellowship. Now we are in the realm of response or sanctification. Just as faith manifests itself in acts of edifying love, so those who have been made one in the body of Christ will confess and teach the gospel, and they are to do this in conformity with the gospel as it has been recorded by the prophets and the apostles in Scripture. The purpose is that the body of Christ may be edified and extended. Edifying love will manifest itself in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances. But the Scriptures teach that Christians never seek to manifest this unity in Christ by compromising the gospel, the means by which the spiritual unity of the church comes into being in the first place.

The commission's final three principles address the specific topic of "*church* fellowship." Unlike spiritual unity, which is a matter of faith in the heart, church fellowship is constituted by agreement in the faith which is confessed and not by faith in the heart. St. Paul appeals to the Christians in Corinth "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1: 10). When the gospel is not confessed in conformity with the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, external unity does not exist in the church, and *church* fellowship has no basis. Church fellowship, therefore, is not a given. It is a matter of confession. It involves human effort. Here we are in the realm of sanctification. To separate from fellow Christians when there is agreement in the confession of the faith would be separatistic. To act as if there was agreement in the confession of the gospel when there is no agreement would be syncretistic and would undermine the gospel. These nine principles summarize what the CTCR understands the Scriptures to teach about the nature and implications of the concept of fellowship.

The second part of the CTCR's report is entitled "The Implications of the Nature of Fellowship for Church-Body-Level Relationships." In this section, the commission examines four frequently mentioned ways that church bodies today at the institutional or denominational level seek to demonstrate unity in Christ with one another: (1.) conciliarity; (2.) reconciled diversity; (3.) selective

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fellowship; and (4.) ecclesiastical declarations of church fellowship based on majority vote.

Following an evaluation of each of these models on the basis of the nine scriptural principles of fellowship, the CTCR concludes:

Of these models for external unity in the church which have been examined in this report, only ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship offer at least the possibility for being able to take into account all that the Scriptures have to say about the nature of fellowship. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, therefore, while recognizing that this model is neither divinely ordained nor scripturally mandated, is convinced that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod should continue to seek to carry out the scriptural principles of fellowship at the church body level by means of ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship based on agreement in doctrine and practice.<sup>14</sup>

It was on the basis of this understanding of the implications of the concept of fellowship for church-body-level relationships that the synod proceeded in 1981 to break altar and pulpit fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.

But the CTCR went on in its 1981 report to say that there are certain problems which can and do arise with the implementation of ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship. There are the problems of "ambiguous denominationalism," "three-cornered relationships," and the mobility of members with their consequent moving of their church affiliations back and forth between church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship—a kind of "serial unionism," one could say. And the commission refers directly to "the problem of terminology and levels of agreement." It is in reference to this problem that the commission states:

Through the use of the word "fellowship" almost exclusively to refer to a formal altar and pulpit fellowship relationship established between two church bodies as the basis of agreement in the confession of the faith, some have been given the impression that no fellowship relationship other than spiritual unity in the body of Christ can or should exist

among members of Christian churches not in altar and pulpit fellowship. The fact that the LCMS is closer doctrinally to a church body which at least formally accepts the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions than to those denominations which do not is often obscured by the "all or nothing" approach that frequently accompanies ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship.<sup>15</sup>

The CTCR goes on to add one more problem:

Finally, it is sometimes overlooked that, although the scriptural principles of fellowship remain constant, the specific results of their application at the individual level may differ from that at the church-body level. The principles of fellowship are not rules of casuistry.<sup>16</sup>

For these reasons, the CTCR itself, already in 1981, recommended that the implications of the nature of the scriptural understanding of fellowship be applied not only to church-body-level relationships, but also to relationships between members of the synod and other Christians at all levels in which the members of synod are involved. The CTCR states:

Because of these factors the commission recommends that the synod continue to study the topic of fellowship during the coming biennium by giving special attention to the implications of the principles of fellowship presented in this report for the relationships and activities between Christians at congregational, pastoral, and individual levels. Although it is neither desirable or even possible to develop guidelines which will answer every case of casuistry, it will be helpful if the synod can develop greater understanding and consensus regarding the implications of the nature of fellowship also at these levels.<sup>17</sup>

It was in response to this specific recommendation of the CTCR, as well as to a number of other overtures presented to the synodical convention of 1981, that the synod proceeded to ask the CTCR to prepare practical guidelines for inter-Christian relationships.

In effect, then, the synod has requested the CTCR to take the



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scriptural principles of fellowship which it had presented in its report "Nature and Implications" and on this basis to give some "practical guidelines" for their application at the level of individual Christians, individual pastors, and individual congregations as they relate to Christians belonging to church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS. The CTCR has been asked to complete the work started in "Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship" by applying the principles of fellowship delineated there, not only to church-body-level relationships, but also to the myriad of questions confronting our people today at the individual level with respect to questions about participation in such activities as neighborhood Bible studies, ecumenical prayer breakfasts, community choirs, convocations and conferences on college and seminary campuses, and worship events such as services of thanksgiving for the end of a war, pro-life celebrations, and occasional devotions of all sorts.

This, then, is the commission's understanding of the assignment which has been given to it. The commission's "Study Instrument" on "Inter-Christian Relationships," therefore, is not a new report on fellowship. It is rather the application of its previous work in this area—"Theology of Fellowship" (1965), "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism" (1974), and "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship" (1981)—to situations which arise among the members of the synod as they relate to Christians belonging to church bodies not in church fellowship with the LCMS. The purpose of this draft, therefore, is not to discuss *church fellowship* but rather, given the synod's understanding of church fellowship as meaning agreement in doctrine and practice between two church bodies, to offer guidance in applying the scriptural principles of fellowship "to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved" (1981 Resolution 3-03A).

## II. Summary of Responses to "Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study"

"Inter-Christian Relationships" has been the most widely studied CTCR document in recent years and perhaps ever. At the request

of the commission, the study of this document has been on the agendas of circuit (*Winkel*) conferences throughout the synod. A total of 267 responses to this draft have been received by the CTCR as of June 21, 1992. One hundred and five responses have come from circuits, ninety-nine from individual pastors, eleven from congregations, nine from various kinds of study groups, ten from lay persons, and thirty-three were unsigned. In addition, three LCMS partner churches have shared their reactions to this draft. At least one response has been received from every district in the synod.

The commission has requested that the synod study this "Study Instrument" carefully, and it has included some questions to stimulate critical reflection. Three intentionally provocative statements were suggested as possible responses:

- (a.) The guidance for inter-Christian relationships provided in this document is not faithful to all that the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach and, while reflecting an awareness of the contemporary situation in which the church finds itself, will nevertheless encourage unionistic activity.
- (b.) The guidance for inter-Christian relationships provided in this document, while faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as far as it goes, does not fully reflect an awareness of the contemporary situations in which the church finds itself and will therefore encourage divisive, separatistic activity.
- (c.) The guidance for inter-Christian relationships provided in this document is faithful to what the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach, reflects an awareness of the contemporary situation in which the church finds itself, and will encourage the proper application of law and gospel in inter-Christian relationships.

The commission has not requested responses to its draft in order to find out what is going on in the church so that it might then provide some theological rationale for what is already taking place, but

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rather so that the entire synod might join the commission in studying what the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions have to say about "Inter-Christian Relationships."

The great majority of those who responded to the commission's study document have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss this issue together with their fellow-members of synod, and many have noted that their study of this issue is continuing. In what follows we shall now seek to give the members of synod a feel for the kinds of reactions which the commission has received to its preliminary draft, and we shall do so by presenting a few excerpts from the responses themselves. We shall present this sampling of responses according to the three-fold options included in the CTCR "Study Instrument."

*A. Responses Seeing the Draft as Promoting Unionism*

Some responders hold that these guidelines, as presently constituted, would promote unionistic or syncretistic relationships with Christians not in church fellowship with the LCMS. A number of reasons for this conclusion are suggested. Some hold, for example, that this draft departs from Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the traditional understanding of the LCMS on fellowship.

If one is not in total agreement in doctrine, based upon the truth of the gospel, one *should not* have inter-Christian relationships.

Church fellowship which is also referred to as "confessional fellowship" includes every joint expression of a common faith. Every expression and manifestation of unity in belief is included in the "avoid" directive of Romans 16:17. It is all-inclusive. There are no degrees of avoidance. In the New Testament all expressions of fellowship are treated as a unit. They are all ways of expressing a common faith worked by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. . . . There are no expressions of a shared faith which are excluded from church fellowship.

Church fellowship is a unit both in respect to the doctrine of Scripture . . . and in respect to the various expressions of a

shared faith that they all be considered a unit or an indivisible whole.

Some responders believe that this document has changed the biblical, confessional, historic definition of and approach to "unionism."

For the history of our synod we have said that joint worship with those not in doctrinal agreement was sin. This document suggests that there are occasions . . . that we may participate in . . . Will this not cause doubt in our people to say, "What other scriptural teachings that our synod has taught for years can now be questioned. Have we stopped teaching that the Bible is a clear book?"

Some responders hold that the commission makes a false distinction between "regular" and "occasional" services.

Acceptance of a ridiculous distinction between "regular and official public and corporate worship services" and "certain occasional joint activities and gatherings at which worship takes place," as though the LCMS constitution would allow such a distinction, is patently and obviously false.

Some responders say that the CTCR's draft is inconsistent or even self-contradictory in places and therefore will confuse and mislead rather than clarify and guide.

Most abstained rather than voted [in our circuit] because they felt the document was too confusing: almost as if put together by a committee which could not agree . . . itself.

The pastors [of our circuit] were especially concerned with kind of an "open door" attitude conveyed in this study. Many good statements were given and much good discussion in keeping with the historic position of the Missouri Synod. And then toward the end of a good discussion, paragraph, section, or in summary, there are such words as "but," "however," "at the same time," etc., as if to convey the attitude that we are in a different time than before, as if to say that our time is different now and we have to do things differently.

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Other responses suggested that while this draft is not itself theologically incorrect, it is ambiguous, unclear, imprecise, and therefore unhelpful. More specific, clear-cut "black on white" directives are needed, they said, and there should not be so much attention devoted to how to handle exceptional situations.

I am not stating that I believe your study to be in error. It is a very important resource for the church of 1991. But the abstract way in which you have attempted to address the issues we face, may confuse those whom God has entrusted to my care. My people are struggling with the issue of "inter-Christian relationships" and I believe that this document can be a great resource only if it can rid itself of what I see from my situation as an ambiguous position through your use of terms.

I find much good in this report. The report makes much progress in its first stated purpose, i.e., assisting pastors, congregations and individual Christians in their study of what the Scriptures and the Confessions say about fellowship. It has given me opportunity to examine what I have probably taken for granted. But in its present form I feel it will encourage unionistic activity.

The vague and undefined terminology employed throughout renders the study document ambiguous and subject to varying interpretations. By blurring terms and concepts this document stands as a theological chameleon which can be read in any number of different ways depending upon the reader and his agenda . . . This kind of ambiguity can in no way be a service to pious souls who seek the certainty and clarity of God's holy word.

Finally, there were those who suggest that this draft, while not unscriptural or even unclear, is nevertheless not helpful because of the current climate in the synod. They say that it offers "loopholes" and reasons for justifying current unionistic activities rather than giving clear-cut direction and guidance.

Our concern is not so much that unionistic activity would be encouraged as much as that unionistic activity that has

already been taking place would now be condoned and legitimized by strong implications in this document and by an air of permissiveness inherent . . . Avoid the tendency to reflect so much upon what is happening in society and cling more to the guidance and direction given by the word.

Hopefully, our present pastors are in agreement with the first sentence in the first full paragraph on p. 6 and with the nine "scriptural principles of fellowship," pp. 7-9. However, will future synodical clergy make the exceptions apparently permissible in Section IV, "Counsel for Specific Situations," the rule? I fear so . . . In this day of doctrinal compromise and spiritual confusion, heed well the last sentence under the summary on p. 23: "For it is better to be divided for the sake of truth than to be united in error."

#### *B. Responses Seeing the Draft as Promoting Separatism*

Disagreeing dramatically with the responses listed above, some responders report that in their view, this draft gives guidance that is basically separatistic in nature.

The content was well organized and established. The topic is timely and fits in with the struggles that many congregations are facing today. But we feel that in some areas the content has limited the dialogue between churches. If we are to gain our brothers, we need to be able to communicate with them. In this matter we feel that the document has become too legalistic and hinders fellowship with other congregations. We would ask that the commission once again review this work, and present a more open hearted approach to others that profess the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some responders believe that this draft curtails the freedom of the gospel.

I sympathize . . . with the CTCR over this assignment. The topic is difficult, and the application of the topic is even more difficult. The document incorporates some beautiful language about the gospel at the heart and core of the church and the church's conduct of the mission which the Lord has

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given the church. . . the gospel which is so clear in the first section is subjected to distinctions and caveats in such a way in the remainder of the document that the freedom of the gospel is curtailed, hemmed in, and controlled as the document reaches its conclusions . . . for the practice of inter-Christian relationships. The issue is the one of "freedom" and "control" under the gospel . . . And the result in this document is mixed.

Some of those responding write that what the members of the synod need now is encouragement to interact with other Christians, not discouragement.

Certainly a lot of good thought has gone into this document, but it seems to try to straddle the several fellowship and political stances in our synod. Not that this is wrong, but I do not believe it gives us the needed encouragement and guidance for inter-church relations. It seems it puts more emphasis on truth than on love. As one of my colleagues put it, "It seems to reflect more the mind of Aristotle than the mind of Christ." There were no suggestions on how we can *listen* to other Christians. There seemed to be no room for confession of our shortcomings and failures with other Christians, hence no need for absolution. It seems that the harder you try to become definitive at relationships with other Christians, the more difficult such relationships become. On the other hand, many of us are establishing relationships on different levels with other Christians, only because we are fighting a common enemy.

Some of those responding believe that this document as it now stands does not fully appreciate the contemporary situation which exists in our society and the need for concern for individuals.

My response, in summary, is that it [this document] does not fully reflect an awareness of the contemporary situations in which the church finds itself and will therefore encourage divisive, separatistic activity. My thirty-eight years of pastoral care have resulted in my caring first for individual Christians—and second for Christian institutions. If the two

come into conflict, I feel compelled to give individual Christians' concerns first priority. I do not mean for that to be an anti-institutional posture; I mean only that I regard it as the best New Testament approach to pastoral care that I can exercise. With all due respect to your commission and to our church body, I am convinced that our LCMS is far more concerned about these kinds of matters than the New Testament would warrant us to be. I say that not in a spirit of rebellion or defiance, but rather from the stance of wanting to reflect as faithfully as I can what our Lord himself would want me to do in specific pastoral inter-Christian relationships.

Some responders hold that this draft asks the right questions, but that it does not show its awareness of the fact that non-Missouri Synod Lutherans do not understand our practices in this area.

This document is seen by some as the "final straw." I believe that it asks the right questions! It is time for us in the LCMS to understand that the other Christians don't understand what we think we're trying to do. More flexibility is necessary—but with caution—in our relationships with other Christians.

*C. Responses Seeing the Draft as Providing  
Helpful and Doctrinally Sound Guidelines*

Some responders express special appreciation for the discussion on truth, unity, and love and the need to maintain the tension inherent in seeking to be faithful to each of them.

We commend the commission for maintaining the centrality of the gospel in this document. . . . We also commend the commission for recognizing that there is a necessary tension between these three principles [truth, unity, and love]. This tension shall be there until Christ returns. We believe that when one does not perceive the tension between these principles one has sold out or simply ignored one of the three principles in a legalistic sort of way. . . . We believe that this tension will necessarily be felt throughout the synod as we attempt to walk together and yet allow each other the



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freedom in the gospel to apply the gospel to our own specific situations.

Some of the responses find helpful the emphasis in this draft on applying principles rather than on offering specific solutions to difficult situations.

We appreciate this presentation of scriptural-confessional principles without the institution of a new canon law. One of the paper's values is its consideration of the diversity of the contemporary situation. This document encourages us to apply principles rather than spoon-feeding us with applications. The discussion we had encouraged us to deal with our practices in an atmosphere of trust. One thing we discovered is that when we walk together in synod, we don't always apply our shared principles in the same way. Then the question is: Can we trust each other as each of us applies scriptural-confessional principles to our ministry?

Some of the responders say that this draft's guidance keeps the law-gospel distinction prominent.

The telling phrase in deciding upon a response is that in the statement above, "proper application of law and gospel." This study encourages careful thought as to how such a proper application may be carried out. Separatism and unionism are, at best, well-intentioned efforts that treat either law or gospel too lightly. This study encourages holding as tightly as possible to Scripture's gospel message in the wide sense, yet it differentiates between holding to and proclaiming that gospel and applying that message so that the hearer might understand.

Some responses are grateful for the openness of this document and its pastoral approach.

This document does *not* encourage unionism [nor] divisive activity. There was a pleasing flavor of responsible openness in the document. I hope you forward *this* document [to the synod as final version]. I found it very pastoral and aware of how people live and relate in the 1990's.

I commend the commission for its study. This is an issue which must be faced; hopefully the results of the study will lead to common practice within the synod to reach lost souls. It is imperative that our synod take a strong stand to advance the cause of the gospel in conformity with our scriptural-confessional position, and in an increasingly non-Christian society we must create an atmosphere where we can walk together in that mission. We who are in the military ministry daily experience the tensions of being missionaries in a sea of pluralism. We want to be orthodox and evangelical. We want to represent our church body with integrity while being winsome and prudent in practicing proper pastoral care.

A number of responses express appreciation for the recognition in this draft that the contemporary scene has changed greatly over the years.

As a whole, I believe the paper is very useful. Its topic is one that every pastor and congregation faces, and I would again echo the spirit and reason for which the convention mandated that this study be done. I do not agree with those who argue that nothing has changed in our culture or church body, and so it should be business as usual. My prayer is that we continue to study these questions so that we can come to a God-given consensus that is in harmony with both Scripture and our confessional understanding.

#### *D. Other Responses*

A good number of those who responded indicated that none of the suggested responses fit their group's reaction, or that their group itself was not of one opinion on these matters.

First of all, let me say that this paper is worthwhile, timely and greatly needed. I can truly appreciate how your work tried to find that elusive ground where scriptural and confessional principles meet the day to day individual cases that we find in our ministries. I tried to use the summary questions in the back of the document, but I did not find a category that fit my response to the paper as a whole. If I

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were to create one, it would be: While this paper is faithful to the Scriptures and to our Lutheran Confessions in summarizing their content and guidelines, as well as the contemporary situation in which the church now proclaims Jesus' death and resurrection, at times the paper failed to show how its applications flowed from these God-given principles, and therefore could easily be abused in a unionistic and non-scriptural manner.

The choices don't quite fit our group. We are not in agreement among ourselves about what the Scriptures and the confessions say about inter-Christian relations. Our points of view range all the way from the most exclusionary version of LCMS tradition on inter-Christian relations to a willingness to practice fellowship with any genuine Christian . . . Some see this booklet leading to further unionistic activity, while others see it leading toward more divisive and separatistic activity.

Some of those who responded have suggested that certain points made in the draft—such as the witness value of inter-Christian activities—need to be given greater emphasis.

In summary, our evaluation of the CTCR document is that it is well reasoned, sensitively drawn, and stands on a firm biblical and confessional base. Our chief concern is more one of punctuation. It needs to more clearly emphasize: the context of our actions and what they are perceived by others as actually saying; the meaning of the term gospel as a criterion for deciding church relations (proclamation, doctrinal corpus, or both?); the terminology with which we either accuse or excuse our actions; and the priority of inter-Christian relations within a congregation and denomination over those between denominations.

One of the synod's sister churches, following careful study of this draft in two pastors conferences, offers the following response:

The CTCR document "Inter-Christian Relationships" has been deeply appreciated for its comprehensive presentation of the whole question of church fellowship, its basically

truly conservative, scriptural, and confession-bound approach, its honest presentation of the present situation of Christianity, Lutheranism, and even conservative Lutheranism (ambiguous denominationalism, lack among members of a clear identification of the official position of their church, etc.), the concern for pastoral care and the continuous will to do justice to both sides of the mission entrusted to the church, preaching the gospel wherever it is possible without compromising the truth. All these aspects of the paper among many others raised much sympathy. . . .

The pastoral conferences of our church . . . too are concentrating on all kinds of problems and situations relating to church fellowship and decided to go on studying and discussing them, and hoping that we may achieve full agreement on all points. So our reaction at this time can only be partial. But it seems right now that we shall probably not be able to go along with all suggestions made in the document, because, according to our opinion, not all of them allow us to safeguard the uncompromising attitude that should always be the mark of a confessional Lutheran Church. But at this time we don't feel able to say more than that. We need more time to study the whole set of problems raised by the question of church-fellowship.

While many more responses could be presented here, these representative quotations provide an overview of the kinds of responses which the commission has received to its preliminary draft.

### **III. Basic Presuppositions Informing the Preliminary Draft of "Inter-Christian Relationships"**

A careful review of the responses to the commission's preliminary draft reveals that a good number of responders are either not aware of the nature of the commission's assignment or of the commission's previous work in the area of fellowship.<sup>18</sup> It may be helpful, therefore, at this time to lay out some of the basic presuppositions with which the CTCR has approached this assignment.

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A. The principles of fellowship presented in the Scriptures are normative for confessional Lutherans as they relate to Christians belonging to church bodies not in doctrinal agreement with the synod. The commission believes that its previous reports on fellowship faithfully present the principles of fellowship taught in the Scriptures which should guide the members of synod in relating to other Christians at all levels.

The commission's draft does not go back to ground zero as it seeks to give guidance to the synod for relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ who belong to church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with LCMS. Rather it seeks to apply the principles presented in its previous reports on fellowship—"Theology of Fellowship" (1965), "Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism" (1974), and "Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship" (1981). It has not sought to develop a new doctrine of fellowship but rather to apply the traditional principles of fellowship which have guided the synod from its very beginning to the contemporary questions regarding relationships between members of the synod and Christians belonging to church bodies not in church fellowship with the LCMS.

B. As the members of the LCMS interact with Christians belonging to church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship, of critical importance is the distinction between the spiritual unity of the church, which is given with faith in the heart, and external unity in the church, which is based on agreement in the confession of the gospel.

From its very beginning the LCMS has clearly distinguished between what Walther refers to over and over again as the invisible church and the visible church, and what the CTCR refers to as the spiritual unity of the church and external unity in the church. This distinction is especially discussed in the CTCR report of 1974, "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism," on the basis of the distinction in the Lutheran Confessions between harmony in the church (Latin, *concordia*; German, *Einigkeit in der Kirche*) and the unity of the church (Latin, *unitas*; German, *Einigkeit der Kirche*). Confusion results when this distinction is obscured or denied. Corresponding to this distinction is the distinction which theologians have traditionally made between the *fides qua*, the dynamic faith in the heart

created by word and sacrament which binds believers together in Christ, and the *fides quae*, the faith which is confessed, which is the basis for external unity. We in the LCMS have a long history of using the same English word "fellowship" to refer both to the unity of the church in Christ in the one, holy Christian church (*una sancta*) and also to the relationship which exists between two church bodies which have agreement in the confession of the Christian faith. The following quotation from C. F. W. Walther illustrates so clearly this dual use of the term fellowship in our circles:

Whoever is not in inward fellowship with the believers and saints is neither in fellowship with Christ. On the other hand, whoever is in fellowship with Christ is in fellowship also with all those in whom Christ dwells, that it, with the invisible church. Accordingly, he who restricts salvation to fellowship with any visible church therewith overthrows the article on the justification of a poor sinner in the sight of God.<sup>19</sup>

Walther uses the same word fellowship to refer to "inward fellowship (*Geimeinschaft*) with the believers" and also to "fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*) with any visible church," expressly contrasting these two distinct relationships. Consistent with the Scriptures themselves, we in the LCMS use the word fellowship to refer to the relationship which binds all Christians together with Christ and with each other in the *koinonia* or communion of the saints. But we also use the same word to talk about "declaring fellowship" or "breaking fellowship," thereby referring to "church fellowship." It is precisely in the dual use of this word fellowship that misunderstanding often arises. The specific topic under consideration in the commission's draft of "Inter-Christian Relationships" is the external expression of the unity which all Christians have in Christ but where agreement in confession is lacking. The very possibility of discussing guidelines for inter-Christian relationships is therefore dependent on the possibility and validity of making this distinction.

C. External unity in the church, *id est*, church fellowship, has as its necessary basis complete agreement in doctrine and practice.

The discussion of inter-Christian relationships in the draft under

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discussion is based on the understanding that the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions teach that external unity in the church means agreement in confession. Church fellowship means "agreement in doctrine and practice." This necessarily implies that there can be no "levels of *church fellowship*," for there can be no levels of "complete agreement." Either agreement in the confession of the gospel exists or it does not exist. Where there is agreement in the confession of the gospel, it would be separatistic for church bodies not to commune together, to exchange pulpits, to lead public worship services together—*id est*, to remain apart from one another.

D. Inter-Christian relationships are not a matter of "all or nothing."

The LCMS does not hold to what some refer to as "the unit concept of fellowship." The LCMS has never held to this understanding. Walther participated in worship and prayer with individuals not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS. Up until 1944 the terms "prayer fellowship" and "joint fellowship" were used synonymously by the synod to refer to praying together with Christians not in doctrinal agreement with one another. The catechism of 1943 (Question 216), as well as the newly revised catechism (Question 206), says with reference to the Lord's Prayer: "In Jesus all believers are children of the one Father and should *pray with* and for one another" (emphasis added). Prayer is worship. Christians do not pray with non-Christians, but believers in Jesus pray for and with one another. The synod's assignment to the commission that it prepare practical guidelines for determining "which practices are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved" assumes that all Christians are bound together in the "communion of the saints," that it is possible to express this unity in Christ with Christians belonging to church bodies not in complete doctrinal agreement in some ways such as praying together in certain situations, and that it is possible to do this without compromising the scriptural principles of fellowship.

In holding to this position the LCMS finds itself in conformity with confessional Lutherans from the time of the Reformation. It is instructive to refer to the reports of the CTCR regarding this point.

In its report of 1965, "Theology of Fellowship," which was formally approved by the synodical convention of 1967, the commission states:

Those who subscribed to them [the Lutheran Confessions] were automatically in pulpit and altar fellowship with one another. Those who did not subscribe to them, but adhered to other confessions, were, according to the Preface to the Book of Concord, not condemned as heretics . . . This followed inevitably from the doctrine of the church as it is contained in the Lutheran Confessions . . . However, while *communicatio in sacris* was impossible with men who were not considered heretics but erring Christians, the Preface of the Book of Concord recognizes a responsibility of Lutherans toward such erring Christians . . . so-called colloquies . . . were repeatedly held by Lutheran theologians with Roman Catholic and also with Reformed theologians. At the colloquy of Regensburg in 1601 neither Lutherans nor Roman Catholics appear to have considered it improper to open the colloquy and the individual sessions of the colloquy with prayer. Numerous passages in the official minutes of this colloquy state that all meetings were opened with liturgical prayers and that representatives of both sides changed off in conducting the opening devotions.

At the Colloquy of Thorn in 1645 where Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed met, the Lutherans asked that the same procedure be followed. When the Catholics refused and insisted that they alone conduct the opening devotions, the Lutherans refused to attend the devotions under these conditions.

From these cases it appears that the Lutherans, during the period of orthodoxy, did not refuse as a matter of principle to pray with Reformed, and even with Roman Catholics. They did refuse when they themselves were treated as heretics.<sup>20</sup>

From these points the commission concludes the following:

Our synod should understand that, in the case of doctrinal



discussions carried on with a view to achieving doctrinal unity, Christians not only *may* but *should* join in fervent prayer that God would guide and bless the discussions . . .

Our synod should clearly recognize that, in the case of necessary work on the local, national, or international level, when the faith and the confession of the church are not compromised, and where it appears essential that the churches of various denominations should cooperate or at least not work at cross purposes, our churches ought to cooperate willingly to the extent that the Word of God and conscience allow . . .<sup>21</sup>

In the many cases which do not seem to fall readily under the guidelines enunciated above (e.g., prayers at all kinds of meetings) every Christian should for his own person observe the apostle's injunction, "Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind," Rom. 14:5 . . .<sup>22</sup>

In its report of 1974, "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism," the commission says that "the unity of the church [*unitas*] is the presupposition, not the goal, of ecumenical endeavors (AC Preface, 10)."<sup>23</sup> This is the presupposition "for continuing ecumenical endeavors throughout Christendom,"<sup>24</sup> and the measure of agreement in the confession of the faith serves as a guide for setting ecumenical priorities: "Since on the confessional spectrum there are church bodies on one end with whom we already enjoy a great deal of agreement and church bodies on the other end with whom we have larger areas of disagreement . . . it is a basic principle that . . . those nearest us in the faith merit our closest contact and most persistent ecumenical effort."<sup>25</sup>

This view that inter-Christian relationships are not a matter of all or nothing, which provides the presupposition for the commission's work on this assignment, contrasts sharply with that of the Wisconsin Synod. One of the WELS official documents states:

We may classify these joint expressions of faith in various ways according to the particular realm of activity in which they occur, pulpit fellowship, altar fellowship, prayer fellowship, fellowship in worship, fellowship in church work, in

missions, in Christian education, in Christian charity. Yet insofar as they are joint expressions of faith, they are all essentially one and the same thing, and are all properly covered by a common designation, namely, church fellowship. Church fellowship should therefore be treated as a unit concept, covering every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of a common faith.<sup>26</sup>

It is for this reason that the WELS rejects joint prayers or worship of any kind with individuals who belong to church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with WELS.<sup>27</sup> This is not now, nor has it ever been, the position of the LCMS (although individual LCMS theologians down through the years and even today may advocate similar views). It was primarily a disagreement over this very point that led the WELS to break church fellowship with the LCMS in 1961. In this connection, it is enlightening to review an open letter sent by Drs. W. M. Oesch and Manfred Roensch, professors of the sister-church of the LCMS in Germany, in 1961 to President Naumann of the Wisconsin Synod. It reads in part as follows:

. . . It should be possible in certain situations to express one's Christian faith *together* with Christians from false-believing churches . . . Our attention must be directed not toward avoiding all mutuality of faith manifestations, but toward overcoming all that compromises the *notae purae*. This positive approach governed Dr. C. F. W. Walther's actions at the free conferences . . .

It was the unanimous conviction of the Overseas Committee that this definition of church-fellowship by placing all manifestations of a common faith on the same level actually . . . puts the Wisconsin Synod in a position which is to some extent outside of the Scriptures themselves. . .<sup>28</sup>

E. The scriptural principles of fellowship must be distinguished from their application in specific situations.

The commission states in its report of 1981, "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship":

Although the Scriptures have much to say about the spiritual

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unity which binds all believers together in the body of Christ and with one another, and despite the exhortations of the inspired writers that the church should seek to manifest its given unity externally without endangering the means by which the unity of the church is created, God's Word does not prescribe specific procedures for carrying this out in each particular case. . . . The Scriptures, rather than presenting the church with specific regulations for each and every inter-Christian relationship, set forth fundamental principles which are to be applied to the unique situation in which Christians find themselves at any given point in history.<sup>29</sup>

This distinction between the principles of fellowship and their application in specific situations may be illustrated in the ministry of the apostle Paul. As the CTCR has noted, in one situation Paul decided to circumcise Timothy (whose father was a Greek and mother a Jew) "because of the Jews that were in those places" (Acts 16:3), while in another situation he chose not to circumcise the Greek Titus (Galatians 2:3). The very principle that the gospel be purely preached was applied in differing ways in different circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

This presupposition implies that confessional Lutherans, as they seek to be faithful to the scriptural principles of fellowship, will recognize the need to guard against the danger of turning the scriptural principles of fellowship into legalistic rules. Moreover, confessional Lutherans will recognize the necessity of allowing for some flexibility in applying the scriptural principles of fellowship in difficult situations. This means that Article VI of the synodical constitution and its condition of membership excluding taking part in "the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations" is itself an application of the scriptural teaching that the gospel never be compromised and is not the principle of fellowship itself.

Nor is "unionism" a term that can be applied automatically to all joint work or worship with those not in complete agreement with one another. In 1932 Francis Pieper asserted in the *Brief Statement*: "We repudiate unionism, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9:10, and as

involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21."<sup>31</sup> The key word here is "church-fellowship." Not all manifestations of unity in Christ outside of church fellowship are necessarily to be rejected as compromises of the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore forbidden by Scripture.

F. Confessional Lutherans recognize the need for responsible commitment to the covenants of love they make with one another with respect to inter-Christian relationships.

The CTCR has prepared its preliminary draft of guidelines for inter-Christian relationships with the presupposition that the members of a confessional Lutheran Church intend to keep the covenants they make with each other with respect to their contacts and activities with Christians in other church bodies. The violation of these agreements makes impossible the mutual trust and confidence among the pastors, teachers, and congregations of the synod which are necessary for pastoral ministry. As the CTCR has previously stated:

Freedom for responsible pastoral ministry goes hand in hand with responsible commitment to mutual decisions. It is impossible to have one without the other. A lack of responsible commitment invites the very suspicion and mistrust which inhibits responsible pastoral care. But genuine commitment to our agreed-upon procedures builds the atmosphere of confidence and trust in which freedom for pastoral ministry thrives.<sup>32</sup>

This presupposition, to be sure, implies that it is also proper and indeed even necessary to re-examine our "covenants of love" with one another from time to time to see if such agreed-upon ways of proceeding with respect to applying the scriptural principles of fellowship are still the best and most effective ways of relating to other Christians in the present context. The "Instrument for Study" prepared by the CTCR provides just such an opportunity for this kind of re-examination. Covenants of love can and need to be revised from time to time. But they ought not be disregarded and violated unilaterally. To arbitrarily dismiss our agreed-upon ways of carrying out inter-Christian relationships is devoid of integrity and is itself a loveless act and therefore contrary to the scriptural

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principles of fellowship.

### **Conclusion**

When we talk about inter-Christian relationships, we must carefully define our terms. We must recognize that the Scriptures use the term fellowship to refer to two distinct but not separate relationships: unity in the Body of Christ, and the manifestation of this unity externally. The challenge facing us in the LCMS today is to manifest our fellowship in the Body of Christ externally in ways which take account of all that Scripture says—both about guarding the truth of the gospel delivered to us, and also about actually manifesting this unity, lest we be guilty of falling into either the error of separatism or the error of syncretism. The synod has asked that the CTCR prepare some "practical guidelines" as to how this can be done in faithfulness to the scriptural principles of fellowship. The commission appreciates the many responses which it has received to its preliminary draft and looks forward to continuing to receive responses from the members of the synod as it works on the completion of this assignment. May God bless our continuing study of this sensitive issue so that we may be found faithful to all that He has to say about this topic, and also so that our way of discussing this issue will itself serve to strengthen our relationships with each other in the synod.

### **Appendix**

#### **Questions and Answers**

#### **"Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study" (CTCR, 1991)**

1. Why did the CTCR prepare the document "Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study"?

The 1981 synodical convention adopted a resolution (3-03A) asking the commission to prepare "practical guidelines . . . to assist the officials, pastors, teachers, congregations, and individuals in the synod, in determining which practices and

activities are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved." This document represents the commission's preliminary response to this assignment.

2. Does this document present a new approach in our synod to the doctrine of fellowship?

No. As the CTCR stated in the *Reporter-Alive* of December 9, 1991, "The commission with this document has not initiated a new approach to the doctrine of fellowship." Rather, this document should be viewed against the background of the commission's many years of study of the issue of fellowship. It seeks to apply the scriptural and confessional principles of fellowship as presented in its previous reports on fellowship (e.g., "Theology of Fellowship," 1965; "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism," 1974; "Bible Study on Fellowship," 1979; "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," 1981) to relationships between the members of synodical congregations and Christians belonging to church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the synod.

3. Is there anything new about this document?

Yes. The nature of the assignment itself is new. The synod has asked the commission to take the scriptural principles of fellowship which have guided the synod through the years and apply them to new questions and problems confronting our people today regarding participation in such things as community Bible studies, ecumenical prayer breakfasts, community choirs, and occasional gatherings and worship events of all kinds. Because the report deals with these contemporary issues, it of necessity offers some new applications of our historic principles of fellowship.

4. Does this document suggest that there are or can be levels of *church fellowship* (altar and pulpit fellowship)?

No. The commission firmly believes that any discussion of inter-Christian relationships by confessional Lutherans must

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be faithful to the scriptural teaching that external unity in the church means complete agreement in doctrine and practice. Nothing is said in this document of 1991 which qualifies in any way this position. Agreement in doctrine and practice is the very essence of altar and pulpit fellowship, and this necessarily means that there can be no "levels of church fellowship." Either there is agreement in the confession of the gospel or there is not.

5. Has our synod historically held to an "all or nothing" approach to the issue of fellowship?

No. The LCMS has never ascribed to an "all or nothing" understanding of fellowship (sometimes called the "unit concept of fellowship"). As stated above, the synod has consistently held that there can be no "levels" of *church fellowship*. But our synod has never held that total agreement in doctrine and practice is necessary for *every expression* of Christian fellowship. The synod's very assignment to the commission that it prepare practical guidelines for determining "which practices and activities are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved" assumes that it is possible to express unity in Christ with Christians not in agreement in confession in ways short of altar and pulpit fellowship which do not compromise the scriptural principles of fellowship.

6. Is it the official and historic position of the LCMS that *all* forms of joint prayer and worship apart from complete doctrinal agreement are necessarily unionistic?

No. The first president of the synod, C. F. W. Walther, participated in free conferences where worship and prayer with individuals not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS took place. Up until 1944 the terms "prayer fellowship" and "joint prayer" were used synonymously by the synod to refer to praying together with Christians not in doctrinal agreement with one another. The catechism of 1943 (Question 216) as well as the newly revised catechism

(Question 206) say with reference to the Lord's Prayer: "In Jesus all believers are children of the one Father and should pray with and for one another." The key factor in determining whether a given activity should be judged as "unionistic" is not whether this activity involves any kind of "worship," but rather whether such an activity involves the public proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments so as to give a false or misleading witness which compromises the truth of the gospel.

7. Does this document reject the traditional distinction between *communio in sacris* and *cooperatio in externis*?

No. On the contrary, this distinction is affirmed in this document. The commission does say, however, "As useful as this distinction is in principle (because it is made on the basis of the means of grace), it is nevertheless subject to considerable confusion because of the term 'externals.' That a given activity is *external* to the means of grace does not mean that we are to regard such an activity as necessarily optional or to be excluded from the church's calling." "Additionally," the commission says, "we must recognize that not all Christian activities fit neatly into one or the other category. With that understanding, however, measuring proposed activities in terms of their relationships to the means of grace remains central to a confessional Lutheran approach to questions of inter-Christian relationships" (ICR, p. 24).

8. Why did the CTCR attempt to give specific answers to specific fellowship questions in this document?

The synod specifically requested that the CTCR prepare "practical guidelines" which would "assist the officials, pastors, teachers, congregations, and individuals in the synod, in determining which practices and activities are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the synod is involved." The CTCR understood this to be a request for "real answers to real questions"—for specific guidance in applying the



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scriptural principles of fellowship to a variety of typical situations and activities confronting the officials, pastors, congregations, and individuals in our synod today. The commission recognizes, of course, that "it is neither desirable nor even possible to develop guidelines which will answer every case of casuistry" (ICR, pp. 9-10). The commission has also stated, however, that "it will be helpful if the synod can develop greater understanding and consensus regarding the implications of the nature of fellowship also at these levels" (ICR, p. 10).

9. Do not some of the answers given by the CTCR contradict Article VI.2 of the synod's constitution?

Article VI of the constitution, which renounces "unionism and syncretism of every description," is affirmed repeatedly by the commission in the document. At the same time, the commission in this document does wrestle very frankly and directly with such crucial questions as "the precise meaning of the terminology employed in Article VI" (ICR, pp. 27-28) and the application of Article VI to various "special services" and "certain occasional joint activities or gatherings at which worship takes place, as distinguished from the regular and official public and corporate worship services of congregations" (ICR, pp. 33-34). In this connection, the commission expresses its judgment "that Article VI and other official statements of the synod do not explicitly address all such questions and circumstances" (ICR, p. 34) and that "it is simply not possible to make decisions in the area of inter-Christian relationships that are free from the ambiguities of human judgment" (ICR, p. 32).

10. Is there any connection between the CTCR's document and Dr. Nafzger's essay on "Levels of Fellowship"?

In 1987 Dr. Nafzger was invited by the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. to give a paper at a conference held in Puerto Rico on the assigned topic "Levels of Fellowship: A Missouri Synod Perspective." A few months later he was invited to give this same essay at the 1987 Circuit

Counselors' Conference. Before accepting this invitation and after sharing this essay with the members of the CTCR, Dr. Nafzger requested guidance from the CTCR concerning this invitation. In response, the commission encouraged him to accept the invitation, "urging" him to give "as broad a coverage of the subject as possible." In this essay Dr. Nafzger states that, from the Missouri Synod perspective, there can be no levels of unity in Christ nor any levels of *church fellowship*. But he also illustrates how the LCMS' consistent understanding of fellowship from the time of Walther through the CTCR reports on fellowship allow for various levels of expression of unity in Christ outside of altar and pulpit fellowship.

Although the commission, therefore, encouraged Dr. Nafzger to share his paper in the synod, this essay was not prepared in connection with the synod's assignment to the Commission. It does illustrate the legitimacy of the synod's assignment to the CTCR to prepare practical guidelines for inter-Christian relationships.

11. Has there been complete agreement within the commission itself regarding this assignment on "Inter-Christian Relationships"?

No. This has been a difficult assignment for the commission, and there has been disagreement within the commission as the work on this assignment has continued over the past ten years. Two of its sixteen voting members requested that their negative votes be recorded when "Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study" was adopted.

All of the members of the commission are of one mind, however, in holding that only the Word of God can determine doctrine in the church. Synods, councils, faculties, commissions on theology, as well as individuals, can err. Right doctrine is never a matter of majority vote, and therefore no one on the commission wants in any way to suppress the viewpoints and opinions of the individual members of the CTCR. At the same time, it is true that the

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overwhelming majority of the CTCR, following years of intense study, is convinced that this document is faithful to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the synod's historic position on fellowship.

12. If the commission is "convinced" that this document is scriptural and confessional, does that mean that the final version of this document is, in effect, already written, and that critiques of this document will be ignored?

Absolutely not. The commission is taking very seriously the responses it is receiving to this document, and intends to make good use of them as it works toward the completion of this assignment. While the commission does not do its theology by means of an "opinion poll" (whether the results are positive or negative), it greatly values the comments, concerns, and insights of the members of the synod regarding its work.

13. How many responses to this document has the commission received, and from whom?

As of April 15 [1992] the commission has received 260 responses to its study document on "Inter-Christian Relationships." About one hundred have come from circuits in the synod, one hundred from individual pastors, and the remainder from laypersons, study groups, congregations, *et cetera*. At least one response has been received from every district in the synod. The commission has also received a number of responses from its partner churches around the world.

14. Have the responses been mainly positive or negative?

The commission did not ask for "positive" or "negative" responses, but for critical study and review of this document. The reactions themselves have been very wide-ranging, from highly critical to very approving of this draft. Most fall somewhere in the middle. Of the approximately one hundred circuit responses, for example, sixty percent chose none of the three responses offered on the response question-

naire. Many have provided suggestions for strengthening the document to avoid misunderstanding and misuse. The great majority of the responses have expressed appreciation for the process which the commission is following and for the opportunity to study and discuss this issue. It is apparent that this document is being widely discussed and studied throughout the synod, and the commission is grateful that so many have shared their reactions.

15. Is it the commission's intention to present a final draft of this document for adoption at the convention in Pittsburgh?

No. Various rumors and reports notwithstanding, this has never been the commission's intention. The commission has been working on this assignment for over ten years, and its work will not be completed until all responses have been received and analyzed, critical issues have again been raised and discussed, and a final draft of the document has been prepared and approved. The commission has no desire or intention to rush this critical process. At the same time, it does seek to complete this assignment as soon as possible, hopefully well in advance of the 1995 convention of the synod.

16. Does the commission plan to offer a detailed report to the synod on the responses it has received to this study document?

Yes. At its meeting in April 1992 the commission asked its executive director to prepare such a report for timely publication, if possible in one of the seminary journals. This report will also set forth some of the basic presuppositions underlying the study document and clarify some apparent misunderstandings about its purpose and content.

### Endnotes

1. *Convention Proceedings*, 1981, Resolution 3-03A, "To Prepare Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships."

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2. See Appendix A in "Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study," CTCR, 1991, pp. 48-52.
  3. For a detailed report on the results of these conferences see the *Convention Workbook*, 1986, pp. 105-108.
  4. *Handbook of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, 1989, p. 9.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
  6. *Convention Proceedings*, 1971, Resolution 3-26, "To Study 'A Statement Regarding Lutheran Unity.'"
  7. *Convention Proceedings*, 1965, Resolution 3-12, "To Enter Proposed Lutheran Council in the USA."
  8. *Convention Proceedings*, 1977, pp. 45-46: "On the basis of the study and evaluation called for in 1971 Res. 3-18 the CTCR therefore concludes that Missouri Synod participation in LCUSA is consistent with the Synod's scriptural and confessional position" (p. 46).
  9. *Convention Proceedings*, 1969, Resolution 3-14, "To Apply for Membership in Lutheran World Federation."
  10. Cf. *Convention Workbook*, 1977, p. 44.
  11. *Convention Proceedings*, 1977, Resolution 3-02A, "To Declare a State of 'Fellowship' with the ALC."
  12. "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," A Report of the CTCR, 1981, p. 9.
  13. *Ibid.*
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
  16. *Ibid.*

17. Ibid.
18. To provide information on a number of questions raised concerning the CTCR's assignment and its "Study Instrument" on "Inter-Christian Relationships" the Executive Director of the CTCR prepared a document entitled "Questions and Answers: 'Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study' (CTCR, 1991)" and distributed it to the Council of Presidents on May 1, 1992, for their use in responding to various inquiries. These *Questions and Answers* are attached as an appendix to this article.
19. C. F. W. Walther, *Walther and the Church*, ed. Wm Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 70. Cf. *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* (1852), p. 179: "denn wer nicht in innerlicher Gemeinschaft mit den Gläubigen und Heiligen steht, der steht auch nicht in Gemeinschaft mit Christo; hingegen wer durch den Glauben in Gemeinschaft mit Christo steht, der steht auch in Gemeinschaft mit allen denen, in denen Christus wohnt, d.i. mit der unsichtbaren Kirche. Wer daher die Seligkeit an die Gemeinschaft mit irgend einer sichtbaren Kirche bindet, stöszt damit den Artikel von der Rechtfertigung eines armen Sünders von Gott allein durch den glauben an Jesum Christum um."
20. "Theology of Fellowship," A Report of the CTCR, 1965, pp. 18-19. Cf. 1967 Resolution 2-13, "To Adopt 'Theology of Fellowship' for Reference and Guidance."
21. Ibid., p. 28.
22. Ibid.
23. "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism," A Report of the CTCR, 1974, p. 9.
24. Ibid., p. 12.
25. Ibid.
26. *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, 1970, p. 51.

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27. On the basis of this unit concept understanding of fellowship, for example, WELS considers it unionistic for "a soloist who does not share our faith to lead us in worship" at a wedding service; cf. *The Northwestern Lutheran*, October 1983, p. 278. It is also considered unionistic for a WELS congregation to have a non-WELS member play the organ for public worship, or for a WELS member to play the organ in a congregation not in church fellowship with WELS; cf. *The Northwestern Lutheran*, April 15, 1989, p. 152. In response to the question as to whether it would be contrary to the WELS teaching on church fellowship to sing Handel's *Messiah* with a community chorus, the answer is that it all depends. If the purpose of the singing is that the chorus "merely performs the great works of choral heritage," then participation by a WELS member "is not religious unionism—the false fellowship of disparate faiths." But "if some in the community chorus want to make the singing of the *Messiah* an expression of religious oneness," then the "confessional response must be to withdraw"; cf. *The Northwestern Lutheran*, November 15, 1990, p. 397.
  28. Letter from Professor W. M. Oesch, D.D., and Pastor Manfred Roensch, Dr. Theol., to President Oscar J. Naumann, July 28, 1961 (in the files of the CTCR).
  29. "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," pp. 18-19.
  30. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
  31. *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 14.
  32. "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," p. 46.

## Books Received

Pokorny, Petr. *Colossians: A Commentary*. Translated by Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991. xxx + 232 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann. *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of N. T. Exegesis*. Translated from the Eighth Revised German Edition by Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1988. xix + 389 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

Craig S. Keener. *And Marries Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991. xii + 256 pages. Paper. \$9.95.

Karen Lebacqz and Ronald O. Barton. *Sex in the Parish*. 279 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

Katheryn Pfisterer Darr. *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 223 pages. Paper. \$15.95.

Stephen Mitchell. *The Gospel According to Jesus: A New Translation and Guide to His Essential Teachings for Believers and Unbelievers*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1991. 310 pages. Cloth. \$22.00.

Karl Barth. *Homiletics*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 136 pages. Paper. \$10.95.

Margaret M. Poloma and George H. Gallup, Jr. *Varieties of Prayer: A Survey Report*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991. xvi + 142 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

Robert G. Hoerber. *Studies in the New Testament*. Cleveland: God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, 1991. xviii + 114 pages. Paper. \$11.95.

Keith Ward. *Divine Action*. San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1991. 274 pages. Paper. \$16.95.

Eduard Lohse. *Theological Ethics of the New Testament*. Translated by M. Eugene Boring. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. viii + 236 pages. Paper.

James H. Robinson. *Devotional Thoughts on Favorite Hymns*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. 165 pages. Paper. \$8.95.

Armin W. Schuetze. *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. The People's Bible. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. vi + 220 pages. Paper. \$7.95.

Eric S. Hartzell. *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*. The People's Bible. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. vii + 152 pages. Paper. \$6.95.



# "Inter-Christian Relationships": A Minority Report

Kurt E. Marquart

In February of 1991 the majority of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) adopted a document entitled "Inter-Christian Relationships" (sometimes abbreviated hereafter as ICR). The response which follows was presented to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in February of 1992 as a dissent from "Inter-Christian Relationships." Only minor alterations have been made to conform to the stylistic conventions of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*.

From the outset it is vital to note what is and what is not at issue here: The question is not whether Christians of different churches should enjoy friendly relations with one another. It is not whether there are occasions for joint prayer among them. And it is not an issue whether there are special situations of pastoral care when the sacrament might be given to persons not officially members of our synod or of a synod in fellowship with it. Nor is it an issue whether there are areas for legitimate cooperation among churches of differing confessions. All these things are taken for granted. What is at stake here is the frame of reference within which such things are treated. The real question is whether our doctrine of church fellowship is to be evangelically and confessionally sound and, indeed, whether it can even be stated coherently enough so that its soundness can be tested.

Among Lutherans there are clear criteria for testing the theological adequacy of anything. They are the Holy Scriptures as the word of God (*norma normans*), and the orthodox creeds and confessions as the true and uncorrupted understanding of that word (*norma normata*) in regard to the matters addressed. What the properly understood divine word (that is, the self-interpreting Holy Scripture as rightly confessed in the Book of Concord) actually teaches about church fellowship, is set out admirably in "Fellowship in Its Necessary Context of the Doctrine of the Church," produced by the Overseas Committee on Fellowship of the Synodical Conference in 1961.<sup>1</sup> This standard, orthodox, evangelical Lutheran position is the frame of reference for the critique of "Inter-Christian Relationships" which follows.

Self-evidently "Inter-Christian Relationships" contains much that

is unexceptionable. This minority report must needs focus on the points of divergence. These may be grouped in terms of surface symptoms and deeper troubles, respectively.

### A. Surface Problems

(1.) The attempted distinction between "regular and official public and corporate worship services" with heterodox churches, on the one hand, and "special" or "occasional" such services, on the other hand (ICR, 33-38), is specious and, in effect, sets aside Article VIIb of the synodical constitution, which forbids "taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession." While the synod has expressly held "that we expect our pastors and congregations to follow this article (VI) with respect to mixed wedding ceremonies" (1977, Resolution 3-25), "Inter-Christian Relationships" treats official participation in "ecumenical wedding services" as in principle permissible (ICR, 35-38), citing German and Australian opinions to that effect for good measure (ICR, Appendix C, 54-57). In respect of the opinion of the Australian Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) of 1988 cited in Appendix C, this statement should be contrasted with an earlier pronouncement by the same CTICR: "The Commission fraternally urges that the pastors of the LCA refrain from co-officiating at or taking official part in wedding, funeral, or other similar services, which are of an inter-church character in the sense of Article II, paragraph 4, of the Theses of Agreement, i.e., 'services conducted by churches not in fellowship of faith.' Participation in such services should be regarded as a form of promiscuous worship to which Article II, paragraph 2, clearly applies."<sup>2</sup>

(2.) "Inter-Christian Relationships" opens the synod's close communion to "visitors who belong to congregations of other Christian denominations" and who "desire to commune at the altars of our synodical congregations." Provided the answers to certain "questions are satisfactory, guests should be welcomed" (ICR, 43-44). Among the questions to be put to prospective communicants—so it was urged during the discussion of the text—should be the vital question whether these guests are regular communicants at altars of other confessions. The final edition of "Inter-Christian

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Relationships" deflected this suggestion by placing the question among the non-committal "discussion questions" (ICR, 44), not among the questions to be asked before admission.

Another suggestion lost without trace in the final version was that Werner Elert's classic monograph on fellowship be quoted as follows:

By his partaking of the Sacrament in a church a Christian declares that the confession of that church is his confession. Since a man cannot at the same time hold two differing confessions, he cannot communicate in two churches of differing confessions. If anyone does this nevertheless, he denies his own confession or has none at all.<sup>3</sup>

(3.) The "Case Studies" in "Inter-Christian Relationships" (Appendix A) are undecidable, given a certain hesitancy about the applicability of the biblical texts (ICR, 15).

(4.) This hesitancy (noted in point 3 above) is related to the loss of clear categories brought about by terminological and conceptual muddles, above all the alien notion of "levels of fellowship."

(a.) On the one hand, "the outward unity of the church" at the top of page 20 is still said to require full agreement in doctrine and sacraments. That is the view expressed in the theses adopted by the CTCR in 1981, which identify "external unity in the church" with "church fellowship," for which full confessional agreement is required (ICR, 7-9). Yet, on the other hand, by the second half of page 20, as on page 22, there are gradations of external unity: "The unity of all believers is a unity of faith in the gospel, and our expression of that unity in outward and organizational ways is determined by the measure of our consensus in confessing the gospel." Again, "expressions of Christian unity" must be "proportionate to the measure of consensus in confessing the Biblical gospel that we enjoy with the other Christians involved" (ICR, 29).

(b.) The logic of "ambiguous denominationalism" (ICR, 5), plus the distinction between fellowship at the "church-body level" and at the "local level" (ICR, 9), plus the insistence "that expressions of Christian unity be proportionate to the measure of consensus . . .

with the other Christians involved" (ICR, 29), leads directly to the "selective fellowship" still rejected by the CTCR in 1981 (ICR, 9), but practised or advocated (or both) in several districts of the LCMS.

(c.) On the one hand, "unionism" is correctly defined as "church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine" (ICR, 28). On the other hand, joint services with heterodox churches and their ministers are allowed and advocated (ICR, 33-38). Whereas Article VI of the synodical constitution forbids joint services *because* they are unionistic, "Inter-Christian Relationships" forbids them *if* they are unionistic, that is to say, "only when doctrinal compromise might be involved" (ICR, 34). There are, then, joint public worship services with heterodox churches which are unionistic and other such joint services which are not unionistic—a conclusion suggestive of sophistry.

(d.) The term "relationships" is a slippery one. It is a sociological term which has no theological meaning whatever. There is no harm in its use as a simple starting point (e.g., "How are various relationships to be understood theologically?"). But then one needs to know in theological terms just what relationship is meant, whether that of parents and children, husbands and wives, governments and citizens, orthodox and heterodox churches, orthodox clergy and laity, or one of many others. The phrase "inter-Christian relationships" can cover any or all of these. As a classifying handle "relationships" works like a "wild card," supplying any desired meaning. The main mischief here is that the term fudges the all-important difference between fellowship and non-fellowship. Thus, on page 24 "relationships" covers both fellowship and non-fellowshipping relations. Yet "the pinnacle of inter-Christian relationships" there is clearly equivalent to "the highest and deepest kind of communion or fellowship" in the next paragraph. When crucial terms are fudged, the discussion wallows in ambiguity. Shuttling back and forth between "relationship" and "fellowship" blurs the absolute boundary between all human sociological constructs and God's own gifts and institutions.

(e.) The ambiguity of "relationships" is the bridge by which the harmless term "levels of relationships" crosses over into the troublesome notion of "levels of fellowship"—a theological novelty

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introduced into the Missouri Synod from alien sources. Although "Inter-Christian Relationships" avoids the *term* "levels of fellowship," the *idea* is the real motor of the entire document: "We express the unity of all believers in Christ on the basis of our measure of consensus in confessing the gospel" (ICR, 20-21); ". . . our expression of that unity in outward and organizational ways is determined by the measure of our consensus in confessing the gospel" (ICR, 22); "we must insist that expressions of Christian unity be proportionate to the measure of consensus in confessing the Biblical gospel that we enjoy with the other Christians involved" (ICR, 29); "it is important that we encourage one another to raise the question of the amount of doctrinal agreement that exists and then to determine the kinds of joint activity that are consistent with that agreement" (ICR, 29). The old "either-or"—"communion or fellowship in sacred things" or else "cooperation in externals," that is, non-fellowship (ICR, 24)—is thus replaced with a sliding scale of more or less "relationship" (equalling fellowship and external expression of unity) depending on the degree of agreement. Three preliminary points may be noted:

(i.) With the orthodox church of all ages—in which *communio una est* ("fellowship is one")—the Missouri Synod has always rejected the idea of levels of fellowship based on degrees of agreement. Werner Elert stated: "There was either complete fellowship or none at all."<sup>4</sup> C. F. W. Walther asserted: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church rejects all fraternal and churchly fellowship with those who reject its Confessions in whole or in part."<sup>5</sup> Ralph Bohlmann once said: "For other Lutherans, 'fellowship' generally indicates a rather minimal relationship between Christians, while the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod regards it as the most comprehensive and complete relationship possible among Christians."<sup>6</sup>

(ii.) The idea of "levels of fellowship" was introduced to, and resisted by, the Missouri Synod in its discussions with the synods of the National Lutheran Council beginning in 1960. Martin Franzmann observed: "The NLC presentation . . . envisages degrees or stages of fellowship proportionate to the degree of consensus which has been attained. The Missouri presentation is oriented toward doctrinal confessional unity between Lutherans."<sup>7</sup> Bergendoff

asserted: "In short we may claim that in the degree to which we can come to a common understanding of the gospel, in that degree we are able to work together in the ministry of reconciliation. . . . The proposition of complete unity or none at all cannot be defended on scriptural grounds . . . Rather the Scriptures teach a unity between the believer and the Redeemer which issues in a unity between believers that varies according to circumstances."<sup>8</sup>

(iii.) Apart from dissident district sources, the only published statements advocating "levels of fellowship" in the Missouri Synod known to the undersigned are the following, the first being the words of Ralph Bohlmann and the second being those of Samuel Nafzger:

Perhaps the time has come for us to consider developing and employing a different set of terms to clarify and distinguish various kinds of Christian relationships . . . *Levels of Unity*. There are many Lutherans who feel that the "unit concept" of the Wisconsin Synod, which places virtually all forms of church relations on the same level, has much to commend it. Others have argued that the amount of doctrinal agreement between Christian groups determines the extent to which they may cooperate or practice fellowship with one another. One could argue that the latter approach is the *de facto* situation for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod which even now engages in some forms of cooperation with church bodies who are not in fellowship. If this is so, a clearly defined rationale should be articulated for the guidance of the Synod at all levels.<sup>9</sup>

My assignment is "to look at the basic challenge of Fundamental Consensus and Fundamental Differences in the light of 'Levels of Fellowship' as seen from your place in the Lutheran tradition". . . Not only is a "levels of fellowship" approach . . . theologically possible, but it seems to me that it is also contextually necessary today. . . . Finally, a "levels of fellowship" approach . . . can help us avoid an "all or nothing" posture to the quest for unity in the church."<sup>10</sup>

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## B. Deep-Structure Problems

In the nature of the case the analysis of theological background requires more space than is available in a necessarily short minority report. Only the main points of the argument will be indicated here, therefore, and the full discussion will be attached as Appendix B.

### 1. *Individualism*

The problems of unity and division in the church cannot be handled in terms of *individuals* ("Christians"), as "Inter-Christian Relationships" attempts to do. That was just the trouble with both the "Missourian" and the "Wisconsinite" approaches in the early 1960's, which the theses of the Overseas Committee on Fellowship (Appendix A) attempted to cure by making the *marks of the church* pivotal. But the marks attach to and identify the church and churches, not individuals.

### 2. *Luther and Schleiermacher*

The thinking behind "Inter-Christian Relationships," while admitting the radical opposition between Luther's and Schleiermacher's understandings of church and fellowship, attempts, disturbingly, to accommodate "both of these conceptions," in the interests of "levels of fellowship."<sup>11</sup> Such a positive evaluation of Schleiermacher represents a significant departure from the position taken by the CTCR in "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship" (1981), where Schleiermacher's view on just this issue is roundly rejected.

Beyond its general individualism, "Inter-Christian Relationships" features two related characteristics of thinking in the mode of Schleiermacher: (a.) church fellowship is seen as a special case within the general category of "fellowship" and (b.) church fellowship is treated under the rubric of ethics (law), rather than doctrine (gospel). Against these ideas the church of the Augsburg Confession holds that church fellowship rests on that which creates the church (Ephesians 2:20), the pure gospel and sacraments of Christ, which are before and above all individual faith, love, justification, and sanctification, as their source and foundation. "All other ground is sinking sand."

### 3. *"Truth, Unity, Love"*

These themes add nothing new, but are simply a condensation of the nine "fellowship principles" writ large. The conclusions of "Inter-Christian Relationships," however, loosen and broaden the "external unity" of the "fellowship principles" formulated a decade earlier. Theses 8 and 9 of 1981 identify "external unity" with "church fellowship" and insist on actual consensus in the apostolic faith as its basis. The "Inter-Christian Relationships" of 1991 broadens this approach to external unity, that is, "expressions of that [internal] unity in outward and organizational ways" on the basis of a *partial* consensus, that is, a "measure" of it (page 22 and elsewhere).

Furthermore, by introducing three terms—"truth," "unity," and "love"—where Luther had two, "doctrine" and "life" (or "love"), the sharp dichotomy between God's saving gifts and our responses is blurred, which amounts to a confusion of law and gospel. "Love can sometimes be neglected without danger, but the word and faith cannot. It belongs to love to bear everything and to yield to everyone. On the other hand, it belongs to faith to bear nothing whatever and to yield to no one."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, says Luther, "Doctrine is heaven; life is earth." The truth of gospel doctrine is not to be relativised to outward "unity" or quantified by "measure" and "proportion."<sup>13</sup>

Finally, neither the "fellowship principles," nor their summary as truth, unity, and love, actually define the *nature* of church fellowship, as distinct from its *basis* (which is defined). Since everything depends on the means of grace, fellowship is basically pulpit and altar fellowship, joint proclamation and celebration. "Joint services" with heterodox churches therefore directly violate the divine (evangelical) instituting mandates by which alone the church lives. It is not a matter of human and changing applications of "eternal" but ethereal "fellowship principles."

### 4. *Augustana VII*

"Inter-Christian Relationships" assumes a schema which assigns Article VII of the Augsburg Confession to an internal ("spiritual")



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unity and fellowship (*unitas*) and Article X:31 of the Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration) to external unity and fellowship (*concordia*). Internal and external unity are, of course, distinct, but it is not true that Augustana VII speaks of one and Formula X of the other. By making this disjunction and banishing the "true unity" of Augustana VII to some invisible ("spiritual") realm, the proper solid ground and starting point is given up. Generic "fellowship principles" are placed into the breach, but they cannot "compute" church fellowship and joint services. "Levels of fellowship" can arise only in the void created by the scuttling of the "strong," traditional understanding of Augustana VII.

### Appendix A

#### "Fellowship in Its Necessary Context of the Doctrine of the Church"

(Statement of the Overseas Committee of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference)

[The following theses were presented to the Forty-Sixth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Conference of North America, which convened in Milwaukee in May (17-19) of 1961. Some instances of capitalization and abbreviation have been modified to conform to the usage of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*.]

1. The holy, catholic, and apostolic church is one body in Christ, incorporating all believers, whose faith is created, sustained, fulfilled, and known by God alone. The church and the faith of the heart (*fides qua*) are outside the competence and the direct comprehension of men.

Matthew 16:16-19; John 10:16, 27-29; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:14, 15; 2:19-21; 4:3-6, 15, 16 (G. Stoeckhardt, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1901, 97ff.)—Nicene Creed; SC [Small Catechism], Second and Third Articles; CA [Augsburg Confession] V and VII; Apology VII:5-8.

John 6:44; Acts 13:48; Colossians 2:12; 3:3, 4; 2 Timothy 2:19.

2. Faith is created and sustained by God through the means of grace. Where the means of grace (gospel and sacraments) are in

use, even where much impeded, there believers are present. We know this by faith and not by empirical experience. This knowledge rests on the promise of God in the means of grace outside of us (*extra nos*) and not on criteria in us (*in nobis*): sanctification, or any assessment of men, their works, polity, or discipline.

Isaiah 55:10; Luke 8:11-15; Romans 10:5-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Titus 3: 5, 6. CA V: "That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake." Apology IV:67, 346 (225); SC, Third Article (cf. Large Catechism, Third Article, 43-45); SD [Solid Declaration] II:50; XI:29, 50.—No other criterion [is allowable]: Apology VII:10 ,11, 18, 19.

1 Samuel 16:7; Acts 15:8.

3. Where the means of grace are in operation, there the church is to be found, whole, local, and tangible. The assembly regularly gathered about the pure preaching and the right administration of the sacraments is called by God Himself the church at that place, irrespective of the hypocrites who may be attached outwardly to such assembly. This is no mere organizational form or association of individuals, but the one church that will remain forever (*una sancta perpetuo mansura*) in the exercise of its God-given, spiritual functions (office of the keys). This church is only one. Though locally apprehended, it must not be thought of as isolated, intermittent, or individual with reference to persons, time, or place.

Matthew 18:18-20; Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20; Ephesians 4:3-16; 5:25, 27 CA VII and VIII; LC [Large Catechism], Third Article, 51-58, 61f.; AS [Smalcald Articles], Part 3, VII:1; Tractatus 24:67-69; SD X:9.—Luther (WA, 18:652, 743): "The church is hidden, the saints latent. . . . The whole life of the church and its being is in the word of God." *Disputation of 1542* (Drews, 655f.): "The church is recognized by its confession . . . it is in other words visible by its confession."

The addresses of the epistles and Acts 2-5; 9:31.

Matthew 28:18-20 par; Galatians 4:26-28; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5;

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1 Peter 2:2-10.

4. The means of grace, which are the means of uniting the church to Christ, its Head, are a given whole, inseparable from the total revelation of law and gospel as set forth in the Scriptures (cf. the whole definition in CA VII).

John 10:34, 35; 16:12-15; 17:20; 1 John 2:26, 27; Romans 1:1, 2; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; parallels—AS, Part 2, II:15: "The word of God shall establish articles of faith. . . ." CA: first paragraph of transition from Article XXI to XXII; SD, Rule and Norm. Note the singulars "doctrine," "form of sound words," "deposit," etc. 1 Timothy 3:15. Luke 24:47 and 1 Timothy 1:8, 9; parallels—SD V and VI.

5. The means of grace create the fellowship of believers with God and thereby fellowship with all believers. This fellowship is, accordingly, given by God, not achieved by any human effort. Its existence can be believed and known only on the basis of the marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*).

Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 10:16, 17; 12:13; Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 John 1:1-4; 3 John 3-8.—Apology VII:5f., 12, 19, 20.—Hollaz, *Examen* (1707 and 1750), p. 1300: "The inner and essential form of the church consists in the spiritual unity of those who truly believe, of the saints who are tied together (John 13:35) as members of the church with Christ the Head, by means of a true and living faith (John 1: 12; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 6:17), which is followed by a fellowship of mutual love."

Galatians 2:6, 9, 11-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15; 1 John 1:5-7.—Apology VII:22; SD X:3.

6. Where the marks of the church are opposed by false teaching, not only is this double fellowship (in the *una sancta*) endangered, but a power is set up which is in contradiction to the fellowship manifested on earth (see 12). Where the pure marks of the church (*notae purae*) hold sway, this disrupting power is repudiated and overcome through refusal to recognize its right to exist, for Christ alone must reign in His church through His word. Where the sway of the pure marks of the church is rejected, the fellowship is broken. A rupture of fellowship for any other reason is impermissible. The restoring of a broken fellowship must be brought about by use of the

pure marks of the church, as they cleanse out the impurity.

Matthew 7:15; 16:6; Acts 20:27-30; Romans 16:16-20; Galatians 1:8, 9; 5:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 11:4, 13-15; Philippians 3:2; 1 Timothy 1:3, 18, 19; 4:1-3; 5:22; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:15-21; 3:5, 8, 9; Titus 1:9, 10; 3:10; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2 John 8-11.—CA VII; SD XI:94-96. The negatives of all symbols; CA XXVIII:20-28; Apology VII:20-22, 48-50; XV:18; AS, Part 2, 11:10; Tractatus 38, 41, 42, 71; Preface to SD: 6-10; X:5, 6, 31.

Acts 15; 2 Corinthians 10:4-6; Ephesians 4:11-14; 6:17.

1 Corinthians 1:10; chapters 12-14.—CA VII: 2, 3; Apology IV: 231 (110).

It is understood that the church takes action through the office of the keys committed to it by Christ (see 3).

7. Impurity can be discerned only by the standard of the pure marks of the church. The subjective faith of any man or group cannot be judged by us, but only what is actually taught or confessed, as it conforms or does not conform to the pure marks.

John 8:31, 32; Romans 6:17; 1 Timothy 6:13, 20; 2 Timothy 1:13.—The passages from the symbols referred to under 4 and 6 [pertain here also].

8. The purity of the marks is defended by the symbols. The symbols (*norma normata*) as the true interpretation of the word of God (*norma normans*) are a continuous standard of public teaching in the church from generation to generation and bind together not only all true confessors of any particular time but those of all ages in oneness of teaching (cf. the durative present tenses in "is taught" and "are administered" and also the adverbs "purely" and "rightly" in AC VII). In the symbols we have a safeguard against those who hold God's word to be present only as God wills from time to time, as they are also a safeguard of the truth against reliance upon a traditional exegesis and ecclesiastical success, and against a method of hermeneutics which uses the Bible as a book of oracles to the neglect of the rule of faith.

Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 16:16, 17; parallels; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 1 Timothy 6:12-14; 2 Timothy 1:13, 14; 2:2; Hebrews 4:14.—Article I in each [of these symbols]: CA, Apology, and AS; CA VII: "Also they teach that one holy church is to continue forever. The church

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is the congregation of saints, in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments." See also FC [Formula of Concord], Norm and Rule, together with prefaces.

Matthew 10:32, 33, 40, 41; Romans 10:9, 10.

9. A quantitative approach is as misleading as an unhistorical one. The inexhaustible wholeness of the marks of the church calls for constant and complete submission and acceptance. The symbols do not speak fully on every doctrine, but as presentations of the marks they have abiding validity, as have also their rejections of what they recognize as falsifications of or subtractions from the marks.

Matthew 23:8; John 10:5, 27; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.—AS, part 3, VIII; SD, X:31; XI:95, 96; XII:39, 40.

10. The faith which is taught in a church is first of all the formal and official confession of a church. This may, however, be called in question or rendered doubtful by actual or practical negation of it. In that case a distinction must be made between sporadic contradiction and persistent approval or toleration of contradiction. In the latter case, the official confession, no matter how excellent, is negated.

For Scripture passages see under 6 and under 8.—SC, Second Commandment and First Petition; end of Preface to the Book of Concord; SD, VII:1; X:5, 6, 10, 11, 28, 29.

11. The marks of the church are all-decisive. Everything must be referred to them. This duty is hindered by presumptuous judgments or statements concerning the faith or lack of it in individuals. It is enthusiasm to build on subjective faith (*fides qua*) and love, for faith is hidden and love is variable. Both are in man. The means of grace are objective, solid, apprehensible. Since these are God's own means, we must attend entirely upon them and draw from them the distinction between the orthodox church and heterodox churches.

See under 4, 6, 8, 10. Observe that of the abounding polemics in the Book of Concord more than one third is directed against pseudo-Lutheranism.

12. The fellowship created by word and sacraments shows itself fundamentally in pulpit and altar fellowship. It can show itself in many other ways, some of which, like prayer and worship and love of the brethren, the church cannot do without; others of which, like the holy kiss or the handshake or the reception into one's house, vary from place to place and from time to time. In whatever way the fellowship created by word and sacraments shows itself, all visible manifestations of fellowship must be truthful and in accordance with the supreme demands of the marks of the church. The "sacred things" (*sacra*) are the means of grace, and only by way of them is anything else a "sacred thing" (*sacrum*).

Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 1:10; cf. 15:1-4; 10:16, 17; 11:22-34; 12:13; chapter 14; 2 Corinthians 8-9. See also material under 2, 6, and 7.

13. Prayer is not one of the marks of the church and should not be co-ordinated with word and sacraments, as though it were essentially of the same nature as they. As a response to the divine word, it is an expression of faith and a fruit of faith and, when spoken before others, a profession of faith. As a profession of faith it must be in harmony with and under the control of the marks of the church.

Daniel 9:18; Acts 9:11; Galatians 4:6; Romans 10:8-14; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2; Acts 27:35.—Apology XIII:16; XXIII:30, 31; LC, Lord's Prayer:13-30. Also see under 12.

This statement bears within it (a.) the implication that the member churches of the Synodical Conference have not enunciated and carried through the principles outlined in it in their documents of fellowship with the necessary clarity and consistency and (b.) the suggestion that the goal of the Synodical Conference discussion is to be reached by the traditional highway of the doctrine of the church. Since the premature turning off into the byway of fellowship has led to a dead end, it would seem best, first of all, to return to the highway and there move forward together guided only by the marks of the church.

Finally, the members of the Overseas Committee on Fellowship feel that they will not have done what is expected of them if they do not indicate, at least in a general way, in the concrete case of prayer

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fellowship how the approach here developed may lead to a happy solution of this vexing matter. It seems to them that statements on prayer fellowship like the following could be suggested as flowing directly from the principles enunciated:

- (1.) Prayer between Christians belonging to churches which have a conflicting relation to the marks of the church must avoid the ever-present suspicion that the marks of the church are being disregarded.
- (2.) "When joint prayer shows the marks or characteristics of unionism, it must be condemned and avoided. Such marks and characteristics of unionism are (a.) failure to confess the whole truth of the divine word (*in statu confessionis*); (b.) failure to reject and denounce every opposing error; (c.) assigning to error equal right with truth; (d.) creating the impression of unity in faith or of church fellowship where it does not exist" (Australian Theses of Agreement, II, 2).

These four characteristics of unionism are clearly negations of the marks of the church.

- (3.) Joint prayer of the kind described in 1 cannot in the very nature of the case be normal or regular, but will rather be exceptional (see 2.d above).
- (4.) Situations, however, can be imagined, and have actually occurred in the history of the church, where joint prayer of the kind mentioned in 1 can be practiced, for it can be shown that the marks of the church have not been or are not in such cases disregarded, jeopardized, or surrendered. These instances cannot be judged by a flat rule beforehand, for the situation differs with each case, and so a decision on the permissibility of joint prayer in any particular situation will have to be made by a fair and adequate judgment of that case. And in such individual cases one must reckon with the fact that Christians will differ in their judgment. Such differences in judgment will have to be tolerated in the church militant, as long as there is an evident loyalty to the demands of the divine word and sacraments.

Isaiah 59:2; Galatians 2—SC, Commandments 1, 2, and 3; First Petition; LC, Second Commandment, 53-56; First Petition, 39-48.

Galatians 5:1; Colossians 2:16, 20.—CA VII:2, 3; XV; XXVIII:30ff. and the correspondents in Apology and AS; SD X.

## Appendix B: The Theological Argument in Detail

### 1. *Individualism*

The root-fallacy of the entire document entitled "Inter-Christian Relationships" is the idea that the problem of unity and division in the church can be handled in terms of individuals ("Christians") rather than churches. This approach was just what the official critique by the synod's sister-church in Australia found wrong with the original version of "Theology of Fellowship" (later improved in response to such criticisms):

The tendency throughout—and it is intentional—is not to speak of churches, but to speak of individuals. For with them, in accordance with the subjective *proton pseudos* at the basis of the whole presentation, we can . . . distinguish those who are plainly not of Christ . . . and those who are true Christians.

Basically the same fault, it may be noted, was found by the overseas theologians with the Wisconsin Synod's definition of fellowship at that time (in the early 1960's), which focused on the "faith" of "Christians" and its "joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration," rather than directly on the objective marks of the church (the purely preached gospel and the rightly administered sacraments). A "unit concept" so based is simply the other (exclusivist) side of the same individualistic coin—the inclusivist side being now represented by "Inter-Christian Relationships".

The fact is that the pure marks attach to and identify not individuals but the church. Only God knows who His believers really are. Individuals ("Christians") can be identified for fellowship purposes not directly but only by way of the churches to which they belong, which are either orthodox or heterodox, depending on their relation to the marks. The "CR" in CTCR, it may be noted, means "Church



Relations," not "Christian Relationships."

Whatever may be said about the many ways in which individual Christians from different churches today find themselves at close quarters, that is not the issue addressed by "Inter-Christian Relationships". All the "Specific Situations" treated in "Inter-Christian Relationships" (pp. 32-47) deal not with private relations among individuals at all, but only with the official actions of churches and their public ministers. And to treat heterodox churches and the ministers who officially represent them simply as so many individual "Christians," is to enter a wayless, bottomless morass. Without stable, objective reference points an already difficult problem becomes insoluble.

## 2. *Luther and Schleiermacher*

The thinking behind "Inter-Christian Relationships" is made quite explicit in the following:

According to Elert the distinction between having "something to do with a person" and having "a part in a common thing" was vital to Luther. Fellowship, as Luther understands this concept, is not something produced by a human act. . .

Schleiermacher, on the other hand, understands fellowship quite differently, says Elert. He writes in his *Glaubenslehre*: "The general concept of the church, if there is to be such a thing, must be derived from ethics because the church at all events is a fellowship created by the voluntary actions of men, and only through these does it continue to exist." Instead of drawing his understanding of fellowship from the nature of the church, as had Luther, Schleiermacher derives the nature of the church from the concept of fellowship as understood in the realm of ethics. For Schleiermacher, therefore, the church is a special instance of the general category of fellowship. Concludes Elert: "What Luther meant is, then, diametrically opposed to what Schleiermacher meant by fellowship when he spoke of the church. For Schleiermacher fellowship 'is created by

the voluntary actions of men.' This is precisely what Luther rejected when he denied that fellowship means 'to have something to do with a person.'". . .

As we take a look at Missouri's understanding of fellowship, let us keep in mind the distinction which Elert has drawn between Luther's understanding of this concept as "having part in a common thing" and that of Schleiermacher as "the voluntary actions of men." This distinction, it seems to me, can be most helpful to us as we consider "Levels of Fellowship." I want to suggest that Missouri's understanding of fellowship takes into account both of these conceptions. It is also my contention that by clearly distinguishing, but not separating, these two ways of thinking about fellowship, it becomes not only possible but also perhaps even necessary to talk about "Levels of Fellowship" as a possible response to the "basic challenge of Fundamental Consensus and Fundamental Differences."<sup>14</sup>

The whole notion of blending the "conceptions" of Luther and Schleiermacher is theologically impossible—one simply has to choose between them. It may be noted, too, that this positive evaluation of Schleiermacher, as though his "conception" supplemented some deficiency in Luther, runs directly counter to the statement produced by the CTCR in 1981, "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship" (pp. 40-41), where Schleiermacher's view on just this point is roundly rejected.

Beyond its general individualism, "Inter-Christian Relationships" features two specific characteristics of Schleiermacher's thinking. One is the treatment of church fellowship as a special case of a more basic, inter-personal "fellowship," governed by generic "fellowship principles." The other is the tendency to treat external church fellowship as an issue in ethics (law) rather than dogmatics or doctrine (gospel).

"Inter-Christian Relationships" indeed has a short section on "The Church and Its Mission" (pp. 11-14). And the "Counsel for Specific Situations" treats, with the exception of half a page devoted to the sub-issue of "para-denominational associations," only of official

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churchly and ministerial acts and relations (pp. 32-47). In other words, the problem is church relations, not individual relationships. Yet the guiding perspective of "Inter-Christian Relationships" is that of generic "fellowship principles" governing relations among individual "Christians." To quote verbatim, "Inter-Christian Relationships" means to set out "the implications of the scriptural principles of fellowship for Christians in their daily life and relationships with other Christians" (p. 10). Thus "church fellowship" is simply a special case within the general "fellowship" relationships among individual Christians.

Even the language of "Inter-Christian Relationships" about the church being "constituted by faith in Jesus Christ" (p. 11) is askew and lends itself too easily to subjective misconceptions—despite the good intention to do justice to the "faith alone" of the Reformation. Faith "constitutes" the church no more than it constitutes baptism: "For my faith does not constitute baptism but receives it" (Large Catechism, Baptism, 52). If anything, the church constitutes us and our faith: "It is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the word of God" (Large Catechism, Creed, 42). The church is constituted by Christ alone through His holy gospel and sacraments (Ephesians 2:20), "and of His fulness have all we received, grace for grace" (John 1:16). Therefore, "the whole life and substance of the church is in the word of God."<sup>15</sup> It does matter how one thinks and speaks about these things.

The "principles of fellowship" of "Inter-Christian Relationships" (pp. 7-9) are taken over from the "Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship." That paper of 1981 had stronger and much more churchly *conclusions* than the "Inter-Christian Relationships" of 1991, in that the CTCR in 1981 rejected Schleiermacher out of hand<sup>16</sup> and did not dream of yielding to the demand for joint "ecumenical weddings, funerals, and occasional services."<sup>17</sup> Yet the fatal flaw which has now come to full flower in "Inter-Christian Relationships", was present in embryo already in the "principles" of 1981: church fellowship was treated in those nine theses under the rubric of love and ethics, not of primal gospel-doctrine and faith.

This is plain from the progression of the argument in the theses. Faith and justification play their role in the first two theses, which

deal not with "church fellowship" but only with "spiritual fellowship with Christ and with all believers." Outward church fellowship comes only at the end, in theses 7-9, and then by way of "good works" (thesis 4), "love" seeking edification (thesis 5), and the divinely "mandated" means of such edification, the confession of the full apostolic faith (thesis 6). Orthodox confession and the church fellowship based on it function here as aspects of the love and sanctification which follow upon justifying faith and "spiritual fellowship." And so theses 8 and 9 really mean that what is wrong with a false granting and withholding of church fellowship is that this violates "the law of Christian love."<sup>18</sup>

But if the whole practice of church fellowship is in principle a matter of love and ethics, and of obedience to divine mandates in that sense, then it cannot be church-divisive. For it would, of course, be schismatic to refuse church fellowship to churches and ministers simply because they do not practise enough love! No orthodox Lutheran church, least of all the Missouri Synod, ever based fellowship on fuzzy "principles" of love. On the contrary, to whom fellowship was granted or refused was always considered not just a point of ethics or love, but a prime indicator of gospel confession or denial. Francis Pieper put it very concretely in his lectures of 1916 on Walther's *The True Visible Church*: "If there is in Australia a church—and thank God there is a church there which agrees with us in the true faith—then we must maintain fellowship of confession and love also with that church. Were we to deny a [church-]body which agrees with us in the faith, that is, which confesses Christ's name in all parts [of doctrine], then we should be denying Christ Himself in such a [church-]body. Furthermore, if we did not want to confess ourselves [as standing together] with the synods of Wisconsin and Minnesota and the Norwegian Lutheran Church, when these are attacked on account of their right doctrine, then we should be denying Christ Himself in these synods. And they would be doing the same were they ashamed of 'the Missourians.'"<sup>19</sup>

What is at stake in church fellowship is not in the first place love or ethics, but that which is absolutely prior not only to love but to justifying faith itself, as its source and ground: the church-creating

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gospel of Christ, that is, His pure doctrine and sacraments. The weak, ethically derived and oriented approach of "Inter-Christian Relationships" contrasts clearly with the strong, objective, gospel-shaped theses of the Overseas Committee of 1961 (appended above): "The marks of the church are all-decisive. Everything must be referred to them. This duty is hindered by presumptuous judgments or statements concerning the faith or lack of it in individuals. It is Enthusiasm to build on subjective faith (*fides qua*) and love, for faith is hidden and love is variable. Both are in man. The means of grace are objective, solid, apprehensible. Since these are God's own means, we must attend entirely upon them and draw from them the distinction between the orthodox church and heterodox churches" (thesis 11).

The stunted growth of the nine "principles of fellowship" might have been forestalled, had *fides quae* (the content of faith) been introduced already in thesis 2 thus: "Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) comes into being through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel (*fides quae*)." Instead, the content of faith (*fides quae*) is introduced only in thesis 6, by way of good works (thesis 4) and love (thesis 5). Or, rather, "faith in the heart" (*fides qua*) is probably regarded—falsely—as a smaller core-content or excerpt from the larger *fides quae*, the full orthodox apostolic faith in all its articles, which latter then is in the domain of sanctification, not justification. The real meaning of the terms is not of this nature at all. Rather, *fides qua* is the faith by which we believe, that is, the act of believing, while *fides quae* is the faith which is believed, the content. The two are related like eating and food, respectively—not like minimal survival food and maximal "balanced diet" food. The *fides qua* bestowed in the one baptism receives a fractional faith no more than it receives a fractional Christ. The "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5) are wholes.

The contrary misunderstanding of "Inter-Christian Relationships" tallies exactly with this construct in one of the document's sources (ICR, p. 16, n. 12): "The church in the narrow sense, which consists of believers in Jesus Christ, is united spiritually by its common faith in the gospel in the narrow sense, but exists within the church in the broad sense whose external unity is to be based on agreement in the

gospel in the broad sense."<sup>20</sup> In the Book of Concord, however, the "strict" and "broad" senses of the word "gospel" mean not something like "justification" and "all other articles," but rather "gospel as distinct from law" and "gospel plus law" respectively.<sup>21</sup> And both internal and external unity in the church are created by the same gospel in the strict sense, that is by the gospel as distinct from the law—though the law is, of course, always presupposed. Early Missourians understood this point very well. Francis Pieper, for example, wrote as follows:

*By unity in faith we understand agreement in all articles of the Christian doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture. . .*

Thus the Lutheran Church has understood the divinely willed unity in the faith. She defines the "true unity of the Christian church" so in the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession: "that the gospel be preached unanimously according to its pure understanding and the holy sacraments be administered according to the gospel". . . Here [in the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, X, 7] our church declares that by true unity she understands agreement "in the doctrine and *all* its articles," not merely in some of them . . .

Also in the [above] thesis only the gospel is meant. When we speak of "articles of the Christian doctrine," this is to be understood as the revelation and preaching of Christ . . . The law does not come into consideration here. The foundation on which the Christian church is built is Christ, the gospel. The law, after all, is not peculiar to the Christian church, but is common to all men . . . The law does not create the church, neither does the law unify the church. Only the gospel does that. Therefore, the law does not belong into a definition of Christian unity or unity in the faith. . .

Although the law therefore does not belong within faith and therefore also not within the definition of faith, acceptance of the law is nevertheless a necessary presupposition of unity in faith. When it is said that we believe the law,

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then the word "believe" is taken in a sense totally different from when one speaks of the Christian faith. The expression "articles of faith" designates a quite definite concept: the doctrine of the gospel in contrast to the law.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. "Truth, Unity, Love"

The principles of "truth, unity, and love" (ICR, pp. 14-23) cannot and do not, despite many fine statements in this section of "Inter-Christian Relationships," remedy the document's basic defect of individualism and subjectivism. In the first place, these three themes introduce nothing new. They are simply the nine "fellowship principles" boiled down to three "overarching" mega-principles (see ICR, p. 23). Thus principles 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8 relate to truth; 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 to unity; and 4 and 5 to love.

Secondly, the treatment of "unity" in "Inter-Christian Relationships" actually loosens and erodes the stricter understanding of "external unity" in principles 7 and 8 of 1981. Those principles (ICR, p. 8) base "external unity" on the faith confessed (*fides quae*), not on faith in the heart (*fides qua*), and require agreement not in some "measure" of the faith, but in the full apostolic faith "as it is taught in the Scriptures." Yet the "unity principle" of "Inter-Christian Relationships" seeks "empirical manifestations" of the "spiritual unity of all believers" (hence *fides qua*, p. 20) and generalises and relativises a clearly external unity to an "organizational" unity (p. 22) and other expressions of it on the basis of only partial agreement—that is, a "measure of consensus" (pp. 21, 22) or "expressions of Christian unity . . . proportionate to the measure of consensus . . ." or "amount of doctrinal agreement" (p. 29). Here "cooperation in externals" is expressly treated as differing only in degree, not in kind, from actual church fellowship. For such external cooperation is cited as an example of "expressions of Christian unity . . . proportionate to the measure of consensus . . ." For the old either-or (communion in sacred things or else cooperation in externals) "Inter-Christian Relationships" here substitutes a many-valued scale of more or less of the same sort of thing, that is, "expressions of Christian unity." Such "external unity" was under principles 7 and 8 of 1981 tantamount to church fellowship.

Thirdly, by making three terms—"truth," "unity," and "love"—of Luther's two ("doctrine" and "life"), "Inter-Christian Relationships" fudges the clear-cut dichotomy between doctrine and life, and it thus confuses law and gospel. Although "Inter-Christian Relationships" laudably states that "the truth principle is central to the other two" and that "it is better to be divided for the sake of the truth than to be united in error" (p. 23), the notion of a duty to "manifest" a unity merely "proportionate" to a "measure" of the truth, relativises and quantifies the latter. Luther simply lumps unity together with love and does not relieve the stark truth-love bi-polarity with any attempt at triangulation. For Luther truth—pure gospel, *fides quae*, the doctrine in all its articles—is not a desirable maximum under the rubric of sanctification, but the non-negotiable, qualitatively whole, divine *sine qua non* standing objectively before and above all subjective faith, love, justification, and sanctification. (By no means, of course, does he imply that the one true Spirit-wrought faith in a Christian's heart cannot be overlaid with mental confusions and even contradictions, just as it exists in constant conflict with the flesh generally, as asserted in Romans 7). Luther argues:

For the sectarians who deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper accuse us today of being quarrelsome, harsh, and intractable, because, as they say, we shatter love and harmony among the churches on account of the single doctrine about the sacrament . . .

To this argument of theirs we reply with Paul: "A little yeast leavens the whole lump." In philosophy a tiny error in the beginning is very great at the end. Thus in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching. Therefore doctrine and life should be distinguished as sharply as possible. Doctrine belongs to God, not to us; and we are called only as its ministers. Therefore we cannot give up or change even one dot of it (Matthew 5:18). Life belongs to us . . . For doctrine is like a mathematical point. Therefore it cannot be divided; that is, it cannot stand either subtraction or addition. On the other hand, life is like a physical point. Therefore it can always be divided and can always yield something . . .



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Therefore doctrine must be one eternal and round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect . . .

A curse on a love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of faith, to which everything must yield—love, an apostle, an angel from heaven, etc.! . . . If they believed that it is the word of God, they would not play around with it this way . . . and they would know that one word of God is all and that all are one, that one doctrine is all doctrines and all are one, so that, when one is lost, all are eventually lost, because they belong together and are held together by a common bond.

Therefore let us leave the praise of harmony and of Christian love to them. We, on the other hand, praise faith and the majesty of the word. Love can sometimes be neglected without danger, but the word and faith cannot . . . Therefore if you deny God in one article of faith, you have denied Him in all; for God is not divided into many articles of faith, but He is everything in each article and He is one in all the articles of faith . . .

We can be saved without love and concord with the Sacramentarians, but not without pure doctrine and faith . . . Doctrine is heaven; life is earth . . . Therefore there is no comparison at all between doctrine and life . . .; therefore we do not permit the slightest offence against it. But we can be lenient toward errors of life. For we, too, err daily in our life and conduct; so do all the saints, as they earnestly confess in the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. But by the grace of God our doctrine is pure; we have all the articles of faith solidly established in Sacred Scripture. The devil would dearly love to corrupt and overthrow these; that is why he attacks us so cleverly with this specious argument about not offending against love and the harmony among the churches.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, neither the nine "fellowship principles" of 1981 nor their generalised condensation in the "truth, unity, love" principles of

1991 expressly spell out just what church fellowship is. The basis for fellowship is stated clearly enough, namely, full confessional agreement, in 1981, and some measure of it for a degree of unity, in 1991. But the "principles" themselves are strangely silent about what sort of activities actually constitute church fellowship. In 1981, to be sure, it was taken for granted that "joint worship services" were at least pulpit fellowship, and that pulpit and altar fellowship was church fellowship.<sup>24</sup> By 1991 "Inter-Christian Relationships" advocates joint services, including "ecumenical wedding services" with the heterodox (pp. 33 ff.). (The heading "A. Joint Worship Occasions" originally read, more candidly, "A. Joint Worship Services.") How is this rapid about-face within one decade to be explained?

Whether by oversight or by design the "fellowship principles" do not actually define church fellowship. It is therefore possible to argue that what was once church fellowship, no longer is that now: "As we seek to apply the same biblical principles to our life today, we need to be aware of contemporary developments in order to distinguish between timeless biblical truths and their applications to a particular set of circumstances. If our circumstances and perceptions have changed, it may well be that different applications are in order precisely for us to maintain the same biblical confession" (ICR, p. 6). Doubtless we have here an echo of a little-noticed comment from 1983:

Quite clearly, the agreement which we in the LCMS have with one another not to participate "in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations" is based on scriptural and confessional principles. The question before us today is whether the renunciation of all joint worship services with all those in doctrinal disagreement with our church is the only or the best way to apply these principles in every situation. Does this practice adequately recognize and give expression to various levels of agreement in the confession of the faith? These are questions which we in the LCMS will be discussing in the coming months.<sup>25</sup>

Joint services despite doctrinal discord, then, are not wrong in and of themselves, but only if they violate certain "principles," which, as

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it happens, do not define just what constitutes "church fellowship." In other words, *communio in sacris* (communion in sacred things) with heterodox churches is not in itself wrong, "but thinking makes it so," to quote Shakespeare.

In opposing participation in a joint community "Christmas Festival" service, Hermann Sasse traced to Cardinal d'Annibale's moral theology (1908) the opinion, now widespread in Roman Catholicism, that *communicatio in divinis* (communion in divine things) with the heterodox is not sinful in its own nature, and is forbidden only by human, rather than divine, law.<sup>26</sup> Wrote Sasse: "Through all centuries and in all churches that take doctrine seriously this has been regarded as a divine law." Certainly for us Lutherans "it is a divine law that the church cannot have communion with heresies, i.e., false doctrines that threaten to destroy the gospel. This is the meaning of the condemnations in the Book of Concord as the preface to the Formula of Concord makes clear with the important distinction between people who err in all simplicity of heart and stubborn teachers of such heresies. This doctrine is based on the many passages in the New Testament in which the apostles warn their churches against heretics (Romans 16:17f.; Galatians 1:8f.; Philippians 3:2f. 18f.; 1 Timothy 6:3f. 20f.; Titus 3:1; 1 John 2:1f. 2 John)."

It is above all the clear distinction between law and gospel that opens up the salvific treasures of the holy word of God (FC-SD V:1). From this vantage-point our Lutheran church follows a distinctively evangelical path in this matter of the church and her fellowship: "The word of God is the true holy thing above all holy things . . . By it all the saints themselves have been sanctified."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, "the fellowship created by word and sacraments shows itself fundamentally in pulpit and altar fellowship . . . The 'sacred things' (*sacra*) are the means of grace, and only by way of them is anything else a 'sacred thing' (*sacrum*)."<sup>28</sup>

This point means that church fellowship is defined not by indirect derivation from individualistic "fellowship principles," but directly from those concrete gifts through which Christ Himself builds His church—the gospel purely preached and the sacraments rightly administered. To proclaim and celebrate jointly from common pul-

pits and at common altars is therefore the essence of church fellowship. And doing these things together with churches which, whatever their names, teach and practise contrary to the pure gospel and sacraments as confessed in the Book of Concord, is the essence of sinful fellowship, or unionism. In this way the nature and boundaries of church fellowship are set by God Himself, in and by the instituting (evangelical) mandates and gifts by which alone His church comes into being and lives. In this context "by divine right" means "according to the gospel."<sup>29</sup>

When the founders of the Missouri Synod, therefore, in their very constitution (Article VI) renounced joint services with heterodox churches as "unionism," they understood such services to be forbidden "by divine right." They were not, by human right and constitutional compact, temporarily and provisionally applying eternal but ethereal "fellowship principles." In the *Denkschrift* of 1871 (which explained the reasons for founding the Synodical Conference, rather than joining an existing general body), not only Missouri, but all the constituting synods of the Synodical Conference unanimously declared "that this doctrinal difference [between Lutherans and Reformed] by its nature essentially annuls also the bond of churchly-brotherly fellowship, and accordingly any cultivation of such fellowship, by way of pulpit and altar fellowship, working together for churchly purposes, and such things, is indeed a wrong [*Unrecht*] and sin committed against God's express prohibition."<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. *Augustana VII*

The strong disjunction between "spiritual" and "external" or "outward" fellowship or unity (ICR, pp. 7, 18-20) alerts the reader that something is wrong. Internal and external unity in the church are indeed distinct.<sup>31</sup> But to make of this a hard-and-fast contrast between "spiritual" and "external" is to suggest that the "association of outward things and rites" is not spiritual! "Inter-Christian Relationships" cannot really mean such a suggestion, but then why insist on talking in this way? The "outward signs," as the German of Apology VII-VIII:5 puts it, are precisely God's pure word and sacraments. Nothing could be more spiritual than just these outward

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gospel-ministrations, which are the fount and source of all that is spiritual in us, for by them the Spirit Himself is given, with all His gifts.<sup>32</sup> "Therefore, we constantly teach that the sacraments and all the external things ordained and instituted by God should be regarded not according to the gross, external mask (as we see the shell of a nut) but as that in which God's word is enclosed."<sup>33</sup> If anything, the *external* "ministration of the Spirit," as the "more glorious" (2 Corinthians 3:8) proximate source of the divine and life-giving light (4:6), has a far greater claim to being called "spiritual" than does the modestly flickering or glimmering wick of our "internal" faith, which is in constant need of re-kindling from the "external" gospel. In sum, external church-fellowship in preaching and sacraments and internal church-fellowship in faith are both "spiritual."

Behind the misleading "spiritual" versus "external" language lies the decisive structural defect of "Inter-Christian Relationships." That defect is the scuttling of a misconstrued Augsburg Confession VII, as not dealing directly with external church unity. "Inter-Christian Relationships" takes Augustana VII to be dealing with *unitas*, meaning internal ("spiritual") unity, based on a "gospel in the narrow sense" and *fides qua*, while Formula X (FC-SD X:31) supposedly deals with *concordia*, or external unity, based on the "gospel in the broad sense" (including all articles) or *fides quae*. The fallacies of contrasting *fides qua* and *fides quae* and "narrow" and "broad" senses of the gospel in this way have already been shown.<sup>34</sup>

The trouble with splitting up Augsburg Confession VII and Formula of Concord X is that then the solid ground on which Lutherans have always built their account of church relations comes unstuck—producing a shifting patchwork of diverse elements in broad and narrow senses. With the solid base of the ecclesiology of Augustana VII gone—banished to the realm of an invisible ("spiritual") church, unity, and fellowship—"Inter-Christian Relationships" must find some other starting point. The vacancy is filled with "fellowship principles" which leave the nature of *church* fellowship undefined and, therefore, cannot cope with "joint services." (The fact that "special services sponsored jointly by associations or groups of churches not in church fellowship" [ICR, p. 33] constitute at least

*pulpit fellowship* simply no longer registers).

The nine "fellowship principles" (ICR, pp. 7-9) themselves model the marginalisation of Augustana VII. That article has finished its work in the first two theses, with "spiritual fellowship" and *fides qua*. By the time we come to the full apostolic faith (thesis 6) and external unity or fellowship (theses 7-9), there is no mention of Augustana VII. This unity is now the quite different preserve of Formula X, cited under theses 8 and 9. This disjunction between an internal *unitas* in Augustana VII and an external *concordia* in Formula X originated in an article by A. C. Piepkorn<sup>35</sup> and was inherited by the CTCR statements of 1981 and 1991 from the otherwise excellent "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism" (CTCR, 1974) and from contributions by Ralph Bohlmann to *Formula for Concord* and *In Search of Christian Unity*<sup>36</sup> and by Samuel Nafziger to *In Search of Christian Unity*.<sup>37</sup>

By contrast, the traditional Lutheran stand, which sees Augustana VII and Formula X as covering the same ground (though perhaps with different emphases), was taken by the CTCR in its "Theology of Fellowship" of 1965 ("the basis for pulpit and altar fellowship, as it has been understood in the Lutheran church where it was loyal to its confessions, is set forth in Augustana . . . VII," p. 18) and by Robert Preus in *Formula for Concord*.<sup>38</sup> That stand, of course, tallies with the actual wording of Augustana VII, which makes "the true unity of the church" depend on ascertainable agreement in preaching and sacraments. The Missouri standard-bearers Walther<sup>39</sup> and Pieper<sup>40</sup> follow suit and do not find different unities in an Augustana VII and Formula X. Calov put it in this way over three centuries ago in his classic *Exegema*, an explanation of the Augsburg Confession: "For as body and soul jointly constitute one natural entity, so for the spiritual unity of the church interior gifts are required no less than external fellowship (*communio*)."<sup>41</sup>

By assigning Augustana VII with its "true unity" to an invisible, "spiritual" fellowship and Formula X to external fellowship and unity in all articles of doctrine, the approach of "Inter-Christian Relationships" creates a certain interval or "no man's land" between the two poles. In this space "levels of fellowship" or "degrees of unity" are able to find a foot-hold. The *intention* behind the "levels"

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approach is doubtless a good one; it is to solve the perceived problem that, by having no outward fellowship relations at all with the Christians in heterodox churches, orthodox churches seem to be placing them on a par with non-Christians. Therefore some "level" must be found at which some fellow-Christian solidarity, but short of full orthodox communion, can be honestly expressed.

The facts are, however, that (1.) there already are proper ways and means of fellow-Christian acknowledgement, and (2.) it is neither necessary nor possible to quantify and fractionalise church fellowship for this or any other purpose. As to the first point it needs to be seen that the church of the Augsburg Confession is, in keeping with her truly evangelical nature, far more generous towards other churches than is generally recognised. She has always acknowledged the true sacramental nature of all baptisms performed in trinitarian churches, as other churches do as well. Lutherans have also recognised, beneath the distortions, the essential presence of the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood in the Roman and the Greek churches, though not in the Calvinist churches. And Lutherans recognise, too, properly called and ordained men (not women) in trinitarian churches, despite heretical distortions, as really holding the one public office or ministry of the gospel. Therefore, the Lutheran church is in principle opposed to "sheep-stealing," and to re-ordaining heretical ministers when they turn to the faith and service of the orthodox church. All these things are a far cry from the denial of "valid" ministries and sacraments by some other confessions. But it would be very misleading to talk now of fellowship with the heterodox at the "levels" of baptism and ordination, for that would, apart from suggesting that baptism and ordination are *quantities*, imply *joint* public proclamation and celebration. In a sense it is even true that those who receive the Lord's body and blood at altars of separate confessions are, since they receive one and the same indivisible gift, "outwardly" in "sacramental fellowship." But, again, such a special and unusual meaning of the phrase must not be used to confuse and destroy the divinely mandated nature, basis, and boundaries of external church fellowship.

As for the second point, church fellowship is indivisible—*communio una est*. Franzmann queried: "There seems to have been

great variety in the organisational manifestations of unity in the New Testament church; but is there any evidence that there was anything like an organisational recognition of fractional obedience to the one Lord?"<sup>42</sup> Sasse observed: "There are even those who suppose that they can establish degrees of unity. The degrees match the level of agreement reached so far in the discussions. The consensus one tries to read out of Article VII is in all such cases a purely human arrangement."<sup>43</sup> Henry Hamann, Sr., a venerable "Old Missourian," declared: "Hence church-fellowship is indivisible. It exists or does not exist; it is accorded or withheld. There can be no stages or degrees of fellowship corresponding to quantitative amounts of doctrinal consensus."<sup>44</sup> The Overseas Committee on Fellowship concurred: "A quantitative approach is as misleading as an unhistorical one" (thesis 9).

Perhaps it will be said that "levels of fellowship" are not "levels of *church* fellowship." Is such a claim even coherent? Can it really be maintained, for instance, that external manifestations or expressions of unity are one thing and "external unity" another? If "external unity" is church fellowship, as theses 8 and 9 of 1981 and 1991 declare, then the external expressions of unity which are in "Inter-Christian Relationships" "proportionate" to some lesser amount of agreement must be simply less of the same sort of thing—"external unity" or church fellowship. Indeed, the German "Guidelines" cited in "Inter-Christian Relationships" (Appendix C, p. 55) expressly admit that wedding services with the official participation of ministers of other confessions entail "a form of church fellowship, although it is clearly below the level of pulpit and altar fellowship." If there are to be "levels of fellowship," they must be "levels of church fellowship." We may note also that the external manifestations of "unity" in "Inter-Christian Relationships" have in view *churches*, not simply private individuals, and that the scale of "full communion to closed communion" of Faith and Order, which is commended for our consideration as we look for "a different set of terms to clarify and distinguish various kinds of Christian relationships,"<sup>45</sup> in fact divides *altar fellowship* into levels—counter-evangelically (Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 10:17). It would be a bureaucratic subterfuge and misdefinition to argue that "church fellowship" is a "church body level" relationship, so that



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strictly *local* joint services, or sharing of altars and pulpits with heterodox congregations, cannot *by definition* be "church fellowship."

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession knows only the "association [*Gesellschaft*] in outward signs" and the "fellowship [*Gemeinschaft*] inwardly of the eternal goods in the heart."<sup>46</sup> There is no third fellowship, of which there could be varying amounts, degrees, or levels. Fellowship is a unique *kind*, not an *amount*, of relationship.

To argue (ICR, pp. 20, 22) for "empirical" and "organisational" manifestations of a "spiritual unity of all believers," apart from the pure marks of the church, is enthusiasm (Overseas Committee, thesis 11). Moreover, this inner "spiritual unity" is "invisible, hidden from human eyes, a matter of faith in the heart . . . fellowship understood in this way is a qualitative concept and therefore by definition incapable of a 'levels' conceptualisation."<sup>47</sup> By the rule of love we are bound to assume sincere Christian faith in all who claim it, unless they themselves openly refute their own claim by words or actions. But external church fellowship is a matter of faith or doctrine and confession, not of love's inferences.

"By definition 'levels of fellowship' talk is quantitative in nature and therefore inappropriate and inadequate to refer to fellowship understood as a qualitative concept."<sup>48</sup> Yet the whole basic premise of "Inter-Christian Relationships" is that outward "manifestations" of unity are *quantitatively* measured and guided—for example, by a "measure of consensus" (p. 21) or "proportionate" to "the amount of doctrinal agreement" (p. 29). The only explanation seems to be that, despite all protestations to the contrary, external *church fellowship* is being divided into levels or degrees on the theory that, unlike internal fellowship, external fellowship is *quantitative* and divisible.<sup>49</sup> Thesis 9 of the Overseas Committee rightly rejects a "quantitative approach" precisely with reference to *external church fellowship*.

Luther's wholistic, non-quantitative approach has already been described above. If ever there was a case for recognising "degrees of unity," it was at Marburg in 1529. Here Lutherans and Zwinglians seemed to agree on fourteen and a half out of fifteen points.

But instead of some "level" of fellowship "proportionate" to a 97% consensus, there was Luther's "qualitative" reply to Bucer: "You have a different spirit!" Similar are the "no fellowship" of Formula VII (SD:33) and the conclusion of Formula XI (SD:95-96):

We have no intention (since we have no authority to do so) to yield anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and outward harmony. Nor would such peace and harmony last, because it would be contrary to the truth and actually intended for its suppression. Still less are we minded to whitewash or cover up any falsification of true doctrine or any publicly condemned errors. We have a sincere delight in and deep love for true harmony and are cordially inclined and determined on our part to do everything in our power to further the same. We desire such harmony as will not violate God's honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy gospel, that will not give place to the smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to a true and sincere repentance . . .<sup>50</sup>

Behind this much-maligned appearance of "all or nothing" in outward fellowship stands the New Testament itself. As Hamann observed, "Our texts [Matthew 7:15; 18:17; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:8, 9; 1 Timothy 4:1-6; Titus 3:10; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9, 10] speak in blacks and whites. We almost wish for texts which said a little about greys. As the matter stands, there does not seem to be any text in the Bible which has a good word to say for errorists, or which, while granting their essential Christianity on the one hand, condemns their error on the other. It is always the two opposites which we see."<sup>51</sup>

If the texts are to be properly applied, therefore, one needs, with Augustana VII and Formula X, to think in terms of church and churches, orthodox or heterodox, not of private individuals ("Christians"), whose personal faith or lack of it must first be assessed. Hamann rightly argued:

Surely one must see that the true counterpart in our day to the false teachers of the New Testament age are the hetero-

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dox church bodies themselves. There are individual false teachers, too, aplenty, but the truly false teachers today are the heterodox bodies. For in them heterodoxy, false teaching, heresy, is given a habitation and a name; it is given respectability; it is given perpetuity—and all this under the protection of the blessed name 'church'! The false teachings given a refuge in heterodox bodies are every whit as bad as the false teachings known in the New Testament . . . And in all heterodox bodies it is just their characteristic false teaching which makes them what they are, and which is their *raison d'être*. The Methodist Church, *insofar as it is Methodist*, is the support of heresy; its incidental witness to the gospel is not something which would mean its continued separate existence. And the same is true of all heterodox bodies. In as far as they are what their reason for existence is, they are the modern counterparts of the New Testament false teachers and false prophets. And the New Testament condemnation of false teachers should be applied to them directly and without any softening of the rebuke.<sup>52</sup>

This truth is just the point of the historic Missourian understanding of fellowship. Thus, *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States* speaks of church as follows:

Since God ordained that His word *only*, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Peter 4:11; John 8:31,32; 1 Timothy 6:3,4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies, Matthew 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them, Romans 16:17.<sup>53</sup>

The Old Missourians understood "fellowship" or "brotherhood" in a thoroughly churchly way, that is, not as something generic or invisible, but quite concretely as sharing publicly in the true faith and church (in accord with Romans 16:1ff.; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4,9; Ephesians 6:23;

Philippians 4:21; Colossians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; etc.). As good Lutherans,<sup>54</sup> the Old Missourians knew very well that their "little flock" included only a small fraction of the world's Christians, with all of whom they were one in Christ by virtue of the invisible bonds of faith and the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup> They also knew, however, that the lines of fellowship or brotherhood run not directly between individual Christians, but only by way of the center—Christ and His pure gospel, sacraments, and church (John 10). Therefore they could not publicly acknowledge fellowship and brotherhood in the faith with such as by their membership in heterodox churches made common cause with unbiblical, unevangelical doctrine. The traditional appeal was to 2 Samuel 15:11, by way of analogy.<sup>56</sup> The two hundred innocents who followed Absalom and "knew not anything" were sincere enough; but one still could not make common cause with them. Objectively they were part and parcel of the rebellion and had to be resisted as such.

To those who no longer "find themselves in agreement with Pieper's [and Walther's] position regarding the recognition of members of heterodox churches as 'brothers in the faith,'"<sup>57</sup> Pieper's view may indeed seem to suffer from "inconsistency."<sup>58</sup> The inconsistency, however, is not in Pieper. The illusion arises out of entirely different perceptions of the meaning and import of Augsburg Confession VII.

It is also contrary to fact to suggest that the idea of outward manifestations of unity, including joint services with heterodox churches, on the basis of a presumed inner unity in Christ, despite incomplete agreement in doctrine and sacraments, has any basis whatever in the synod's historic position, or even in the products of its CTCR prior to the Wichita Convention (1989). A friendly observer, J. L. Neve, who died in 1943, put it like this:

1. Fellowship in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper between churches and individuals disagreeing not only in the doctrinal conception of this sacrament, to which Luther was very much opposed . . . , but in Christian doctrine generally—is very carefully avoided by the bodies confederated in the Synodical Conference . . . 3. From this same standpoint the Missourians have been opposed also to

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prayer-fellowship with such as are not in doctrinal agreement with them . . . We are glad to observe that on this point Missouri is changing, changing also from Walther who interpreted 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and 2 John 10-11 in an utterly impossible way. It was the customary interpretation among the Lutherans in the seventeenth century, which Walther followed. Missouri had drifted into an unhistorical use of Scripture pertaining to the whole church-fellowship question.<sup>59</sup>

The change which Neve noted was spearheaded by Missourian "progressives," represented by the so-called "Statement of 1945," who were rebelling especially against an overdone rigidity on the issue of prayer. (There had been joint prayers and devotions at Walther's "free conferences" in the nineteenth century). The aforesaid statement's rejection of the applicability of Romans 16:17 "to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America," however, threatened the loss of all objective biblical constraints on inter-church relations. The theses of the Overseas Committee of 1961 later showed how to maintain objective standards (the pure marks), without unnecessary inflexibility on the issue of prayer. After all, unlike preaching and the sacrament of the altar, which are not only means of grace, but are by definition official and churchly in nature, prayer is not a means of grace and may be offered by private individuals without any direct involvement of the church as such.

The important point here is that "official" Missourian action resolved the problem *not* by distinguishing a "prayer-fellowship" level from an "altar and pulpit" level of fellowship, but rather by distinguishing "joint prayer" from "prayer fellowship," that is, the prayer aspect of church fellowship. Thus the synodical convention of 1944 maintained the warning of the previous convention (which had met in Fort Wayne) "that no pulpit, altar, or prayer fellowship has been established between us and the American Lutheran Church," but held that "joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for His guidance and blessing upon the deliberations and discussions of His word, does not militate against the resolution of the Fort Wayne Convention, provided such prayer does not imply

denial of truth or support of error."<sup>60</sup> The public liturgical prayer of "joint services" as such is and remains an expression of church fellowship. The convention of 1944 also declined membership in the National Lutheran Council because that "would apparently involve our synod in unionistic principles and endeavors beyond a mere cooperation in externals and thus violate scriptural principles which we are bound to observe."<sup>61</sup>

If later a model involving "levels of unity" became, in the minds of some, "the *de facto* situation for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,"<sup>62</sup> then this development implies theological legitimacy no more than do the other *de facto* aberrations and confusions in fellowship mentioned in "Inter-Christian Relationships" (p. 81). Indeed, the CTCR resolved at its meeting of 15-17 February 1988: "We continue to recognize the present situation in regard to fellowship practices within the synod as a crisis in our synod's confessional unity." Although some careless language was habitually used with reference to the former Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., degrees of fellowship based on degrees of agreement were never officially suggested, let alone embraced. LCUSA was not supposed to involve fellowship at all.

Yet keen observers noticed the ambiguities and sounded early warnings. Henry Hamann, Sr., the leading theologian of the old Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, wrote with "concern" and "apprehension": "... extent of cooperation apart from pulpit and altar fellowship' suggests the possibility of creating steps or gradations between cooperation *in externis* and church fellowship; for fellowship at the altar and [in] the pulpit is church fellowship. If that be the intention, it involves a serious mistake. Church fellowship either exists or it does not exist between church bodies. It is granted, or it is withheld. It is indivisible. We find ourselves in agreement with people in the teaching and the practice demanded by the divine word, and we acknowledge the existence of fellowship; to deny it in such cases would be wrong. We find that no such agreement exists; and it is both right and a duty to withhold fellowship until the differences are resolved. *Tertium non datur*. That is the confessional principle."<sup>63</sup>

When it comes to CTCR statements, the relevant evolutionary line

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is as follows: In 1965 the improved version of "Theology of Fellowship" expressly maintained the correct and historic understanding of Augustana VII. It stressed that the marks of the church, as defined in Augustana VII, "have throughout the history of orthodox Lutheranism served to establish the limits of pulpit and altar fellowship and to distinguish the Lutheran Church from other churches" (p. 17). In 1974 "A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism" for the first time adopted Piepkorn's new division between an *unitas* of Augustana VII and a *concordia* of Formula X (p. 9). But the intentions and conclusions of this document were entirely orthodox and traditional.<sup>64</sup> Its appendix cites, among others, Resolution 2-16 of the synodical convention of 1965: "Resolved: That no joint worship services be held with those with whom we have not established pulpit and altar fellowship." A prominent feature of the statement of 1974 is its reference to "levels"—but only in the correct sense of the application of the one indivisible fellowship at various structural levels, not as though fellowship itself were divided into levels. For example, "*C. On the Congregational Level . . .*" Similarly, congregations agree that they will practice fellowship only with those congregations which belong to a church body with which the synod is in fellowship" (p. 15).

In 1981 the CTCR's "Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship" continues the split between Augustana VII and Formula X, but makes more substantive use of it than had the document of 1974. The applications and conclusions are still traditional and orthodox, but the supporting argumentation in terms of "principles of fellowship" is inadequate, as has been shown above. There is one single hint, to which no attention was paid at the time, of the mischief to come from "levels." One sentence on page 43 states: "Through the use of the word 'fellowship' almost exclusively to refer to a formal altar and pulpit fellowship relationship established between two church bodies on the basis of agreement in the confession of the faith, some have been given the impression that no fellowship relationship other than spiritual unity in the body of Christ can or should exist among members of Christian churches not in altar and pulpit fellowship." By itself the sentence might mean no more than a criticism of the Wisconsin Synod's "unit concept," which no one on the CTCR advocated. Certainly no "levels of

fellowship" were intended by the CTCR in 1981. But appeal was later made to that single sentence as having prepared the way for "levels of fellowship," and in 1991 this faulty line of development came into full flower in "Inter-Christian Relationships."

One can only conclude that the advocacy of differential unities in "Inter-Christian Relationships" (including joint services with heterodox churches) has no genuine roots at all in the historic Lutheran theology of the Missouri Synod. Its kinship is rather with that other disastrous "course correction," by which President David Preus plunged the ALC into pulpit and altar fellowship with Reformed churches, thus giving up the sacrament of the altar as confessed by the church of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>65</sup> The common element is a model employing "levels": "The Scriptures call us to express the measure of unity that exists among Christians rather than to say we must agree on everything before we can express true Christian fellowship."<sup>66</sup> "Total doctrinal agreement is not necessary for mutual recognition of a basic unity in Christian faith."<sup>67</sup>

In the Missouri Synod itself such views were hitherto represented never by the CTCR but only by dissident elements. This example derived from the pages of *Missouri in Perspective*: "For Dorpat, purity of doctrine should not be made the basis for Christian fellowship. The purpose of all doctrine is 'to come to know Jesus,' and to 'deal with Him personally.' When that happens, one is a child of God, and so deserves to be treated as a brother by all the children of God . . . 'Have we repented for treating fellow Christians as unbelievers,' Dorpat asks of the Missouri Synod . . . Copies of 'The Lutheran Church-Missouri Sin' are available for 40 cents from ELIM Documents."<sup>68</sup> A second example is the following district action of 1985: "*Resolved*: That the Southeastern District acknowledge the following as broad principles reflecting the consensus of its thought regarding inter-Christian relationships: . . . 4. Decisions regarding the exercise of fellowship on the local level are best made at the local level . . . 8. The exercise of fellowship must be defined within the relationship between truth and love . . . This tension implies no easy answers, but a sure struggle drawing us closer to God and His will for our time . . . 9. There is a growing



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recognition that an 'all or nothing,' 'either/or' approach to fellowship is inadequate. 10. Christian relationships differ at various levels: international, national, church body, synod, district, congregation, and individual, and may require diverse and appropriate responses."<sup>69</sup>

Whether one takes Augustana VII at face value, as setting out the actual criteria for God-pleasing unity in the church militant here on earth, or whether one sends this article off into a fluffily "spiritual" limbo of invisibility, turns out to make quite a difference in the real world. What is at stake here—all subjectively good intentions aside—is the awesomely qualitative great divide between the God-given, purely taught gospel and rightly administered sacraments and their human falsifications. To bridge these opposites with levels and degrees is to quantify, relativise, and trivialise the church-creating truth of God and the abyss that separates confession from denial.

Contrary to the implications of "Inter-Christian Relationships" (page 5), today's "ambiguous denominationalism" (with people neither knowing nor caring about the official positions of their churches) is an argument for sharpening, not fudging inter-confessional boundaries. Church practice must teach people to be confessionally responsible, not irresponsible. Yet "Inter-Christian Relationships" leaves room for admission to orthodox altars regardless of the heterodox altars at which people may be communicating also. By contrast Walther held as follows:

Since the holy supper is also a sign of the confession of the faith and doctrine of those with whom one celebrates it, the admission of members of heterodox fellowships to the celebration of the supper within the Lutheran church militates (1.) against Christ's institution; (2.) against the mandated unity of the church in the faith and the corresponding confession; (3.) against love for him to whom it is given; (4.) against love for one's own fellow-believers, especially towards the weak, who are thereby given grave offence; (5.) against the command not to become partakers of the sins and errors of others . . .

The more unionism and syncretism is the sin and corruption

of our time, the more the [faithfulness] of the orthodox church now demands that the Lord's Supper not be misused as a means of external union without internal unity of faith.<sup>70</sup>

In conclusion, few documents reflect better the old Lutheran zeal for the truth of their confession, than does the unanimous record (*Denkschrift*) of the reasons given by the constituting synods for forming the Synodical Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America in 1871. These synods felt obliged to explain why they could not join any of the three existing general Lutheran bodies. The first two, the General Synod and the General Synod South, were given short shrift. The longest discussion was devoted to the would-be orthodox General Council and to its chief fault—its "lax and indecisive spirit," ever blunting the cutting edge of truth. It was here, in the doctrine and practice of church fellowship, that the real difference lay between the "Missourians" and the halting reserve of the General Council, despite the great C. P. Krauth. The paragraphs which follow eloquently embody the confessional spirit of the Old Missourians and show how Augsburg Confession VII and the Formula of Concord were woven together in a seamless, confident, and consistent implementation and application of the church's saving treasures:

If we now focus more closely on the special situation of our dear Lutheran Church in America, it is indeed all too clear, even to the dullest eye, that it is frightful powers of darkness against which the faithful members and servants of our church must stand in unremitting battle already now and will likely have to stand still more earnestly in the future. Our synods and congregations stand here in the midst of a churning hotchpotch of almost innumerable sects and parties, which indeed fondly boast of their "evangelical Protestantism" and mostly also of their "vital piety," but which through their deceptive rationalisations and enthusiastic dreamings shamefully falsify the dear word of God, and especially the alone-saving gospel of the free grace of God in Christ, yet ridicule the orthodox church on account of her faithful witness, and seek to seduce her children, by means

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of false doctrine and the trickery of men, into the nets of her false-believing communions . . .

Next, it is the question of pulpit and altar fellowship with Calvinists and other heterodox [literally, false-believing] ecclesiastical parties—so important for the assessment of the Lutheran-churchly standpoint of a communion [fellowship]—in which the General Council has demonstrated a most lamentable lack of resolute faithfulness towards our Lutheran doctrine and church. The council has indeed, upon the request of several synods connected with it, repeatedly, though clearly not exactly with a joyful willingness, conducted discussions of the question mentioned and has, in a number of decisions, rendered official responses to inquiries submitted. Yet it is alas only too evident that, in all its largely ambiguous or at least contradictorily understood and interpreted pronouncements, the council has at least steadfastly refused to reject in definite, plain, and simple words, as contrary to Scripture and confession, that unionistic practice which is in keeping with the spirit of the old General Synod and seriously to work towards a resolute implementation of the opposite, strictly Lutheran and biblical principles in its synods and congregations.

Already this sad defect in confessional faithfulness makes it impossible for us to become members of the council. For therein is revealed, in our view, not only an excusable weakness of inconsistency (that is, a deficiency in drawing conclusions) combined with an otherwise actually existing unity of spirit with us, but regrettably rather an actual fundamental difference of attitude in respect of the right treasuring of the pure doctrine and of the orthodox church in opposition to the doctrinal indifference and church-mingling of our days. We for our part believe, with the recognisably orthodox and confessionally faithful doctrinal fathers of our church in the prime of her existence, that it is simply incompatible with the faithfulness in office and the churchly position of a Lutheran curate of souls, if he knowingly and willingly allows his pulpit to heterodox

preachers or administers the holy Supper to members of heterodox ecclesiastical parties. As a householder over God's mysteries, and a called servant of His orthodox church, he not only has the sacred obligation by a wise and faithful exercise of doctrinal correction [*Lehrenlenchus*] (that is, the reproof of false doctrine for the preservation of the pure doctrine, mandated in God's Word, Titus 1:9-11) to render a forceful testimony *for* the pure and *against* the false doctrine, but it is also his sacred duty by refusing the members of heterodox and heretical ecclesiastical parties the rights and treasures of ecclesiastical fellowship in the orthodox church to maintain the wall of separation between pure and false doctrine and church so emphatically commanded by God and by this confessional act actually to reprove and avoid the error . . .

Yet as correct as this distinction is [between articles of faith strictly indispensable for salvation, and those without which it is still possible to be saved], there lies in it no justifying ground for the unionistic practice of the council. Every true Lutheran will of course heartily agree, when it says in the Preface to our Book of Confession:

. . . There are also many other reasons why condemnations cannot by any means be avoided. However, it is not our purpose and intention to mean thereby those persons who err ingenuously and who do not blaspheme the truth of the divine word, and far less do we mean entire churches inside or outside the Holy Empire of the German Nation. On the contrary, we mean specifically to condemn only false and seductive doctrines and their stiff-necked proponents and blasphemers. These we do not by any means intend to tolerate in our lands, churches, and schools inasmuch as such teachings are contrary to the expressed word of God and cannot coexist with it. Besides, pious people should be warned against them. But we have no doubt at all that one can find many pious, innocent

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people even in those churches which have up to now admittedly not come to agreement with us. These people go their way in the simplicity of their hearts, do not understand the issues, and take no pleasure in blasphemies against the holy supper as it is celebrated in our churches according to Christ's institution and as we concordantly teach about it on the basis of the words of His testament.<sup>71</sup>

... Our church indeed acknowledges that also in heterodox communions there are "many pious, innocent people, who go their way in the simplicity of their hearts," but she does not say that she is prepared to cultivate altar and pulpit fellowship also with such, if they want to remain in the heterodox communions. The former concerns the faith that there exists an invisible church extending over the entire baptised Christendom; the latter, however concerns the right form of a true visible church. Immediately after the cited testimony from the Preface to our Book of Confession our church continues, speaking of those true believers in the sects, as follows:

It is furthermore to be hoped that when they are rightly instructed in this doctrine, they will, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, turn to the infallible truth of the divine word and unite with us and our churches and schools. Consequently the responsibility devolves upon the theologians and ministers duly to remind even those who err ingenuously and ignorantly of the danger to their souls and to warn them against it, lest one blind person let himself be misled by another.<sup>72</sup>

These last words must necessarily be taken together with those which deal with the erring persons within the sects who err from simplicity, if one does not wish deliberately to fabricate for our confession a doctrine which it does not have. According to the first citation our church is indeed far from condemning, for example, all Reformed who still err in the article of the holy supper, or all Baptists, who still

err in the doctrine of the marks of recognition of the state of grace; but our church is just as far from admitting a Reformed, Baptist, or Methodist to her altar, or yet a Reformed, Baptist, or Methodist preacher into her pulpit, without having first instructed, reminded, and warned them and prevailed upon them to "turn to the infallible truth of the divine word and unite with us and our churches and schools." Rather, our church declares that in the contrary case one blind person lets himself be misled by another. Therefore also our church has taken Luther's anti-unionistic judgment into her confession and made it her own, as "the explanation of the chief teacher of the Augsburg Confession": "I reckon them all as belonging together (that is, as Sacramentarians and Enthusiasts), for that is what they are who will not believe that the Lord's bread in the supper is His true, natural body, which the godless or Judas receive orally as well as St. Peter and all the saints. Whoever, I say, will not believe this, will please let me alone and expect no fellowship from me. This is final."<sup>73</sup> Hereby our church publicly and solemnly renounces ecclesiastical fellowship not only with the crass Zwinglians but also with the subtle Calvinists, and whoever does not do so with her appeals in vain to having subscribed all her confessions without reservation.

... Although the lax principles of the council ... can be applied with full validity also to the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches, it is here something directly to do only with the Reformed communions. We for our part hold fast, with our orthodox doctrinal fathers and in full harmony with the emphatic rejections in the Augustana as well as in the Formula of Concord, to this, that the doctrinal difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches is indeed essential and fundamental to such a degree that what God's word says of the mandated separation between true and false prophets or churches is to be applied also to the relationship between Lutheran and Reformed churches and their members as such; so that this doctrinal difference by its nature essentially annuls also the bond of churchly-brotherly

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fellowship, and accordingly any cultivation of such fellowship, by way of pulpit and altar fellowship, working together for churchly purposes, and such things, is indeed a wrong and sin committed against God's express prohibition. The "true unity of the church," of which altar and pulpit fellowship are, after all, obviously an essential part and actual proof—and are therefore also practised in just this sense by the unionistically minded with those who believe differently—this true unity of the Christian church rests according to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession on this, "that the gospel is *unanimously* preached there *according to its pure understanding* and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the divine word." Does such unanimity in the pure teaching of the gospel perhaps exist, according to the confession of our church, between her and the Reformed communions? Has she not rather, by her ecclesiastical rejections of the Reformed teachings and teachers, at the same time erected the wall of separation, demanded by Scripture, between true and false church, with reference to external ecclesiastical fellowship and its essential parts and expressions?

. . . Either therefore we must, if with our church we acknowledge the distinguishing doctrines between Lutherans and Reformed as truly church-divisive, also hold fast, with our church and her faithful warriors, to the reprehensibility of all cultivation of ecclesiastical-fraternal fellowship [with the Reformed], especially by way of pulpit and altar fellowship; or else, in the contrary case, if we wish to hold on to the admissibility of such cultivation of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed, we must at the same time also declare the doctrinal difference between Lutherans and Reformed to be not church-divisive at all, and we must thus also declare the whole separate existence of our Lutheran church—on the basis of her separate confession and the ecclesiastical implementation of such doctrines as are not in reality church-divisive—to be schismatic, unchristian, and ungodly, and we must earnestly press for the immediate dissolution of our church and for union with the Reformed.

For if it is sinful to turn away from our Lutheran altars and pulpits those in other communions whom one regards as Christians, then the separate existence of our Lutheran church generally is something sinful and reprehensible. But that the distinctive doctrines of our church set out in our symbols have been regarded as truly and summarily church-divisive, in the sense of the original authors of these symbols as well as in the sense of the church which adopted these as the banner of her unity and purity, about that there cannot exist the slightest doubt for him who is even only superficially acquainted with the history of our symbols and church.

. . . So long as the council rather tolerates without reproof ecclesiastical-fraternal fellowship with Reformed and Union [members] in its synods and congregations, especially in respect of the public administration of the means of grace, yes even strengthens and promotes this aberration by its silence or its waffling decisions and explanations—so long it is self-evident for us that we find ourselves, with our Lutheran hearts and consciences, entirely unable to connect ourselves with the council as members.<sup>74</sup>

These lucid excerpts, then, from the *Denkschrift* of 1871 say all which needs to be said; they form, therefore, without additional commentary, a fitting conclusion to this plea to rethink the whole conception and structure of "Inter-Christian Relationships."

### Endnotes

1. The Statement of the Overseas Committee on Fellowship, presented to the Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of May (17-19) 1961 (*Proceedings*, pp. 9-13) and appended to the present report as Appendix A.
2. CTCR, minutes of 18-20 February 1970, p. 3.
3. Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, tr. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia



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- Publishing House, 1966), p. 182.
4. Ibid., p. 164.
  5. C. F. W. Walther, *The True Visible Church*, tr. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), Thesis XXI. C.
  6. Ralph Bohlmann, "The Celebration of Concord," in *Formula for Concord: Theologians' Convocation Essays*, ed. Samuel Nafzger (St. Louis: CTCR, 1977), p. 75.
  7. *Essays on the Lutheran Confessions Basic to Lutheran Cooperation* (St. Louis and New York: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council, 1961), p. 6.
  8. Ibid., p. 14.
  9. Ralph Bohlmann, in *Formula for Concord* (1977), pp. 75-76, 82-83.
  10. Samuel Nafzger, "Levels of Fellowship," in *In Search of Christian Unity*, ed. J. A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 239, 249, 253. This is a volume of essays read at a conference held in Puerto Rico in 1987, under the sponsorship of the former Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. and the Institute for Ecumenical Research of the Lutheran World Federation (in Strasbourg). ". . . are there levels or degrees of visible unity and, if so, what are they? All participants seemed to assume that there are such levels" (p. 15).
  11. Samuel Nafzger, *In Search of Christian Unity*, p. 239.
  12. *Luther's Works*, 27 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 38.
  13. Ibid., p. 41.
  14. Samuel Nafzger, *In Search of Christian Unity*, pp. 238-239.
  15. *D. Martin Luther's Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883- ), 7, p. 721.

16. "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," pp. 40-41.
17. Ibid., p. 4.
18. Ibid., pp. 15, 16.
19. Francis Pieper, *Vortraege ueber die Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche, Die Wahre Sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden* (St. Louis: Seminary Press, 1916), p. 191, using this writer's translation.
20. Ralph Bohlmann, *Formula for Concord*, p. 65.
21. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, V:3-6; Theodore Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 558-559.
22. Francis Pieper, "Of Unity in the Faith," presented to the Convention of the Synodical Conference of 1888, *Proceedings*, pp. 6-13, using this writer's translation.
23. *Luther's Works*, 27, pp. 36-42.
24. "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," p. 36.
25. Samuel Nafzger, "The LCMS and Joint Worship Services," *The Lutheran Witness*, June 1983, p. 28.
26. Letter from Hermann Sasse to H. Beach, 9 November 1969, circularized within the Darling Downs Pastors' Conference (Queensland District, Lutheran Church of Australia).
27. Large Catechism, Third Commandment, 91.
28. Thesis 12, Overseas Committee on Fellowship (Appendix A).
29. Augsburg Confession XXVIII:21.
30. *Denkschrift [Memorandum, Comprising a Thorough Presentation of the Reasons Why the Synods Joining Together into the Synodical Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America, Could Not Join One of the Nomi-*

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nally Lutheran Associations of Synods Already Existing in This Country] (Columbus, 1871), p. 26, using this writer's translation.

31. Apology VII-VIII:5.
32. 2 Corinthians 3-5; Smalcald Articles III:VIII.
33. Large Catechism, Baptism, 19.
34. *Supra*, p. [12].
35. A. C. Piepkorn, "What the Symbols Have to Say about the Church," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXVI:10 (October, 1955), pp. 750-763.
36. Ralph Bohlmann, *Formula for Concord*, pp. 55-89, and *In Search of Christian Unity*, pp. 86-98.
37. Samuel Nafzger, *In Search of Christian Unity*, pp. 238-256.
38. Robert Preus, "The Basis for Concord," *Formula for Concord*, pp. 11-30.
39. C. F. W. Walther, *The True Visible Church*.
40. Francis Pieper, *Das Grundbekenntnis der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880, 1930); "Unity in Faith," Synodical Conference, 1888.
41. A. Calov, *Exegema Augustanae Confessionis*, second ed. (Wittenberg, 1665).
42. Martin Franzmann, "A Lutheran Study of Church Unity," *Essays on the Lutheran Confessions Basic to Lutheran Cooperation*, p. 22.
43. Hermann Sasse, *We Confess the Church*, tr. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), p. 67.
44. Hermann Sasse, "Basic Theses on Church Fellowship," *The Australasian Theological Review*, XXXIV:1-2 (March-June 1963), p. 44.
45. Ralph Bohlmann, *Formula for Concord*, p. 76; see also

Samuel Nafzger, *In Search of Christian Unity*, pp. 248, 256.

46. Apology VII-VIII:5 (German).
47. Samuel Nafzger, *In Search of Christian Unity*, p. 249.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 249. The stress on external fellowship as quantitative is also found in Ralph Bohlmann, *Formula for Concord*, p. 64, and *In Search*, pp. 89, 91. The actual conclusions and applications here, especially in *In Search*, pp. 91-96, are clearly meant to defend the full, orthodox biblical gospel, "in all its articles"—including a strong stress on biblical authority, against historical criticism (pp. 94-95). Yet the trouble is with the interpretation of Augustana VII. On the one hand, this article is said to involve not only the *qualitative* but also a "*quantitative*" purity, in the sense that the gospel "ultimately" embraces all articles (*Formula for Concord*, p. 64). On the other hand, a problem with the word "fellowship" is said to be "the fact that its major ecclesiastical usage by contemporary Lutherans, including the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, is for *concordia* situations, when in fact it is an *unitas* concept in the New Testament" (p. 75)—in other words, "fellowship" really is something "spiritual" (which is to say, invisible) and only secondarily something outward. Hence Augustana VII is not really about outward fellowship: "It is a serious confusion when the requirements for spiritual unity are made the sole basis for altar and pulpit fellowship. This was done, for example, in the Fellowship Supplement of *The Lutheran Witness Reporter*, Vol. 4, No. 22, November 17, 1968, which stated on p. 4: 'That which is necessary and sufficient for the church's true spiritual unity is also necessary and sufficient for altar and pulpit fellowship.' This statement either requires too much for true spiritual unity or too little for altar and pulpit fellowship" (*Formula for Concord*, p. 67, note 13). Here internal and external fellowship are *quantified*, that is, related as less and more respectively—with the internal as the lesser quantity

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(compare Apology VII-VIII:5). For a truly biblical understanding of "fellowship," which keeps "inner" and "outer" aspects together, see Hermann Sasse, *Sanctorum Communio* (*We Confess the Sacraments*), especially pp. 140-141.

50. Tappert, p. 632.
51. H. P. Hamann, "An Examination of the Relation of Certain Passages of the New Testament to the Problem of Fellowship," unpublished paper, c. 1962, p. 6.
52. H. P. Hamann, official critique by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia of the early version of "Theology of Fellowship," which was later edited and improved by the CTCR of the LCMS.
53. *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States*. ICR, p. 27, cites the sentence which follows, minus its Bible texts, but omits the preceding.
54. Apology VII-VIII:9-11 (German); Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration XI:50.
55. See also *Luther's Works*, 40, pp. 231-234, 251, *re* true Christian believers under the papacy and under "enthusiast" heretics.
56. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 425.
57. Samuel Nafzger, *In Search of Christian Unity*, p. 245.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
59. J. L. Neve, *Churches and Sects of Christendom* (Blair, Nebraska: Lutheran Publishing House, 1944), pp. 208-209.
60. *LCMS Report*, 1944, pp. 251-252.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Ralph Bohlmann, *Formula for Concord*, p. 83.
63. Henry Hamann, "Missouriana," *The Australasian Theologi-*

- cal Review*, XXXII:1 (March, 1961), p. 23.
64. It was described as "splendid" by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary of Fort Wayne, *Convention Workbook* (LCMS, 1977), p. 112.
65. See J. E. Andrews and J. A. Burgess, eds., *An Invitation to Action: The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue: Series III, 1981-1983* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
66. David Preus, "Fellowship with Other Christians," *The Lutheran Standard*, 20 January 1984, p. 29.
67. David Preus, "Ecumenical Step of Joy," *The Lutheran Standard*, 13 June 1986, p. 37.
68. "Fear of Unionism—Missouri's Sin," *Missouri in Perspective*, 2 February 1976. Pastor Dorpat later became a founding member of "Renewal in Missouri."
69. Resolution 85-05-02 of the Convention of 1985 of the Southeastern District of the LCMS.
70. C. F. W. Walther, Thesis Ten (using this writer's translation) and Thesis Thirteen, as translated by L. White, in *Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently*, ed. P. T. McCain (Fort Wayne: Seminary Press, 1990), pp. 36, 49. (This essay was originally presented to the Western District of the LCMS in 1870.)
71. This portion is cited according to the translation in Tappert, pp. 11-12.
72. Ibid.
73. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII:33; Tappert, p. 575.
74. *Denkschrift* [Memorandum], pp. 10, 22-28, using this writer's translation.

# Authority in the Church: A Lutheran Perspective

Eugene F. Klug

This essay was first presented at the second meeting of Series II (1985-1987) of the Lutheran-Methodist Dialogue.<sup>1</sup> Discussion in this series revolved around each church body's teaching and practice concerning *episcopo* (oversight) and *episcopos* (overseer, bishop, pastor) in the churches. The author of this particular contribution to the discussion attempted to present Walther's (and first of all Luther's) exposition of Scripture's teaching on the subject, which has, of course, a continuing relevance to the life of the church.

The church most simply defined "is holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (Smalcald Articles, III, xii). Luther was right on target with the Scriptures with this totally artless, ingenuous explication of the church's boundaries, the faithful fold of believers, among whom there can be no pseudo-sheep. The chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows without fail who are His (John 10:27-29; 11:51-52; 15:6; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-27; 1 John 2:19). In his famous treatise of 1539, *On the Councils and the Church*, Luther thumps home the point that this is a truth that even a seven-year-old child knows.

Thus the true nature of the church has to do with people. Christ is the church's only Head and Sovereign. By its very nature the church is a spiritual community traversing all time and place. No secular relationship (family, race, or nation), nor mere external connection, nor fellowship around given rites or external objects, but personal faith alone makes people members of Christ, and thus of Christ's mystical body and church.

What Christians confess in the creed, "Credo . . . unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam," is true in every point because of what has been done for His church by Christ. It is one, numerically, and in unity of faith and hope; it is holy through the perfect, imputed righteousness of Christ; it is catholic because it embraces all believers; it is apostolic because it is built on apostolic teaching.

To the church belong all the powers and privileges which Christ, the Bridegroom, has given to His beloved, the church. The church is the royal priesthood of which Scripture speaks. To it all rights, privileges, and responsibilities belong which Christ has bestowed

upon this sovereign body. These are the church's treasures. No hierarchy, certainly no individual, no church body as such, no synod, mediates between the royal priests and Christ. Christian believers come boldly into His presence with complete confidence in His mercy, with all their petitions and all their spiritual sacrifices. The keys of Christ's kingdom, word and sacraments, are the possession of this royal priesthood to use and proclaim. They are not vested in a special order of "priests," of clergy, of church bodies, of popes, bishops, or the like.

Christ builds His church. He does so with His word, by the gospel of forgiveness through His atoning sacrifice which is to be proclaimed in all the world for sinners' sakes. Thus the word, along with baptism and the Lord's Supper, becomes the mark of the church's presence upon earth. It is never preached in vain, but by His promise will accomplish the purpose for which He sent it. The gatherings of believers that cluster around the word are, therefore, not accidental. It is the Lord's will that congregations, called churches appropriately in the New Testament because of the believers present there, assemble all those who profess faith in Christ for worship, for prayer, for instruction, for godly discipline, for fellowship at the Lord's Supper.

Such local churches exist by divine will. To them the keys belong. The relation of such local churches with the *una sancta*, the holy Christian church of all believers, is co-extensive as regards membership. Christ does not have two churches, although it is appropriate to speak of the invisible nature of the universal church at the same time that one speaks of the visible Christian church on earth. Thus there are not two charters. With whatever powers and privileges Christ has endowed the *una sancta*, He has vested the local congregation in fullest measure.

The ministry of the word, therefore, belongs not first of all to a special class, but to all believers. Every Christian congregation has this responsibility from its Lord. Included in these powers and duties is the need to call a qualified pastor. This is God's will, and ministry in the narrow sense, referring to the public pastoral office, exists *jure divino*, by God's institution. The pastor comes into his office by the call of the congregation, through which by Christ's



command the powers of office are delegated. Thus, congregation and pastor exist in correlative relationship, the pastor performing publicly the things which belong to all the royal priests.

Luther saw no conflict between these two articles, the sovereignty of the royal priesthood and the God-ordained pastoral office. They formed a very wonderful ellipse which Christ Himself had set up for His church, like two poles around which the life of the church moves in God-intended symmetry and function.

Associations or groupings of congregations into larger bodies may be shown to be a godly and beneficial arrangement. In fact, the paradigm of the New Testament points the way towards the cultivating of a wider fellowship of sister churches, banded together for mutual strengthening and joint church work. The Scriptures, however, are silent on the form that such bodies should take and, first of all, whether they should be considered as commanded by God. Useful purpose though they serve, there is no ground whatsoever to the claim that God requires them, nor to any pretension that apostolicity has been given to any person or any set of persons to rule or govern over such bodies, as in the so-called historic episcopate.

True it is that the unity of the church universal, the *una sancta*, ought to have its counterpart in the visible Christian church in this world. Division and schism in the latter is certainly contrary to God's will, as is also the vaunted pluralism of Christian bodies. These splits surely pain all Christians. They strive and pray that these disruptions be overcome. But fellowship in the faith finally rests upon true unity in belief. Such a bond results only from fidelity to Christ's word, hardly from fabricated ecclesial structures that are built upon minimal formulas of union. Unity in Christ's church is the presupposition, not the goal, of ecumenical endeavor.

Fundamental to Lutheran theology, therefore, is the recognition that the church in this world cannot create anything to enhance the nature of Christ's church, which He creates whole and perfect. Synods of congregations may be formed, but they do not *ipso facto* advance Christ's kingdom. They are voluntary organizations which exist *jure humano* and must always be seen as such. They are

representative churches, which bear the name "church" in a representative fashion, by virtue of certain powers or functions delegated to them by the member congregations. They exercise no overlordship over and above the congregations, but are super-ordinated only to the extent that given functions have been delegated to them by the congregations which they represent. The churchly work which they do belongs first of all and fundamentally to the congregations which they serve. Together the congregations, through the instrumentality of such synods, cooperate in the church's work, not least the preparation of qualified men for the public ministry; but the individual congregation's sovereignty in all of this cooperation remains intact.

Synods thus have advisory powers only, not legislative, as far as the internal affairs of congregations go. At the same time, each congregation, as a member of the *ecclesia representativa* or *concordita*, values the fellowship and unity which it has within the synodical body, cooperates fully in the joint mission, and fosters the fraternal spirit, joined in the proclamation of the gospel with kindred minds. The congregation does not derive its powers from a super-church, by whatever name it is called, but from Christ, who bestows the keys of the kingdom upon every community of believers.

It was in America, under the guarantee of the First Amendment, that Lutheran congregations for the first time had the freedom to establish, or set in operation, principles which Luther articulated at the time of the Reformation in opposition to Rome's hierarchical conception of the church and the ministry. Now for the first time the individual churches, or congregations, were free from governmental and consistorial domination in religious matters. It was especially C. F. W. Walther, pressed by controversy over these very issues in his own circles and guided by intense study of Scripture and Luther's writings, who was able to throw off the old state-church yoke and articulate clearly the fundamental principles that characterize Lutheran thinking and practice on church and ministry.<sup>2</sup> The constitution of the church body which Walther helped to found carefully delimited the synod's authority:

In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers,

and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient [*ungeeignet* in the original] as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.<sup>3</sup>

The motivation for forming such a synodical union was twofold: (1.) the example of the apostolic church (Acts 15:1-31); (2.) our Lord's will that the diversities of gifts should be for the common profit (1 Corinthians 12:4-31). Fundamental to this bond of stated purposes was the unequivocal pledge to hold faithfully to the articles of Christian belief taught by the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, as contained in the Book of Concord.

The congregations remain the basic units within the synod, which, in turn, is seen as an extension of these congregations, as are the various geographical districts and circuits. Through these structures the congregations exercise stated functions as agreed upon in the delegate synods which meet regularly for that purpose. The officers elected at such general synods serve in accordance with the duties assigned to them, and they remain accountable at all times to the congregations who constitute the synod along with their called pastors.

The right of judging and deciding in all matters, including doctrinal, is shared by all members of the royal priesthood, pastors and laity alike. This principle was first clearly articulated by Luther, who reminded the church of his day that Christ's admonition to guard against false prophets in sheep's clothing was spoken as much to the pew as to the pulpit—in fact, first of all to the pew. "The laymen," stated Walther, "are entitled to sit and vote together with the pastors in ecclesiastical courts and councils," and to judge in doctrinal matters (Thesis X, *Church and Ministry*). All such judgments must conform and be subject to Scripture's teaching. The right of private judgment does not entitle anyone to sit in judgment over Scripture, which, as Luther firmly contended, is its own interpreter: *Scriptura interpret sui*, or *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*.

While every Christian believer is obligated by virtue of his priesthood, as a baptized follower of his Lord, to speak and witness for the Word of God among all with whom he has to do, it does not follow from this that each believer holds the public pastoral office by virtue of his priesthood. For this office Scripture requires that there be special aptitude to preach and teach beyond the ability of the average Christian, and also that a man possess a valid call from the congregation of believers to administer publicly in their stead the word and sacraments. It is such call which empowers the pastor for his office; and, as Luther pointed out, it focuses his labors on a given field of labor at that place—to preach, teach, render care of the souls in his charge, administer the sacraments, exercise Christian discipline, and evangelize the unchurched. Holy Scripture speaks directly to the necessary requisites for the pastoral ministry (Titus 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:19; 3:2; 3:7; Titus 1:6), and it becomes the duty of the congregation to require that these qualifications be met. A man becomes unfit for office when he proves unfaithful to God's word and the Lutheran Confessions or persists in willful misconduct.

The importance of the congregation's call of a qualified man into the pastoral office is seen also in the relation of that call to his ordination. The former, Luther points out on the basis of Scripture, is necessary by divine injunction; the latter (ordination) is a desirable usage with roots deeply set in apostolic-ecclesial practice or ordinance. It is a solemn ratifying of the call with an earnest petitioning by all the "priests" for God's blessings upon the ordinand and the congregation which he has been called to serve. Ordination does not confer the ministry. The call and its acceptance make the minister. Should it be necessary by reason of ill health or incapacity for a man to resign his ministry, says Luther, the individual then returns to what he was before. That ordination does not confer a kind of indelible character is Luther's point.

The power of the ministry is the power of the word of God. To it, all alike, people and pastor, give unconditional obedience. It is because of that word as well as because of his office that the royal priests dutifully honor, respect, and love their pastor. In matters, however, that are not addressed by God's word there can be no binding of consciences.

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Before God and His word there are no superiors or inferiors in the church, not even in the station of ministers in relation to congregations, nor between the incumbents of the pastoral ranks. Executive positions and grades of supervisory officials within the church, particularly in the *ecclesia representativa*, or synod (church body), are entirely of human origin. Whatever titles or functions are assigned to these ranks, they remain human arrangements only and may be altered or discontinued as necessary.

Bishops in the apostolic church were ministers in charge of local congregations and were also called elders. There were no bishops in the diocesan sense. The office of supervising bishop was a later addition in the church and was generally acknowledged to be of human right only. It was virtually equivalent to the office of superintendent, or of president, in synodical polity. Luther noted that even in those early days there was no basis to the notion that the episcopal office was self-perpetuating, conferred from one who has the office to another aspiring for it. As a matter of fact, in many instances it was the people's consent which bestowed the office. Nor was a bishop's consecration required for the bestowing of office. Thus, Luther installed his friend and colleague Nicolaus von Amsdorf as bishop of Naumburg.

The office of pastor is the one divinely instituted office in the church. Properly speaking, therefore, that man is a pastor who is the pastor of a congregation. Such other offices which may be found necessary for the church's well-being are auxiliary to that chief office and, following apostolic precedent, lie within the area of Christian liberty, either within a congregation or in a synod (church body). Such offices are created and governed by the member congregations who constitute the synod, deriving their importance and their functions in that way for the performance of joint work, programs, and counsel. On the local level there may be teachers, elders, councilmen, and the like; on a national level there may be synodical officials, various governing board executives, and so forth. All of these offices exist for the sake of the churches and their ministry of the word. Such auxiliary offices may well cease, depending upon the circumstances; but no congregation may dispense with the office of the called pastor. There is no substitute

for the pastoral office; it is the highest office in the church by virtue of its divine ordinance.

Elected executives in the *ecclesia representativa* (bishops, presidents, supervisors, and other officials) have served the church well and efficiently. It is not likely that they would ever be discontinued, as little as would the synods themselves. Constituting congregations, however, need always to be on guard against power that overreaches given limits. Human pretension and pride are always around the corner, to create episcopal officers who vaunt themselves over the royal priests, attaching to themselves titles, dress, and airs that clash with the apostolic example and word, not to mention the Master's first of all. The organizations and stations which men create in the name of the church and, indeed, of Christ Himself must serve Him and the gospel, not self-serving ambition or pretension, especially not at the expense of the "holy believers, lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd."

Thus, ultimately all authority in the church remains with the Shepherd, Christ, who bestows upon His fold, the church, royal prerogatives and responsibilities for the administering of the word and sacraments in its midst. By God's ordinance it is this royal priesthood of believers that has the authority and power to issue a divine call to a qualified man (1 Timothy 3:1ff.; Titus 1:5) into the pastoral office to do publicly the things which Christ has entrusted to the church.

### Endnotes

1. January 31, 1986 (Atlanta, Georgia).
2. In his definitive study, *Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), Carl S. Mundinger dispels the notion that the founders of the Missouri Synod were dependent upon the American political system. He states: "Any democratic political theories which the founders of the Missouri Synod might have entertained, they did not get from America, but from the same source from which they derived their theology and church polity, viz., from the writings of Martin Luther" (p.

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209). "Though this polity was not made of contemporary German materials, much less of contemporary American materials, it was made in America, and it surely was tailor-made for the nineteenth-century American frontier" (p. 218). In footnote 45 on that page Munding cites two significant observations that bear on the above: (1.) The one is by H. H. Maurer in *The American Journal of Sociology* (XXXI [1925], p. 56), who noted: "By an irony of fate, it [the Missouri Synod] rises in defense of the Jeffersonian state, the limited state, the thing that was begotten in the iniquity of rationalism." (2.) The other is by Carl Mauelshagen in *American Lutheranism Surrenders to the Forces of Conservatism* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1936, p. 204): "The Missouri Synod's congregational and synodical organization was less objectionable than that of any other to the German immigrant, who came to America prejudiced against the hierarchical and consistorial form of church administration and autocratic, political government."

3. Article VII: "Relation of the Synod to Its Members."

## Books Received

Lyle W. Lange, general editor, and G. Jerome Albrecht, manuscript editor. *Our Great Heritage*. Volume 1. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. xvi + 588 pages. Cloth. \$26.95. Volume 2. xvi + 625 pages. Cloth. \$26.95. Volume 3. xvi + 766 pages. Cloth. \$26.95.

Alan P. F. Sell. *Aspects of Christian Integrity*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. x + 160 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

John Warwick Montgomery, editor. *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*. Dallas and London: Probe Books, 1991. 366 pages. \$14.99.

Carroll Saussy. *God Images and Self-Esteem: Empowering Women in a Patriarchal Society*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 191 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

Peter T. O'Brien. *The Epistle to the Philippians. A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991. xli + 597 pages. Cloth. \$39.95.

John Piper. *"Love Your Enemies": Jesus' Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and the Early Christian Paraenesis. A History of the Tradition and Interpretation of Its Uses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. xiv + 273 pages. Paper.

Andrew T. Lincoln. *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. xi + 277 pages. Paper.

Mark A. Noll. *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986, 1991. xii + 271 pages. Paper.

Millard J. Erickson. *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 663 pages. Cloth.

Tom Sine. *Wild Hope*. Dallas and London: Word Publishing, 1991. x + 343 pages. Paper.

John McRay. *Archaeology and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 432 pages. Cloth.

Kenneth L. Woodward. *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why*. New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 1991. 461 pages. Cloth. \$12.00.

Bruce C. Birch. *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 383 pages. Paper. \$19.95.



# Theological Observer

## "THE QUESTION OF WOMEN PRIESTS"

A brief article entitled "The Question of Women Priests" appeared in the November 1992 issue of *The Tablet* (pp. 1387-1388), laying down the lines of what was then the forthcoming debate over the Church of England's decision to ordain women. A photocopy was given the undersigned; so he has no precise knowledge of what kind of periodical *The Tablet* is supposed to be. Considering the page numbers in its November issue, it must be extensive. The assured methods and results of form and source criticism can leave no doubt that this religious periodical is intended for laymen of the Church of England with, what for them would be a conservative bent, but willingness to conform to church decisions. How English! Anglicans (Episcopalians) do theology by looking in the side-view mirrors so that they remain in the middle lane between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Their decision in November to ordain women priests has left the Roman Catholics coughing in the dust and Anglicans are moving up fast in the passing (i.e., Protestant) lane. In England that would be inappropriately the right lane. In the U.S.A. that is the left lane. Forward into Protestantism! The Anglicans made a rational, fully informed choice. They knew it was *Arrivederci Roma*. A reprimand from Rome was more gentle ("we can still dialogue") than one given by the occupant of the see of Westminster, the Roman primate in England. The English convocation (synod) also knew that a decision to ordain women priests was "the infiltration of the Christian Church by a secular feminist ideology, so that the real question becomes whether the Church can find the strength to resist." The maiden did not resist and has lost her chastity, though in regard to the Church of England, where the theology of *Honest to God* flourished in the 1960's, such language is markedly ill fitting.

The problem in the Church of England is not precisely the same as the one faced by the LCMS, but it is close enough. No theological problem is exclusively denominationally circumscribed, unless one is content with sectarianism. The English church and her sisters are more ecumenically self-conscious than we are. Whether women may be consecrated as bishops is moot, since the American branch of Anglicanism has already done so, and no one has imposed any interdicts on anyone else, although it would brighten up a dull ecclesiastical landscape to see Henry VIII's church, excommunicated by mother Rome, disinheriting in turn her children. Schism in the twentieth century is sheer historical and impossible romanticism. Besides, there is no stomach for that kind of courageous action. It would be regarded as no more than hysterics. How tolerantly British!

The last paragraph in "The Question of Women Priests" states that, as a result of the decision of the Church of England to ordain women priests, "the question is now posed to Christian churches which do not ordain women: why not?" The Roman and Eastern communities will not even bother with the "why not?" question. After all, their positions are well known, informed, and argued, and the Anglicans went out on this limb without concern for their sensitivities. Regretably and tiresomely, however, the "why not?" question does have to be answered by the LCMS, though the editors of *The Tablet* doubtless know as little about us as we know about them. The word "tiresomely" is used, because the LCMS has already answered the question over and over again for at least twenty years. Though a long period of time to us, it is short in the history of doctrine. Previous answers have not squelched enthusiasm for women clergy. If women can occupy every position which men do in government and society, why not do so in the church? That is the "why not?" question again, but in a different form.

The LCMS position on ordaining women clergy is made more difficult by the facts that we are neither part of a worldwide association of churches opposed to the practice (as are the Eastern Orthodox), nor do we have the advantage of being a mammoth church (as is Rome). The LWF long ago made up its mind on this one; such a singularly courageous person as Peter Brunner was a prophetic voice soon lost among the shouts of the siren voices of feminism. The LCMS does its theology not in response to what Constantinople and Rome think, but in response to what the neighboring Protestant churches around the block do and they have women clergy. Protestantism seeps up through the basement. It is inevitable. Walther's prediction of an English-speaking (viz., Americanized) Lutheran church soon becoming Reformed had more truth than we previously conceded. Among the major Protestant denominations only the LCMS does not allow women pastors. Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, ELCA Lutherans, and Disciples of Christ all have women pastors. Why not we? Charismatic groups by necessity have women ministers, since the Holy Spirit is encouraged to spring up in everyone in the group. Southern Baptists are against female ministry, but their polity (and perhaps inclination as well) keep them from doing anything about reportedly three hundred congregations with women pastors. Here is the sovereignty of the congregation with a vengeance! Most of these Protestants do not recognize the office of the ministry as divine in the sense that Lutherans do; this fact only exacerbates the problem. Without a clearly defined office of the ministry, the question of who occupies the office is

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secondary. By ordaining women the ELCA has adjusted its teaching on the office of the ministry by lowering it to an extension of the church, an unanticipated and for some unwelcome side-affect. (One may consult the author's "Augustana V and the Doctrine of the Ministry" [*Lutheran Quarterly* (Winter 1993)] or read the original in *Called and Ordained* [Augsburg Publishing House, 1990].)

Lutherans feel uncomfortable with obtaining theological aid from Rome or the Eastern communions. The reasons for this fact are as varied as they might be contradictory. The Smalcald Articles call the papacy the antichrist, and therefore everything papal is dismissed with a wave of the hand. Overlooked is the commendation given the Roman church in the Augsburg Confession. Eastern Orthodoxy is simply not part of our religious experience as, for example, the Methodist church around the corner is. It is not American. Still it is the Eastern fathers and not the founders of Reformed Protestantism who are cited in our confessions. But we are uncomfortable with the Eastern Church. It is as much an ethnic issue as a religious one. Whatever the reasons are, we are left alone in answering the "why not?" question of why we do not ordain women. Left to our loneliness, we are faced with exhausting our resources, and the troops are less prepared to fight on this issue than some others. The Protestants are always ready to embrace us. LCMS pastors participating in local clergy councils know for themselves the percentages of women ministers in other denominations. As recently as twenty-five years ago, such was not the case. We lost a first line of defense with the decisions of the ALC and LCA (now ELCA) around 1970 to permit women pastors. Although not long enough ago to make a binding tradition, it was a moment to be hailed as historic. Strange as it seems, we lost one more line of defense in the Church of England's decision. Awaiting the queen in parliament to legislate women clergy is only waiting for the other shoe to drop. We are now more alone than ever. "The waters of the river will rise over its channels and go over all its banks; and it will sweep on to Judah; it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck" (adapting Isaiah 8:7-8). We have less breathing space.

Postscript: The Presbyterian Church in Australia, that portion of Australian Presbyterianism not joining the Uniting Church of Australia and thus losing its denomination identity, has rescinded its decision to ordain women. Not known is how many women were already ordained and what role they will now play in the church. The situation would be

worth watching, if we could obtain some information.

David P. Scaer

FEMINISM, THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN,  
AND LUTHERAN FORUM

The editors of *Forum Letter*, the monthly voice of the quarterly *Lutheran Forum*, have it right when they say that "gnostic feminism [is] pervading and invading the American religious scene" (October 31, 1992, p. 4). They still do not see the ordination of women as part of this "gnostic feminism." There may still be hope, as will be shown below. From time to time we have referred to *Lutheran Forum* and its *Forum Letter* here in the *CTQ*, simply because LCMS readers do not have a readily available avenue into the inner workings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). One weekly periodical never seems to proceed beyond scolding the ELCA on the inerrancy question. On the other hand, official publications are just that—official! Unless the *Lutheran Forum* is reprinted elsewhere, what it offers is simply unavailable to LCMS pastors. It deserves a place in the pastor's study (P.O. Box 327, Delhi, New York 13753).

*Lutheran Forum* has continued to make a blistering attack on the ELCA quota system. No one has been as critical of anything in the LCMS as *Lutheran Forum* has been of the ELCA system of allotting church positions according to gender, race, and ethnic background. But it is just this approach of equal opportunities to ministry which editors of the *Lutheran Forum* adopt in defending the ordination of women pastors. "If men can be ordained, why not women?"

One can think of any number of less than fully theological reasons for the *Forum* editors to oppose women's ordination. Perhaps the best reason for not ordaining women is that no one has found a theological reason to do so. This fact some women clergy themselves concede. They recognize that the theological answers offered so far are inadequate. Another reason for not ordaining women pastors is the ecumenical one, which the *Forum* editors acknowledge themselves. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, who constitute three quarters of the world's Christians, do not ordain women and are not likely to do so. The ecumenical argument is the same as the catholic one. It looks not only at what other churches are doing, but also at what the church has done historically. This is precisely the way in which the Augsburg Confession argues. Its doctrinal section closes by claiming that the Lutheran teachings do not

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differ from the Roman church as it is known from the writings of the fathers. Pope Gelasius is listed as an authority in regard to receiving the sacrament in both kinds. The Catalogue of Testimonies at the end of the Book of Concord anchors Lutheran doctrine in church tradition. Without the catholic argument for doctrine, the church is in danger of sectarianism and becomes schismatic. Since the catholic argument may be seen as a threat to a church which boasts the *sola scriptura*, it is rarely used. But the plain fact is that the ordination of women has no support from church tradition and, accordingly, is not supported by the catholic argument. Without considering biblical prohibitions, the arguments against it could rely on church history alone, unless one wanted to cite gnostic practices.

LCMS Pastor Joel Elowsky took the ecumenical (catholic) issue right over the walls and behind the lines in the 1992 Reformation issue of *Lutheran Forum*. *Lutheran Forum* comes close to being "an equal-opportunity theological journal." The other side was not slow to fire back. ELCA Pastor Mark Chapman, whose home address indicates that he must be a good friend of newly consecrated editor Leonard Klein, responded in the 1993 Lenten issue. Chapman does not address the point that Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians do not ordain women and are unlikely to do so. While Chapman is clearly wounded by Elowsky's quite proper suggestion that a church ordaining women may be guilty of "apostasy and schism," Elowsky is only reflecting how the Roman and Eastern communions think! He cannot change that fact.

More significant is that Chapman answers the accusations of apostasy and schism by elevating the *reformation* principle over the *catholic* one, if it is permissible to speak in these terms. Luther replaced celibate priests with married pastors. The conclusion is that we can replace male pastors with female ones. The reason is *ecclesia semper reformanda est*. Is this really a reformation or catholic principle of theology? It is more likely Reformed. If this were a principle of theology, then everything would be debatable sooner or later. In any event, *Lutheran Forum* is still talking about the issue.

Perhaps the least significant but still a valid reason for ELCA pastors, especially those connected with *Lutheran Forum*, to cease ordaining women is to avoid continuing to give offense to their confessional (and in their view weaker) LCMS brothers and sisters, some of whom recognize that theology is alive on the pages of *Lutheran Forum*. LCMS pastors may differ among themselves on what arguments against women pastors are the most important, but these arguments include biblical

prohibitions, ecumenical practice and catholic tradition, the incarnation, the all male-apostolate, the revelation of God as Father and Son, and the fact that God is Father and Son. Some among us may question some of these arguments, but we are open to some mutual convincing, or at least we should be. The arguments of *Lutheran Forum* against feminine references to God are similar to ours against the ordination of women, at least in the estimation of many, and we have no hesitancy to use their ammunition.

When the *Forum* editors say that feminism is modern gnosticism, they are absolutely right in seeing that we are dealing with the very doctrine of God. The *Forum* editors have rejected the idea of genderless or bisexual references to God because it conflicts with the usage of biblical revelation. We would like them to go one step further in recognizing that this revelation is not arbitrary. Limiting our understanding of God as Father and Son to His revelation of Himself, without being convinced that He *is* Father and Son, does not go far enough. For in Jesus we know God as Father, because He is the Father of Jesus. The issues of using inclusive language in liturgy, Bible translation, and theology and the ordaining of women are interrelated, not because one is the cause or result of the other, but because both result from a gnostic view of God whereby feminine and masculine views of him (or her) are placed side by side.

It is simplistic to suggest that women pastors are gnostics simply because they are women. That idea is absurd and no one has even suggested it, as *Forum Letter* claims (October 31, 1992, p. 4). But we have no intention of retreating from identifying women pastors as evidence of gnosticism and its success. In addition, no one has suggested that male theologians cannot be feminists. In fact, many more men may be feminists than women. This is not an issue of one denomination only, as even in LCMS circles some are promoting the advantage of introducing feministic qualities into the church to improve church life. Such a suggestion is as fraught with feminism as is the actual ordaining of women. We dare not fool ourselves in this regard!

Richard John Neuhaus's *First Things* has played a valuable role in providing a broader evaluation of feminism than that which is coming from Lutheran circles, including the LCMS. An example is furnished by Olivia Vlahos in "The Goddess That Failed" (December 1992). Retired from the Norwalk Community College (Connecticut), she shows that religions of the Mother Goddess were hideously cruel, requiring self-emasculation and sacrifice. Feminism in religion has not historically

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delivered utopia. Vlahos's being a woman does not make her a feminist. To the contrary, her awareness that we are confronting a wider problem should be integrated into the theology of those male theologians who oppose the ordination of women but have not related what they believe about God to contemporary theological movements and the even wider-ranging philosophical movements of the day. In the February 1993 issue of *First Things*, Vlahos follows up with "Generic Male, Endangered Gender?" Denominational boundaries can become walls limiting theological squabbles to intramural debates between freshmen and sophomores and keeping us unaware of the massive philosophical movements which are responsible for our predicaments. Unless our own position takes into account these theological and philosophical currents, we will eventually be swept along with them. Our theology will remain superficial. Strange as it may seem, a governmental quota system in hiring (even at the cabinet level), the ELCA quota system, the use of inclusive liturgical language, referring to God in both masculine and feminine terms, and allowing women into the ministry are all branches of the same tree. *Lutheran Forum* does a good job in *selective* pruning, but does not attack the trunk problem. Limiting our concerns to the one issue of the ordination of women may be the same kind of selective gardening which will allow weeds to spring up in other flower beds. *First Things*, in tracing feminism into pre-Roman paganism, has gone to the root of the problem. Old Testament colleagues, similarly, in the course of evaluating the validity of feminist exegesis and the propriety of inclusive language in biblical translation, have now begun to draw attention to the relevance, *vis-a-vis* the Old Testament, of the worship of Ashteroth (Astarte).

Eastern Orthodox theology has predictably and essentially looked at the issue from the perspective of God. At the Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions (in Fort Wayne) in January of 1991 Dr. Thomas Hopko of St. Vladimir's Seminary provided an essay, now appearing in *Speaking the Christian God*, entitled "Apophatic Theology and the Naming of God in Eastern Orthodox Tradition" (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992). Hopko's thesis is that God's revelation as Father and Son has significance for human life. We are now at the heart of the problem. Essays in collections are often lost between the covers, but searching for this one is worth the effort.

Several centuries were needed to resolve the ramifications of Arianism in theology and christology. Feminism will not be easily overcome and no one living today will see the matter resolved. Being right on the ordination of women is not the complete solution, but recognizing that the



practice is aberrant is a step in making the diagnosis. *Lutheran Forum* has made this kind of diagnosis in regard to inclusive language about God. But the point must be made that God is consistent in His revelation. The God who reveals Himself as Father through the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ is the same God who by the Spirit of Jesus inspires Paul to allow only men into the pastoral office. To top off the argument Paul claims the support of the Old Testament and Jesus. The problem generic to all sides of the argument (including the LCMS and *Lutheran Forum*) is the recognition that God, incarnation, apostolicity, apostolic injunctions, language about God, and the ministry are *necessarily* interrelated. Not being able to see beyond and behind the biblical references to christology and theology (in the narrow sense) suffers from the same fault as not seeing that language about God and the office of the ministry are interrelated.

By placing a picture of a woman pastor on the cover of *Lutheran Forum* (Lent 1993), its editors were making an obvious statement of intransigence. But there is light at the end of this tunnel. Arriving a few days earlier was *Forum Letter*, in which the Reverend Tom Brock (an ELCA pastor) takes exception to "Sexual Diversity," a program topic in *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters*. Officially produced by the ELCA, it sees homosexuality as being as acceptable as heterosexuality (*Forum Letter* [January 27, 1993], pp. 7-8). This is a mild description of what "Sexual Diversity" really says and of how *Forum Letter* reacts. Pastor Brock relates a conversation with ELCA Bishop Chilstrom in which Brock asked him "if he thought the ELCA would reaffirm the church's teaching that sexual intercourse before marriage and homosexual behavior are wrong. The bishop didn't know. He said he never thought we would change our mind on the ordination of women, but we did." This statement must mean that Bishop Chilstrom was once opposed to the practice of ordaining women, but something changed his mind! The bishop continued, "The same principles that applied to that decision need to be applied to this one." Just what are "the same principles"? Does this statement mean that the prohibition in the sixth commandment is as flexible as the prohibition of women pastors? The article claims that Bishop Chilstrom would not deny the possibility of practicing homosexuals being ordained. Brock finds these words tragic. We are asking *Lutheran Forum* to let us know what the aforesaid principles are when its editors find out.

The deeper theological level at which the issues of how we speak about God and the ministry has been reached. Principles which allow women



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to be ordained may also allow open homosexuality in the church and the ministry. Richard John Neuhaus came to the same conclusion. It may have been this point which moved him from the ELCA to Rome. In ordaining women we are going beyond appearances into anthropological and theological depths. The foundations of reality are being shaken. If the ordinations of women and homosexuals proceed from the same theological or philosophical basis, perhaps concerns about homosexuals serving as pastors should raise the question again of whether women should be ordained. The challenge for the LCMS is recognizing that behind the biblical prohibitions rests the fundamental understanding of God as Father and Son. When this understanding is compromised or changed, there will be changes in the occupants of the pastoral office and in the language in which we speak about God. *Forum Letter* is probing beneath the surface. Now comes the question of whether enough of us, even in confessional Lutheran circles, will see that the tentacles of this cancer are derived from the same root system.

David P. Scaer

#### LOGIA: A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

*Logia* appeared, unheralded as far as I can remember, in the mail-boxes of many Lutheran pastors some time in October or November. The page of credits explains its purpose as promoting orthodox theology. Circulating in the LCMS are any number of official and unofficial periodicals which claim the same goal for themselves. (Would anyone really admit to promoting unorthodox theology?) Among those periodicals claiming to present the confessional Lutheran position, however, none is as impressive as *Logia*.

An explanation is provided for choosing *Logia* as the title, but the periodical would have looked just as well under another title. We all know what *Logia* means anyway. It resembles the word "logomachy," which means a battle of words, although I am sure that logomachy is not the editors' intent. *Logia* is unashamedly Lutheran. Affiliations of the contributing editors include the Lutheran (State) Church of Hanover, the Lutheran Church of Australia, the Lutheran Church-Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Independent Lutheran Church of Germany, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The pan-Lutheran background of the contributors is belied by the list of six editors, who are with one exception all pastors of the LCMS. The exception, Erling Teigen of the ELS, is listed as the coordinating editor, suggesting that this

journal really is a team effort. Strikingly, most of the editors belong to the younger generation of pastors. With the exception of Teigen and John Pless, whom we know from *Forum Letter* and *The Bride of Christ*, the others are unknown to most. Of the five editors in the LCMS Saint Louis graduates have the edge over Fort Wayne graduates. Perhaps the message here is that Lutheran theology of the confessional sort is not the possession of one church body and a younger generation wants to be involved. This is the clear message of the anonymously written "Loeche's Nightmare," the first piece in the *Logia* "Forum" (p. 75.):

Theological inbreeding in smaller Lutheran bodies leaves them defenseless when confronting challenges from groups which can echo quite well their "inerrancy" view of the Scriptures. A myopic parochialism afflicts some of us in Lutheranism. We seem to have convinced ourselves that a particular incarnation of the Lutheran church is the true, visible church on earth—and to the devil with the rest.

Is the reason for this article's anonymity the author's modesty or his fear of repercussions? The clue here is "myopic parochialism." *Logia* will overcome the temptation of answering theological issues from the reservoir of one church body, a disorder recognized by repetitious quoting of the same sources without engaging the opinions and views of others. This expectation is a tall order.

Unstated in *Logia* is the premise that additional channels are needed to do justice to confessional and, presumably, biblical theology. We shall see how courageous the editors are. "The Universal Priesthood in the Lutheran Confessions" by Erling Teigen shows that a few sacred cows have been taken off the list of endangered species.

Among the contributing editors are five members of the faculty in Fort Wayne and three members of the faculty in Saint Louis. Some who were invited to serve as contributing editors in the spring of 1992 did not accept. I was among those who neither accepted nor declined but, after seeing the impressive format, I am pleased to see my name listed there. Perhaps my silence qualified as the Roman Catholic *obicem non ponere*. Without objection the divine work could proceed.

A cryptic sentence appears in the leading contribution in the "Forum" (p. 75): "Renewal in the Lutheran Church will not come from the seminaries or institutional office buildings." *Logia's* anonymous writer claims that synodical and seminary personnel will not do theology because

"the political pressures brought to bear are simply to [sic!] severe for either academics or bureaucrats to speak with a prophetic voice to the church. Anemic theology will result if the parish pastors of our church do not reclaim the position of leadership in our church bodies." *Logia's* editors are there getting their piece of the theological pie. In any event *Logia* tells us that theology is still alive among the non-professionals.

*Logia* measures eight and a half inches by eleven, with an Albrecht Durer sketch, dated 1511, depicting the atonement with reference to the persons of the Trinity. That the Father appears with the papal tiara might indicate that an anti-Roman Catholic polemic will be excluded from the pages of *Logia*. (That polemic has, in actuality, been dead for some time.) *Logia's* outward appearance receives a high rating. The first issue is divided, as is the *CTQ*, into three sections: articles, book reviews, and a forum. Articles are of both contemporary and historical characters. Ken Schurb provides contemporary insights, and Martin Wittenberg offers "Church Fellowship and Altar Fellowship in the Light of Church History." Its twenty-five double-columned pages, translated from the German by John Bruss of Mankato, are so exhaustive that they qualify as a book. This article took several sittings to read but was worth the time. Three articles are by living authors. Two contributors are dead. Presented here are two sermons by Luther on the Lord's Supper and an essay by Hermann Sasse, translated by Matthew Harrison, a Sasse scholar in his own right, as is contributing editor Ronald Feuerhahn. Contributing editor John Kleinig of Australia actually had Sasse as a teacher. Books by Lutheran writers are reviewed critically by three Lutheran reviewers. Robert Preus responds to Tietjen's *Memoirs in Exile*; Mark Sell to Becker's *The Foolishness of God*; and John Maxwell to Kolb's *Confessing the Faith*. Preus's treatment of Tietjen is sympathetic. In the ecumenical spirit which *Logia* claims for itself, a sequel from Tietjen or anyone else involved in the turmoils of the early 1970's would be welcome. Maxwell respects the scholarly Kolb, but asks him to reevaluate the claim that the Lutheran Confessions set forth a particular hermeneutic. In the *Logia* "Forum" the undersigned is said to be capable of amusement "at the suggestion that his christology provides a theological framework congenial to Mrs. Meyer's purpose" in *Voices/Visions*. He is flattered, of course, that someone read the book.

After these disconnected comments, some might rummage through their files to find their copies of *Logia*. One missionary on leave complained that he did not receive a copy. Eighteen dollars will solve the problem for the year. The editors are off to a good start, but whether they can

maintain an adequate level of scholarship, enthusiasm, editorial work, and financial support is another matter. Good wishes are not lacking. They come from the editor of *Lutheran Forum* and the president of the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod. Nor is the advertising unimpressive. Advertisers found in the first issue are Eerdmans (with two pages), Gramcord (for exegetes who have abandoned the concordance for computer efficiency), *Lutheran Forum*, and *Touchstone* (self-described as "A Journal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy"). Eerdmans pushes Calvin's commentaries. *Lutheran Forum* receives endorsements from David Benke and Ralph Bohlmann and is available for \$21. *Touchstone* is available for \$13. *Logia* requires \$18 as its annual subscription fee and claims an address at 800 South Military, Dearborn, Michigan, 48124. It is too early to make any predictions of its survival, but *Logia* is a serious scholarly journal, forthrightly addressing pressing theological topics. It has competition from the *Lutheran Quarterly*, *Dialog*, the *Concordia Journal*, and, of course, the *CTQ*. Theology is alive and, if not well, at least increasing in strength. On the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary for the theological symposia of January, the editors claimed that subscriptions had exceeded a thousand. The editor of the *Lutheran Quarterly*, also on campus for the symposia, claimed over two thousand readers and successfully proselyted others for his cause.

David P. Scaer

#### THE NEW WELS CREED: AGAIN

In a previous "Theological Observer" (*CTQ*, LVI:2-3 [April-July 1992], pp. 201-206) I published a critique of a proposal by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) to change the translation of the Nicene Creed for its new hymnal, *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. At issue was the propriety and validity of changing the confession of the Lord's incarnation from "was made man" to "was made fully human." Such is the change intended by the WELS for its worshippers. Readers may refer to my earlier remarks in their entirety, but in brief my arguments concerned two points. Firstly, the language "fully human" is an abstraction and intentionally wishes to eschew gender-specificity. However, for the humanity of Christ to be "full" it must entail the maleness of Christ, which (along with other factors) bespeaks the particularity of His humanity as concrete and individualized. No generic humanity exists; only individualized concretions of humanity exist and, indeed, either male humanity or female humanity. The language of "fully human" allows the interpretation that Christ's humanity was at its most

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fundamental level a mere generic humanity, and that fact alone makes such language ill-suited for creedal affirmation. But ironically the desire to eschew gender-specific language with "fully human" renders Christ less than fully human, for it makes of secondary importance the specificity of His humanity apart from which no full humanity exists. My second point was that such wording breaks the organic connection between the Scriptures and the ecumenical creed as a summary of the Scriptures. The language of Christ's incarnation may not be divested of the various significances with which the Bible invests the person of Jesus. In the economy of salvation Jesus is New Adam, Son of Man, Son of God, Bridegroom, and the like. Such language is not mere metaphor but renders the reality of Christ's significance as the person who is Lord and Savior.

As one might have expected, reaction to my critique came largely from WELS people. Not all reaction was equally helpful nor equally charitable. Nor was all of it comprehending. Nonetheless, within the reactions points were raised which deserve response. Especially important is a response by Professor James P. Tiefel, a member of the Joint Hymnal Committee, which appeared in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (XC:1 [1993], pp. 55-58). This is a response which "the Executive Committee of the Hymnal Project felt it wise to publish for the sake of our Synod's members" (p. 55). As such it deserves an honest rejoinder, for it possesses special claims to represent WELS reaction to my comments. I must also add by way of acknowledgement the materials which the Reverend Victor Prange, Chairman of the Commission on Worship, kindly sent to me.<sup>1</sup> All of these responses give me occasion now to pursue this matter a little more.

*A Brief Prologue:* Before turning to the matter at hand, a brief prologue is perhaps required. Professor Tiefel remarks that it was not so much the appearance of my critique in the *CTQ* which aroused his response as it was its appearance in Herman Otten's *Christian News*, which "has wide readership also in the WELS" (p. 55). Especially troubling, however, was the fact that my remarks appeared under the title "Is the WELS Still Orthodox?" Hence, Tiefel's response "for the sake of our Synod's members." I wish to make it clear that that title was a bit of editorializing by the people of *Christian News* and had no connection with me. I have no doubt that the members of WELS are orthodox Christians and are earnestly desirous to remain so. At the same time I do believe that the proposed change at issue allows false interpretation—indeed in the environment of present-day culture invites false interpretation and is for

that reason alone problematic as creedal phraseology. And I know that the very language suggested by WELS has been used precisely to deny any significance to the male specificity of Christ, and that makes a dogmatic claim about which the church would be wise to reflect more seriously than it has.

Secondly, a number of WELS respondents seemed to receive my remarks as little more than presumption by a big sister. "Stop straining at WELS gnats but swallowing Missouri camels!" wrote one person. To his attitude two remarks are appropriate: (1.) We are dealing here not with Wisconsin's creed nor with Missouri's creed. We are discussing the proper vernacular wording of the most significant ecumenical creed which the church possesses. To treat this matter as of parochial interest is to engage in a severe strain of sectarian hybris. The creed is everyone's business, because by it the baptized confess the one, undivided faith. Furthermore, the selfsame change proposed by the WELS has already been proposed and implemented by others, including some who intentionally and explicitly wish to peripheralize the maleness of Jesus as without meaning. The issue raised by the WELS proposal goes well beyond its new hymnal. It is a truly ecumenical and catholic question, and it is such because it raises acute christological issues.

Finally, for clarity's sake a red herring from Professor Tiefel's article requires comment. Professor Tiefel avers that the real reason for my interest in this question is the question of the ordination of women. He refers to my booklet of 1991, "It Is Not Given to Women to Teach: A Lex in Search of a Ratio," in which I made some of the same arguments as I made in my critique of the proposed creedal change. While Prof. Tiefel obfuscates my intentions in that booklet, he is certainly right in recognizing similarities of argument. I do believe that the masculinity of Jesus is not unrelated to the biblical prohibition of women in the office of the public ministry. Yet the concern about the proper translation of ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, *homo factus est*, is quite divisible from the question of the ordination of women. Indeed, the question of the ordination of women is but one—albeit important—practical implication of the great and large issue of the theological meaning of gender-specificity and of the simple but pervasive fact that the biblical language is masculine at most places where gender *inclusivity* is intended and such is the case also and *especially* in the language concerning Him in whom all are included.<sup>2</sup>

The responses to my critique raised a number of issues and questions,

but the following points appear to encompass most of them.

(1.) The question of translation remains an issue. Tiefel raises the question of a "living language." "For many years the words *man* and *human being* could be used interchangeably by both the church and society. However, in a living language words change meaning. More and more the word *man* is defined, even in dictionaries, as a male person" (p. 55). Hartwig speaks of words becoming "unclear" and language "infelicitous" (p. 202). Another respondent wrote: "The English language, unlike ancient Latin, is a living language, and whether we like it or not I think the English lexicon and usage are changing." In this regard Tiefel points to passages like Luke 2:14 ("peace on earth, good will to *men*") and 1 Timothy 2:4 ("[God] will have all *men* to be saved"). In such passages can we not recognize our changing lexicon and translate "peace on earth to *people* who have His good will" and "[God] wants all *people* to be saved"? Clearly, as Tiefel notes, in both passages "all *people*" were intended (pp. 55-56). We also have no difficulty with such translations, for the referent is clearly "all individual persons" (noting the plural form of ἀνθρώπος).

The same is also true concerning the phrase "who for us *men* and for our salvation" (τὸν δι' ἡμῶς τοῦς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν) in the Nicene Creed. Hartwig explains the rationale for the omission of the word "men" in the new translation (p. 212). The creed in the new WELS hymnal will now read "who for us and for our salvation." While I am not as positive about the rationale as Hartwig is, the translation without "men" adequately renders the creed's meaning. The referent is all who are confessing the creed, men and women; gender-specificity in itself is in no way part of the meaning. Indeed, the referent and meaning would be the same if *only* women were in fact in mind or *only* men. In these instances we may defer in freedom to the changing lexicon of our day.<sup>3</sup>

(2.) However, the above argument does *not* work for translating the creedal phrase ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, *homo factus est*, "He became man." Here the referent is not "all people" but the one Lord, Jesus Christ. To talk here about the changing "living language" and the lexical possibilities just will not do. For this creedal phrase renders the incarnation of the eternal Son of the Father which was "for us and for our salvation." Nothing in Tiefel's response leads me to look more kindly on the phrase "He became fully human" as a proper rendering of the above Greek and Latin phrases. Here two points require a brief mention.

(a.) I argued before that "fully human" does not necessarily connote that Jesus was also a male human being. That fact remains true, and as far as I can see Tiefel does not try to assert that in the phrase "fully human" Christ's maleness is necessarily implied. He refers rather to the use of the masculine pronouns elsewhere in the translation and to the phrase "Son of God." These assert "that the fully human Jesus is a male person" (p. 57). The masculine pronouns, however, at most assert the facticity of Christ's maleness (the "Son of God" is more problematic). The worst feminist enthusiast would agree. I do not doubt that the WELS believes that Jesus was a male. The question is whether the maleness of Christ is in any way an important and even constitutive fact in His *significance* or *meaning* for us. That is the reason why I wrote before: "The change in the WELS rendering of the creed simply denigrates the *importance* of Christ as a concrete male human figure and apparently assumes that Christ's gender is confessionally insignificant and without meaning" (p. 204).

Some respondents argued that, were the gender-specificity in any way important in the translation of ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, *homo factus est*, the creed would have used the Greek ἀνὴρ and the Latin *vir*, which specifically denote a male member of humankind (similarly *Mann* instead of *Mensch* in the German). But this argument is simply to miss the point. To use the distinctly male term is exactly *not* what the creed wanted to use, just as the full meaning of the creedal phrase is not properly rendered "fully human." Both err, but at opposite ends. The distinctly male term does not include the female half of the human race. It is precisely ἀνὴρ and *vir* which are gender-exclusive. To say that the Son of God became "male" (*vir factus est*, without guessing what the Greek might be) would implicitly deny Christ's universal significance. Hence, to be sure, along with Tiefel I do indeed wish to confess that Christ was "fully human" (τέλειον ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι, as Chalcedon put it). Nonetheless, the phrase "became fully human" does not clearly render the concrete, particularized humanity of Christ as male humanity and (I repeat again) in the present social climate is often preferred precisely to deny the meaning of Christ having become a male. But Christ's humanity was necessarily a concrete, individualized humanity. The fact remains, whether or not we fear that we offend our culture: the term "man" is capable of rendering both truths at once, that Christ shared that humanity which is the common possession of all human beings, men and women, and that Christ was the individual human person that He was, a male human being. To say that the Son "became man" is a richer translation—



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that is, a more truthful translation—than "became fully human."

(b.) Here I must mention again a major argument of mine to which, interestingly, none of the respondents reacted. I refer to my point that the creed is a summary of the prophetic and apostolic narrative which is the Scriptures. Here Tiefel overlooks something important. He writes: "One cannot simply overlook how the phrase ["became fully human"] fits within the body of the creed" (p. 57). He then refers to the symmetry that earlier in the text the creed asserts the "full divinity" of Christ and now in this phrase asserts the "full humanity" of Christ. It is a fair observation. But the creed is not just a dogmatic summary. It is a biblical summary, and that fact means that the phrase must also be considered in what might be called its salvific economical context. The creed says, "who for us and for our salvation . . . was made man." It is impossible, on the Bible's own terms, to understand Christ's salvific significance apart from His role as Second Adam, Son of man, Son of Mary, Priest after the order of Melchizedek, new Moses, and the like. It is precisely *this context* in the creed which demands a language which allows His maleness to be connoted—as well as, again, His common humanity.

That Hartwig in this connection claims that the change to "became fully human" may be counted "as one of the finest improvements in the new translation" (p. 212) is overly self-congratulatory. That the muse of translation suggested this "improvement" also to others is acknowledged. Tiefel and Hartwig mention especially the translation of the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC). However, we must pose again the question concerning the nature of a creed. A creed is a summary of the church's faith, which faith is given by the Triune God to each who is baptized. The creed, therefore, bears eschatological significance. It is the hymn of the redeemed and bespeaks the truth of that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is the Redeemer. In expressing its faith in a creed the church does not first cast its eye on the "living" language of its surroundings; it takes account of the fullness of the truth entrusted to it and ensures that no falsehood enters into or may enter into the unity and catholicity of its hymn. False hymning is false worship. Intentions here begin to pale. WELS will confess that the Son of God "became fully human." There are others who will confess the same language (real people, whose names are not important here). But these others will understand and explain that confession to mean—and indeed on the basis that *ἄνθρωπος* and *homo* are terms for generic humanity—that in the incarnation God "breaks through the bonds of any and every limitation" and that "if the male/female wall of binary division remains operative

... then not all is redeemed." Is this the meaning of the confession which WELS will be making when its good people confess that the divine Son "became fully human"? No, I dare to answer, that will not be their intent. But will the language of their confession allow that meaning? The answer here is no less evident: Yes, it will allow that meaning, and that is the very meaning that many intend by opting for "fully human." I do not believe that churches can responsibly adopt new creedal language without seriously reflecting on the cultural and social intentionality of the new language. I reiterate what I wrote before: "It is the church's task to safeguard the deposit of faith once entrusted to it and to ensure that the expression of its faith through creed does not merely mirror the demands of culture with the attendant erosion of a clearly articulated faith."

(3.) Finally, one other question raised by a couple of thoughtful respondents deserves some answer. While acknowledging my interest in claiming that in the incarnated Christ there subsisted a "whole human nature" common to all humans, yet with and not apart from His becoming also a male individual, they ask this question: "Is all of this the historically intended sense of ἐνανθρωπήσαντα and *homo factus est*?" I take this question to inquire whether the fathers at Nicaea consciously had in mind all of this. It is a fair question. I will give a fair and honest answer: I do not know, but frankly I doubt it. But we do not get very far with this historical question. The fathers were careful to select language for the creed which did not easily allow false understanding. Yet that is not always an easy task, especially when attempting to render succinctly the complex reality that the person of Christ is.

To inquire what the ancient fathers contemporary to the creed actually had foremost in their minds, one must inquire after the doctrinal context which moved their reflections. Briefly, I think it suffices to say that the distinct problems of Arianism, Apollinarianism, and finally Nestorianism surrounded early discussion of what was intended by the creedal language ἐνανθρωπήσαντα which was usually translated in the Latin as *homo factus est*. In their own way both Arius and Apollinarius denied the fullness of Christ's humanity. Arius asserted that Jesus Christ was not the fully divine, eternal Son. Jesus was, however, the created Word who assumed "flesh" but not a human "soul." Apollinarius asserted the full essential deity of Jesus but also denied that Jesus had assumed a human "soul." In both cases the humanity of Christ tended toward a Platonic abstraction which denigrated the humanity of Jesus as a concrete, individualized humanity with its own natural will, intellect, and psychic life. One can see the desire to exclude Arius and Apollinarius in Cyril of

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Alexandria's (+444) commentary on the Nicene Creed:

That is why they say: "who for us and for our salvation came down, was incarnate, was made man." Notice how their statement proceeds in the requisite order and with the most apposite sequence! The point of their saying "He came down" is that we should see that it was He, He who transcends all in nature and glory, who descended for us . . . He was, as I said, God in human shape, by taking not inanimate flesh (as some heretics have seen fit to imagine) but flesh endowed with mental life [τὴν σάρκα ἐψυχωμένην δὲ μᾶλλον ψυχῇ νοερᾷ].

In the reference to Christ's transcendence we see Cyril's anti-Arian assertion of Christ's deity, and the "heretics" to which Cyril refers are almost certainly the Apollinarians.

On the other hand, those who opposed Nestorius, like Cyril, often spoke of Christ assuming "flesh." The Nestorians wished to assure the integrity of Christ's humanity but often did this in ways which seemed to imply that one could consider Christ's humanity as an individualized humanity apart from and separate from His divinity. The fathers, in this following Cyril, wished to assert both the universal significance of Christ by virtue of His possessing common humanity (against Nestorius) and the particular reality of Christ's humanity by virtue of His possessing a truly human will and mental life (against Arius and especially Apollinarius). In the face of Apollinarius the interest in Christ's particularity centered in His possessing a rational soul. It may be doubted whether in these discussions the specific question of Christ's gender was uppermost in their minds.

Indeed, in the early sixth century in Italy Dionysius Exiguus was busy translating Greek discussion of the Nestorian crisis into Latin. Dionysius was especially active in translating Cyril's important anti-Nestorian writings. In translating the Nicene Creed into Latin Dionysius Exiguus does not render "became man" as *homo factus est*. Interestingly, he renders the phrase *humanatus est*. Dionysius' great friend, Cassiodorus, apparently also tended to prefer the verb *humanare* in speaking of Christ's incarnation. In his *Ecclesiastical History* Cassiodorus speaks of the Word having been made human (H.E. 6.22: *verbum humanatum*), and in his commentary on the psalms he speak of God being made visually human for the salvation of the believers (*Deum propter salutem credentium visualiter humanandum*). Of course, *homo* and *humanare* are related, but I suspect that the use of *humanare* has an anti-Nestorian intention.

The point is that translation is not merely a lexical matter but also a confessional matter. When the fathers at Chalcedon (451 A.D.) explained why it was necessary for them to be in council to clarify the christological meaning of the Nicene Creed, they referred to the difficulties of Nestorius, on the one hand, and of Eutyches, on the other. New issues demand new reflections on what further meaning lies *within* the words of the creed. A merely lexical and historical investigation does not suffice. At a time when feminist enthusiasms are especially strong and even the language of Scripture and creed is being marginalized or declared irrelevant for the sake of specific social, cultural, and ecclesiastical agendas, the church might find itself performing a distinctly "good work" by unabashedly standing up for the truth once given to it. Significant to that truth is the assertion ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, *homo factus est*, that is, the Son of God "became man."

#### Endnotes

1. We should refer also to the article by Theodore J. Hartwig, "The Creeds in Contemporary English," which was published in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* in the summer of 1989 (pp. 202-214). In this article Hartwig gives the rationale for the new translations of both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. We have no special difficulties with these changes, except, of course, the change under discussion.
2. The word "bride" for the church and "daughter of Zion" for Jerusalem would be examples of feminine imagery which clearly intends to include both men and women. I believe, however, that in biblical usage feminine imagery is the imagery of reception, of faith; while masculine imagery is the imagery of giving, of grace. God is our Father who gives His Son; Mary is our mother who received the Son unto herself and therein became the type of all believers.
3. I do fear, however, that Tiefel, Hartwig, and other respondents are too enamored of ideas such as a "living language" and "changing lexicon"—not that there are not such things and that by and large the changes involved in them are innocuous. However, in the present context we ought be aware that a social, political, and cultural ideology (i.e., feminism) is a major driving force behind the desire to excise "man" as signifying "humanity." What word do we have now which renders humanity *as a whole*

and yet is personal and not an abstraction? Is not in fact our language less a "living" one by this change—that is, less rich, less able to express an important idea? Of course, if "living" means merely what happens to obtain in the common speech as it changes, Tiefel *et alii* have a point. Perhaps, however, the point is not as significant as they think.

William C. Weinrich

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP IN THE LWF

The question has been posed and must be examined theologically as to whether the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK in Germany) too should aspire to associate membership in the LWF (Lutheran World Federation), as the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) intends to do. The following considerations are not a comprehensive statement of a position with reference to this question; and, in particular, they do not refer to earlier decisions of the SELK—for example, on the occasion of the World Federation Assembly in Hanover.

For an accurate answer to the question posed it is indispensable to consider first the constitution of the LWF, together with its bylaws,<sup>1</sup> and, secondly, the reality of the LWF, as it manifests itself in its statements, aims, and actions. A comparison with the old constitution and the interpretative introduction by the chairman of the Constitutional Commission are important here, as is the report of the general secretary at the first session of the Council of the LWF after Curitiba.<sup>2</sup>

#### A. Constitution and Bylaws

The assessment of the constitution of the LWF turns especially (1.) on the doctrinal basis, which also the associated churches must accept, (2.) on the self-understanding of the LWF, and (3.) on the meaning of associate membership.

##### 1. Doctrinal Basis

The doctrinal article of the LWF constitution states the formulations customary in the Lutheran church: "The Lutheran World Federation confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life, and service" (Article II). It is not stated that Holy Scripture is God's word. This deficit is considerable in view of the fact that the old constitution, now no longer valid, still

spoke of the "infallible" norm, but the new constitution does not. The article still speaks, to be sure, of the Lutheran confessions as a pure exposition of the word of God, but the identification of word of God and Scripture cannot, in view of its general surrender, simply be taken for granted.

Furthermore, the doctrinal basis is no longer merely a doctrinal basis in the previous sense, but a confession. The LWF now "confesses" the Holy Scripture. Correspondingly it "confesses" the one, holy, catholic church (Article III).<sup>3</sup> Associate membership presupposes the acceptance of this doctrinal basis, which has the nature of a confession. In view of the fact that the SELK and the LCA both have another position in respect of Scripture, any witness must properly begin by having the doctrinal basis clarified in this regard.

## 2. *Self-Understanding*

The self-understanding of the LWF is, not in the church-juridical but in the theological sense, unambiguously that of a church. All full members are in church fellowship with one another. As to its nature LWF designates itself as "a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship" (Article III). Thereby the marks of the church of which Augustana VII speaks are claimed, even if in abbreviated form, for the federation itself as a communion of such churches. Correspondingly, the LWF in its new constitution "confesses"<sup>4</sup> and speaks of "the norm of its doctrine." It also regards mission and service as its task, and knows itself to be deeply committed to ecumenism.<sup>5</sup> The establishment of the *status confessionis* toward two white African member churches also corresponds to the nature of the church.<sup>6</sup>

Not unimportant in this connexion is what the bylaws state about membership. According to these, churches which include strong non-Lutheran components, and so are Union [*unierte*] churches in some form, may become members and thereby stand in full church fellowship with the churches of the LWF. Also dual membership in other world federations is possible.<sup>7</sup> An association with the LWF therefore means that we—theologically speaking—associate ourselves with a church, not only with a federation. And that church bears a decidedly "union" character.

But even in the church-juridical sense, in which the LWF understands itself as a communion of churches and not as a church, the new constitution goes beyond the old understanding of a federation. The important

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clause, "It shall not exercise churchly functions on its own authority," was not taken over into the new constitution.<sup>8</sup> Evidently such action is now possible and corresponds fundamentally to the theological self-understanding of the LWF. The article on "Scope and Authority" provides, to be sure, that the LWF acts as the instrument of its autonomous member churches in matters committed to it by the member churches; but thereby an autonomous action on the part of the LWF, in the tasks named in the constitution, is by no means ruled out. This understanding fits the fact that the essay which introduced the change of constitution spoke expressly of the assembly and the council as legislative organs. All such things lie well within the tendency recognizable already in Budapest: "The LWF is an expression and *instrument* of this communion. It assists it to become more and more a conciliar, mutually *committed* communion by furthering consultation and exchange among its member churches of the Lutheran tradition . . ."<sup>9</sup> (italics added). Autonomous action likely would affect especially planning, programmes, and their implementation, whereby the Office for Planning receives an important governing function.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Associate Membership

In view of the nature of the question posed above, Article V.2 of the constitution is particularly important. It reads: "The Lutheran World Federation may recognize as eligible to participate in the work of the Federation non-member churches, councils, or congregations which accept the doctrinal basis set forth in Article II of this Constitution (Associate Membership). The granting, conditions and continuation of such recognition shall be governed by the bylaws." The following bylaws relate to this point:

2.4.3.1: An associated member church may take part in all activities of the Lutheran World Federation; its representatives to the Assembly have the right to speak, but may not take part in a vote or be elected to an office. The Council determines the membership contributions to be paid by associated member churches, applying the same criteria as with full membership.

2.4.5: The General Secretary at regular intervals reviews, with associated member churches, recognized councils and congregations, their relation to the LWF. One year prior to the Assembly the General Secretary reports on this to the Council.

Associate membership thereby presupposes recognition of the doctrinal

basis in Article II and demands membership contributions according to the same criteria as in the case of full membership. It allows participation in all activities of the LWF and the right to speak at the assembly. The question remains open whether associate membership means a partial acceptance of the constitution beyond the doctrinal basis, perhaps in those points in which one can agree. The report of the General Secretary at the council session in Chicago in 1991 could be understood in this direction, when it says: "The salient point here is that associate membership is open for those who accept the doctrinal basis of the LWF while not necessarily adopting the whole Constitution."<sup>11</sup> It also remains an open question whether offices other than elective ones may be occupied by representatives of associate members, but according to previous practice this possibility must be assumed.

Associate membership is, to be sure, not full membership, but it is really membership. That fact comes to expression in the partial acceptance of the constitution and in the membership contributions, but also in the distinction between associate membership, on the one hand, and recognized councils or congregations, on the other. The latter may, indeed, also take part in all activities, but have only observer status at assemblies and no right to speak.

Associate membership may by no means be seen merely as something static. The report of the General Secretary together with the paragraph on supervision (2.4.5) speak a clear language. Going on after the sentence cited above, the General Secretary explains: "While we welcome this opening and see it as a way for our member churches to *grow together* with other churches with whom we have the doctrinal basis in common but also with whom we share a commitment to mission and evangelization, we should beware not to make this an easy way to avoid the burdens and pains of *living in a mutually committed relationship*. By making associate membership possible, the LWF assumes the need for a *continued theological dialogue on what communion implies*. The conversations held in 1986-1989 between LWF and non-member Lutheran churches have contributed to this development"<sup>12</sup> (italics added).

Here the mutually obligating relation is quite clearly underscored and, as a presupposition for making associate membership possible, ongoing conversation about the implications of fellowship [communion] is mentioned.<sup>13</sup> According to the whole root-orientation of the LWF, this point can only mean that from its side there will be pressure toward full membership and that associate membership is to be regarded only as an



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upon the associated members; and it is deeply problematical to decide from the outset not to enter into this communion, and yet to accept associate membership, which is a preliminary step towards it.

### **B. Statements, Aims, and Actions**

For an answer to the question posed above, one must draw not only on the constitution by itself, but also on the theological and churchly reality. Only then does the constitution really become understandable.

#### *1. Realities*

One ought not expect the theology of the LWF to be other than that of the churches which essentially support the LWF. A few exceptions aside, the SELK has no church fellowship with them. The reasons for this fact, which have to do essentially with the understanding of confessional obligation and of church unity, need not be rehearsed here. They have not, however, become less compelling with time—on the contrary, they have grown more so. By contrast, the churches of the Lutheran World Federation have church fellowship with each other and base it on unity of faith and confession, in accord with Augustana VII. This reasoning comes to expression also in Article III of the LWF constitution, which means that the understanding of the unity of the church, as it exists in the churches supporting the LWF, also governs the LWF itself. That this approach works itself out also in the understanding of the doctrinal basis in Article II is self-evident.

The SELK's profoundly different understanding of the nature and unity of the church thus refers also to the LWF. This conclusion is confirmed by the initiatives of the LWF itself. The LWF has become the decisive and normative engine for the Leuenberg Agreement and thus for church fellowship between the Lutheran, Reformed, Union, and pre-Reformation churches of Europe. The SELK has declined this concept as a new form of the Union. The LWF energetically promotes bilateral dialogues and pushes towards church fellowship, even when the results are theological compromises. It is deeply rooted in the ecumenical movement. Even if it strives to preserve Lutheran concerns within that movement, it is on the other hand obviously prepared to come together in full communion (fellowship) without theological unification. The General Secretary put this point as follows in Curitiba:

Lutheran ecumenical involvement is not limited to theological dialogues. As reports from the departments amply document and

dialogues. As reports from the departments amply document and as this address repeatedly illustrates, there is ecumenical cooperation in many phases of our work. Sometimes these have become possible because of the trust built between the partners by dialogues. Sometimes they are expressions of common discipleship even before theological issues are raised. Ecumenical awareness and engagement can make congregations come alive spiritually in new ways, discovering new dimensions to their life in the church and their common Christian commitment. Here is the growing edge of the ecumenical movement. We may well have come close to the end of the real possibilities of theological convergence with our dialogue partners. We must be attentive to *other ways* in which God's Spirit may be calling us to unity. And we must recognize that some of our differences will only be resolvable *after* we have come together and lived together in full communion [*italics added*].<sup>14</sup>

Here there is talk not only of an end of the possibilities of theological convergence—let alone consensus—but also of bringing about fellowship otherwise than by way of doctrinal unity, and of settling differences only thereafter—perhaps, as one must add. All this is a totally different understanding of the unity of the church and of confessional obligation from that represented by the confessional Lutheran churches.

But also the understandings of central theological matters cleave asunder. Reminders are in order of the doctrine of justification—and the disagreements about it in Helsinki—and of the facts that since the Leuenberg Agreement the Small Catechism's doctrine of the Lord's Supper is no longer required for church fellowship and that Scripture and God's word are not identified in the constitution. Reminders are needed also that with the programme "Peace, Justice, and Protection of the Creation" the distinction between the two kingdoms is set aside and—by no means last—that the LWF promotes the ordination of women with might and main. Furthermore, the doctrinal pluralism of the churches supporting the LWF continues in full cry.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. *Meaning and Results*

In the face of this reality one must now ask what associate membership means and what it can bring. What it means, according to the preceding observations, is this: one acquiesces in the self-understanding of the LWF in view of its doctrinal basis, and takes over, practically, its root-conception of unity, even if one theoretically opposes it. Associate

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one's own understanding and a repudiation of the LWF's would not help here. For in foundational matters one would have to overturn the whole self-understanding of the LWF.

As to the question of what associate membership can bring, the possibility of bearing witness is especially emphasized. One must, however, consider that such witnessing always has a double aspect. A clear witness always makes plain the existing disunity. If witnessing is taken seriously, it can only lead to constant disagreements. Such a situation cannot be the purpose of associate membership. Finally one would then fall into the role of a constant theological watchdog and spoilsport. One can hardly do battle against "Reconciled Diversity" and yet join—if only as an associate—the LWF, which represents it. Nor may we leave out of account to what extent our work and strength would be determined no longer by us and our proper tasks, but by others, and to what extent we should be able to resist the pressure of others.

That there are in the Lutheran World Federation churches which value the witness of the confessional Lutheran churches should not be taken lightly. This witness, however, if only it is rendered, can be brought home also in other ways, without letting ourselves be drawn into an overall concept which we must reject. It makes more sense to serve one another at concrete places and in concrete cases.

#### Endnotes

1. The constitution is to be found in *LWF Report*, no. 28-29 (December 1990), pp. 141-144; the bylaws are to be found in the minutes of the meeting of the LWF Council in Chicago, 30 June-7 July, 1991, attachment 19.1, pp. 1-11.
2. James Crumley, Jr., "On Restructuring and Constitution," *LWF Report*, no. 28-29, pp. 137-140; Gunnar Staalsett, "Church without Frontiers: Responsibility and Tasks of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation," *LWF Documentation*, no. 30 (December 1991), pp. 14-28.
3. The old constitution had "acknowledges" rather than "confesses" in Article II. There was no sentence corresponding to the one cited from Article III.

4.      Compare also the comments of General Secretary Staalsett in Curitiba, according to which the LWF is not a "free association," but what binds the member churches together "is essential to their being Lutheran churches—common subscription to a common confession" (*LWF Report*, no. 28-29, p. 16).
5.      Ibid.
6.      "This means that, on the basis of faith and in order to manifest the unity of the church, churches would publicly and unequivocally reject the existing apartheid system" (*LWF Documentation*, no. 30, p. 29).
7.      "When an amalgamation of one or more Lutheran churches and one or more non-Lutheran churches occurs, then this united church may, after consultation with the respective world communions, apply for membership in the Federation, even if it is a member of another world communion or meets the conditions for such membership" (Bylaw 2.3.1).
8.      The same is true of the clause: "nor shall it have power to legislate for the churches belonging to it or to limit the autonomy of any member church."
9.      *LWF Report*, no. 28-29, p. 138; see also p. 16.
10.     "The planning office will monitor the pulse-beat of the world and of the member churches. What is happening? What influence will it have in five years? Ten years? Will there be a change in support patterns? To what should the Federation give greatest emphasis and where should that responsibility be lodged? How can our many programs be seen *together* as meeting the needs of the member churches?" (J. Crumley, *LWF Report*, no. 28-29, p. 139).
11.     *LWF Documentation*, no. 30, p. 24.
12.     Ibid.

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13. In this connexion one must read also Bylaw 2.4.1.e, according to which an application for associate membership must be accompanied by a declaration of the reasons "why associate membership or recognition rather than full membership is desired."
  14. *LWF Report*, no. 28-29, p. 17.
  15. In view of the practice of "life discipline," the LWF must be asked the question of doctrinal discipline in the light of the "norm of its doctrine." What happens when churches are not in accord with the confession? Doctrinal discipline, however, has always been consistently rejected by the LWF.

G. Hoffmann  
Oberursel, Germany

(Translator's Note: Except for the LWF bylaws, the texts of the references made here have followed the official English versions. Since the English text of the bylaws, on the other hand, was not immediately available, translations of bylaw references have been made anew. Kurt Marquart.)

## Books Received

Norman L. Geisler. *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 195 pages. Paper.

Gerd Theissen. *The Open Door: Variations on Biblical Themes*. Translated by John Bowden. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. xii + 191 pages. Cloth.

Ben Campbell Johnson. *Speaking of God: Evangelism as Initial Spiritual Guidance*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 188 pages. Paper. \$12.95.

Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, Louis B. Weeks, editors. *The Diversity of Discipleship: The Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Christian Witness*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 415 pages. Paper. \$16.95.

James P. Wind, Russell Burck, et al., editors. *Clergy Ethics in a Changing Society: Mapping the Terrain*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 303 pages. Paper. \$18.95.

Wolfhart Pannenberg. *Systematic Theology*. Volume 1. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromily. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991. xiii + 473 pages. Cloth. \$39.95.

John Reumann. *Variety and Unity in New Testament Thought*. The Oxford Bible Series. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. xv + 330 pages. Cloth, \$55.00. Paper, \$19.95.

James W. Cox, editor. *Handbook of Themes for Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 265 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

Robin Gill. *Christian Ethics in Secular Worlds*. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991. xvii + 159 pages. Paper. \$19.95.

E. W. Faulstich. *Bible Chronology and the Scientific Method*. Spencer, Iowa: Chronology Books, 1990. xii + 202 pages. Paper.

Philip S. Clapp, Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, editors. *Analytical Concordance of the Greek New Testament, Volume 1: Lexical Focus*. Baker's Greek New Testament Library. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. xxviii + 2619 pages. Cloth.

Philip S. Clapp, Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, editors. *Analytical Concordance of the Greek New Testament, Volume 2: Grammatical Focus*. Baker's Greek New Testament Library. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. xii + 2215 pages. Cloth.

Additional lists of "Books Received" by the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* are to be found on pages 40, 104, and 158 of this issue.

## Book Reviews

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER. By Wayne Grudem. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988. 239 pages. Paper, \$5.95.

In an effort to remain current with the Bible versions now in use and with the secondary literature, many publishers are releasing revised or updated volumes in their commentary series. This book is a recently updated volume in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. It replaces the original volume by Stibbs and Walls. This commentary stays with the traditional purpose of this series both in content and cost—to provide the non-technical reader with inexpensive tools that are neither "unduly technical or unhelpfully brief" (p. 5).

Wayne Grudem is Associate Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology in Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. His approach is focused prominently on the grammatical exegesis of the text itself. His command of the original text is visible in his frequent notation of the force of the perfect tense, his careful nuancing of word meaning in translation, and his extensive cross-referencing of word usage in the Septuagint. This commentary is virtually free of secondary literature outside of footnotes and is lucid in its presentation. While Grudem shows awareness of arguments against Petrine authorship in his introduction, he refutes them in his limited space and demonstrates a high respect for the text throughout his exegesis. His comments reflect a sensitivity to modern translations and will prove helpful, especially to the layman.

One of the most thought-provoking proposals of this volume is Grudem's position on 1 Peter 3:19-20 (Christ's descent to hell). While acknowledging five views that have certain credence, the author argues the following position: "When Noah was building the ark, Christ 'in spirit' was in Noah preaching repentance and righteousness through him to unbelievers who were on the earth then but are now 'spirits in prison' (people in hell)" (p. 204). While the appendix on this matter may fail to convince the reader, it will nonetheless stimulate him to probe the text more carefully.

Two weaknesses of this volume are apparent, both dealing with theological interpretation. First, recognition of sacramental allusions—especially to baptism—in 1 Peter is lacking, perhaps because of Grudem's Reformed background (e.g., there is no mention of baptism in discussing "born anew" in 1:3; baptism is excluded from the context of 2:2, "like newborn babies long for pure spiritual milk"; nothing is said of the Lord's Supper in regard to 2:3, "for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord"). Secondly, the theology of the cross is replaced with more of an emphasis on sanctification in the theological exegesis of the text (e.g., the exegesis of 1 Peter 2:24 and the chart of blessings that *result from*

sanctification on page 149). Nevertheless, this volume will prove a worthy addition to the libraries of pastors, students, and congregations.

Charles A. Gieschen  
Traverse City, Michigan

MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS. By James G. Kirk. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1989.

Publishers assert that the market is glutted with prayer books and that they are not selling. (Is it the high cost of books, or do people read less, or is there an eroding of piety among our people?) It is surprising, then, that this work should appear at all. But it is even more of a surprise that Kirk's offering is a cut above the usual generic devotional book.

*Meditations for Advent and Christmas* provides an insightful reflection for each day in Advent through Epiphany on the themes of watchfulness, promise, preparation, fulfillment, and celebration. Kirk's meditations include down-home illustrations from the flesh and blood lives of the people to whom he ministered. That approach provides refreshing reading and also helpful fodder for the preacher's homiletical bin. It is worth buying. One more surprise is that Presbyterian Kirk closes his book with a prayer which includes this sentence: "We remember our baptism and rejoice in the refreshing waters that washed away our sins, thanks to your grace."

Donald L. Deffner

THE BOOK OF RUTH. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. By Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. 317 pages. Cloth, \$26.95.

Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., of Denver Seminary, has produced for the NICOT series a major commentary and an invaluable tool for the study of Ruth in depth. He exposes the literary artistry of the narrator, provides his own translation, and treats text-critical and literary problems in detail. The introduction discusses the text, canonicity, literary criticism, authorship, purpose, setting, legal background, themes, theology, and bibliography. Valuable indices cover subjects, authors, Scripture references, and Hebrew words.

The greatest weaknesses of the commentary are in theology. Although accepting Lutheran Ronald M. Hals' insight that God works in a hidden way through human actions as the implicit cause of events (pp. 32, 70),



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Hubbard presents God as the sovereign ruler of the universe (e.g., p. 68). The second major doctrine for Hubbard is retribution: God becomes indebted to Ruth (!) to reward her and Boaz for their loyal deeds (pp. 70, 194). Thus, a theology of glory infused with works-righteousness emerges.

What Hubbard misses is, first, that God appears as omnipotent sovereign to highlight His ability to overcome all obstacles in fulfilling His real purpose, salvation by grace. Secondly, the confessions of *faith* in God by Ruth and Boaz (1:16-17; 2:4, 12; 3:10, 13) were the foundation for their sacrificial loyalty (*hesed*). This faith led them to recognize and exploit the opportunities which God gave them to "redeem" a tragic situation—which on no account amounted to "luck," "coincidence," or "chance" (pp. 140, 143, 153). Talk of rewards (2:12) is meant figuratively, for disbelief neither recognizes nor accepts divine blessings. Hubbard also reduces Israel's belief in an afterlife to existence in descendants on ancestral soil (p. 244).

Nevertheless, Hubbard's *Ruth* is very worthwhile. First, he thoroughly referees the various viewpoints fairly on all issues, although his presentations are repeated too frequently. Secondly, his conclusions in most cases are well taken, including his answers to such thorny problems as the roles of Ruth, Naomi, the other women, Obed, the genealogy, and especially Boaz as *go'el* ("redeemer")—Boaz voluntarily restores the land of a family of the clan and provides an heir for such a family without one (p. 246). Thirdly, Hubbard rightly identifies the main purpose of the Book of Ruth as giving theological support to David's claims as divinely appointed king, and Hubbard's emphasis on the positive approach to aliens in Ruth is welcome (p. 42). Finally, Hubbard particularly excels in revealing every skillful move of the biblical narrator (e.g., pp. 23, 278). However, one is left wondering whether he (or she, p. 24), who exhibits such consummate literary genius, actually invented the whole story (cf., e.g., p. 186)—or whether historical facts and divine inspiration should be given the credit due them.

John R. Wilch  
St. Catharines, Ontario

THE NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: SELECTED DOCUMENTS. Revised Edition. Edited by C. K. Barrett. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987. 361 pages. Paper, \$14.95.

This book is an expanded revision of Barrett's compilation in 1956 of

representative primary sources from the literary milieu of the first century. Essential excerpts of ancient documents are grouped with brief notes within thirteen categories: "The Roman Empire"; "The Papyri"; "Inscriptions"; "The Philosophers and Poets"; "Gnosis and Gnosticism"; "Mystery Religions"; "Jewish History"; "Rabbinic Literature and Rabbinic Judaism"; "Qumran"; "Philo"; "Josephus"; "The Septuagint and Targums"; and "Apocalyptic Literature." Bibliographic information is provided in order that the interested student may be encouraged to probe certain documents more completely than is possible in these excerpts.

This volume is an inexpensive and invaluable window through which the exegete can better understand the cultural, political, and theological context of the Judaism and Hellenism that is often implicit in the text of the New Testament. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of this literature in aiding the exegete's comprehension of the world into which Christianity and its documents were born. With the passage of centuries and the movement of our society from literature to video, the reading of these primary sources is increasingly necessary. The publisher (Harper and Row) has done students a great service in making this volume available once again.

Charles A. Gieschen  
Traverse City, Michigan

SERMON STUDIES ON THE GOSPELS, SERIES A. Edited by Richard D. Balge (General Editor) and Roland Cap Ehlke (Manuscript Editor). Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989. 380 pages. Cloth, \$14.95.

In every religious bookstore, as well as in the catalogue of most religious publishers, one can regularly find volumes of homiletical resources. Northwestern Publishing House, in providing this fifth volume of a sermon study guide series, has added to the plethora of sermonic aids. Yet it is not a contribution without merit. Indeed, it is one of the best volumes of the genre.

The contributors provide an analysis of each gospel pericope of ILCW Series A. The texts are approached with the reverence due the inspired Scripture and are expounded in accordance with sound hermeneutical principles. Attention is paid to the Old Testament and epistle readings for the day in the course of the exegesis, a matter of no small concern to liturgical preaching. Homiletical suggestions, including two, three, or four basic outlines, are included for each text. All is done with a proper

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sensitivity to the law-gospel content of the text.

A legitimate question to ask, however, is whether such a book ought to be used by pastors who are themselves trained in exegesis, theology, and sermon preparation. If *Sermon Studies on the Gospels* is used in place of the preacher's own struggle with the text, the answer must be an unqualified "no." Short-cuts around the pastor's study straight into the pulpit rarely make for worthwhile sermons. On the other hand, if the book is consulted after the preacher's personal study, *Sermon Studies on the Gospels* can be a valuable resource. Insights into the text can be gained from the work of others, especially from those who share a common confessional commitment. In the maze of sermon resource material, ranging from the frustratingly critical to the inanely fundamentalistic, it is good to have this solidly biblical and Lutheran option.

Daniel L. Gard

MESSIANIC EXEGESIS. By Donald Juel. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.

Juel's thesis is that the New Testament references to Jesus as Messiah derive not from Jesus but from exegetes of the early church. He traces this development from Jesus' resurrection to the completion of the New Testament by analyzing selected Old Testament passages. Problematic for Juel is the use of the title "Christ" in the Old Testament for the coming king, not the crucified and exalted king, as in the New Testament. This usage was equally as foreign, at first, to Christians as to Jews. The amalgamation of royal messianic texts with suffering and glorification took place after the resurrection. It is, of course, incontrovertable that the New Testament understood Jesus in Old Testament terms. The crunch comes in seeing this procedure's origins with the church and not Jesus. Juel deals with five topics in attempting to demonstrate this thesis: (1.) 2 Samuel 7, with reference to David's son as king; (2.) the Psalms, with application to the passion; (3.) Second Isaiah, with reference to the suffering servant; (4.) Psalm 110, with reference to God's right hand; and (5.) Daniel 7, with reference to the Son of Man. Juel provides an overview of midrashic exegesis used by the rabbis, Qumran, and early Christians. Jesus' person and not differences in exegetical approaches distinguished Christians (p. 57).

Juel's thesis has placed the major impetus for christology with the gatherers of the tradition incorporated in the New Testament and not with Jesus. This thesis is only a modification of Bultmann's approach to New

Testament theology. Jesus' "ministry of healing and teaching cannot, however, serve as the basis for the claim that He is Messiah. The New Testament makes no such claim . . . . Nor can the claim be derived from Jesus' own teaching exegesis," maintains Juel (p. 25). The late John A. T. Robinson in *The Priority of John* took exception to seeing the New Testament as an account of the teaching of the early church and not of Jesus. His strictures still apply to Juel. Juel assumes—as, evidently, any New Testament scholar in good standing must assume—Marcan priority. For this or whatever reason, Juel makes no reference to Matthew 16:16, where Jesus is identified as Christ and Son of God in the same breath. Juel likewise prefers Mark 14:61, where Jesus confesses that He is the Son of the Blessed, to Matthew 26:63, where "Christ" is joined with "the Son of God." This combination would be the work of later exegetes in the early church. Juel does not cite Mark 8:29, the parallel to Matthew 16:16, which has no reference to Jesus as God's Son, but does refer to Him as Christ. If Juel had cited it, then two of his theses would not stand, namely, that Jesus in His ministry did not interpret the Old Testament as referring to Himself and, more importantly, that Jesus' self-identification as Messiah occurred first at His trial. Luke 24, where Jesus interprets the Old Testament as applying to Himself, is dismissed. By placing Mark first, Juel can more easily attribute to Luke's "distinctive 'messianic exegesis'" Jesus' instruction to "His followers about the scriptural necessity of His death and resurrection as Messiah" in chapter 24 (p. 14). Juel's thesis that the church and not Jesus is responsible for seeing Him as the suffering and resurrected Christ is only possible because his ground rules permit him to ignore evidence which would lead to another conclusion. The title *Messianic Exegesis* created more enthusiasm in this reviewer than the contents. The subject still requires discussion by others.

David P. Scaer

LENT: A TIME FOR RENEWAL, SERMON BOOK. By Gerhard Aho, Donald Deffner, and Richard Kapfer. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1989.

Combining the talents of three of the finest homileticians of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod should produce a valuable resource for our preachers. *Lent: A Time for Renewal* is, indeed, a valuable resource, but it also has at least one inherent disadvantage. The book is based on the premise that we should do more than simply rehash the events of Christ's passion during these special days of each church year. Lent, the

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introduction argues, is a *kairos*, a most opportune—even urgent—time for us to repent and be refreshed to lead anew a redeemed life. Nine homiletical studies for midweek services and Holy Week, including Easter, offer this renewal in such areas as servanthood, witness, priorities, faith, and hope. Five studies were authored by Aho, four by Kapfer. From these studies Deffner has prepared full sermon manuscripts. Finally, Kapfer presents excellent liturgies for each week's theme.

The Aho-Kapfer-Deffner collaboration gives the user the best of three worlds. Aho's legacy to the pulpit is a seldom-paralleled depth of analysis and skillful organization of material. His studies in this work are typical. No two are developed using quite the same methodology, but each is incisive. The result is a tight, memorable textual-analytic outline for each text.

Kapfer's unique contribution is a writing style that seems almost musical. His homiletical studies are less structured, but they themselves read as eloquent sermons. The preacher himself is inspired, renewed in excitement for the text as he digests Kapfer's thoughts.

The homiletical studies Deffner complements with his own personal forte, the illustration. Deffner enlivens his manuscripts especially with pointed anecdotes and observations, no doubt from his own experience. They have that kind of realism.

The one possible disadvantage of a collaborative effort, of course, is the variance in style. The differences from one author to another are marked. If one loves Aho's outlines, for example, one may be disappointed when Deffner's manuscripts take a different tack. If one prefers a more flexible style, one may wish Kapfer had written all nine studies. Even this variation, however, can be useful. The preacher who wishes to adapt these materials to his own style and situation (as any good preacher will) will appreciate having alternatives. Deffner says of the sermon for Good Friday: "The preacher can focus on a variety of applications on the basis of the Romans passage. Aho's classic outline is one more approach. I offer another, stemming from some of the insights in his three sections under 'An Examination of Renewal in Relation to Faith'" (p. 113).

*Lent: A Time for Renewal* is clearly written to be preached, not just read and shelved. Its applications are direct and pastoral, reflecting sensitivity to the needs of the parish (that is, of people) by all three contributors. The sermons lend themselves well to a pulpit exchange since they may be presented in other than their original sequence without

losing effectiveness. One caution is that the overall theme, *A Time for Renewal*, is not verbally reinforced from week to week as strongly as it might be. The preacher will want to remind hearers of that goal more frequently in order to maintain interest through the series.

As one might expect in this computer age, a catalogue of "peripherals" is available with the *Sermon Book*. Modified versions of Kapfer's liturgies are offered on disk in *Creative Worship for the Lutheran Parish* (Series A, Part 2). Bulletin inserts, posters, and daily devotional booklets may also be purchased separately through Concordia Publishing House. When, in its pre-publication days, the material in *Lent: A Time for Renewal* was presented by Aho and Kapfer to a conference of Michigan District pastors, it received a standing ovation. We add our applause.

Carl C. Fickenscher II  
Garland, Texas

**EUCCHARIST: A THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION.** By Leo Hay. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989. 159 pages.

This volume is one in a series of books intended to unfold the meaning of each of the sacraments recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. The target audience appears to be chiefly the laity. Like its companion volumes in the "Message of the Sacraments Series," *Eucharist* seeks to cover five aspects of the sacrament: ". . . the existential or experiential meaning of the sacrament in the context of secular human experience; what is known of the historical development of the sacrament; a theological exposition of the meaning, function, and effect of the sacrament in the context of present official Catholic doctrinal positions; some pastoral reflections; and a projection of possible future developments in the practice and catechesis of the sacrament" (p. 9). *Eucharist* is something of an *apologia* for post-Vatican II developments in eucharistic and liturgical theology.

As the presence of the word "celebration" in both the title of the book and the title of each chapter would indicate, "celebration" is the organizing theme and principle for the volume. It is not surprising, therefore, that Father Hay places the primary accent on the eucharist as the church's act of coming together rather than on the sacramental character of the Supper as the gift of God. In consistency with Vatican II, there is a shift from the mass as the sacrifice offered by the priest to the mass as the sacrifice offered by the people of God. For a critique of Roman "celebration theology" and an analysis of its impact on liturgical theology in Lutheran-

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ism, the reader would do well to consult Oliver Olson's "Liturgy as Action" in *Dialog* (Spring 1975).

Lutheran pastors will find in *Eucharist* a concise and helpful summary of contemporary Roman Catholic understandings of the offertory, the eucharistic prayer, and transubstantiation. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for further reading and study.

John T. Pless  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

HOW DOES AMERICA HEAR THE GOSPEL? By William A. Dyrness. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. xi and 164 pages.

If one inclines toward the opinion that Anglo-Americans are nearly hopelessly ethnocentric in their understanding of gospel and Scripture, this book will be received most agreeably. Like many other Anglo-Americans who have served in Christian ministries overseas, Dyrness discovered that the message which he intended to take to others was not quite the one which they were prepared to receive. Dyrness concluded that the message which he took to other lands was an "American gospel," one which had a limited usefulness in other cultures. With this book Dyrness intends to set forth the historical roots and sources of this culturally specific gospel. Most of the book is a sweeping flight through American history, touching down here and there for a quote or observation.

In this way Dyrness hopes to show that the gospel was, even at the beginning, pressed into service and made captive to three powerful urges in the American mind: (1.) a pragmatic, expansive materialism, (2.) an energetic optimism, and (3.) a commitment to individualism. The founding Americans arrived with, and instilled in those who followed, a desire for a "gospel that works" in prevailing circumstances. Dyrness attempts to show that, when Calvinist and Puritan theology became wedded to the democratic desires of colonial Americans, the marriage produced an egalitarianism which turned back on the gospel and altered it to American tastes. Two chapters on Walter Rauschenbusch and Robert Schuller are included to show how this process has continued into this century.

Dyrness' conclusions are intriguing, and his extensive bibliography is impressive, but his book is difficult to read for reasons of style. Its goal is not well-defined, and Dyrness' personal interjections are not clearly

separated from the historical data which he sets forth. In addition, if the reader is not conversant with a great deal of American history, Dyrness' use of brief quotes to illustrate grand movements in the American story will contribute little to that reader's understanding of the author's thesis. Some readers, particularly those without Calvinist roots, may wonder whether the gospel for which Dyrness is concerned is the same gospel to which they adhere. Yet, quite apart from these criticisms, this book poses a question which should give pause to anyone who would seek the "christianizing" of any culture: Might any given culture have aspects which will limit its understanding of the gospel of Christ, and might that culture as a result proclaim a truncated gospel?

Andrew W. Dimit  
Duluth, Minnesota

MARK 1-8:26. WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY. By Robert A. Guelich. Dallas: Word Books, 1989. xliii and 454 pages.

In this commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Robert A. Guelich, professor of New Testament in Fuller Theological Seminary, proposes to break new ground in the study of the gospel, at least in the English-speaking world. The author must regard this work as something of a *magnum opus*, as he provides 436 pages of commentary on only the first half of the gospel. (By way of comparison one notes that the commentary on John in the same series comprises a single volume.) The author takes as one of his primary hermeneutical assumptions the need to distinguish the pre-Markan oral tradition from the way in which the evangelist used this material in writing his gospel. In this way Guelich believes one will see Mark's true intent in writing.

At places Guelich succeeds admirably. The author argues convincingly that the first half of Mark should be outlined as follows:

- |               |                                   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| I. 1:1-15     | The Beginning                     |
| II. 1:16-3:12 | New Wine in Old Wineskins         |
| III. 3:13-6:6 | The Mystery of the Kingdom of God |
| IV. 6:7-8:26  | "Do You Not Yet Understand?"      |

This outline emerges from a recognition that each of the latter three sections opens with an account pertaining to the disciples, winds down with a story about a negative response to Jesus' ministry (3:1-6; 6:1-6a; 8:14-21), and concludes with a summarizing account which recalls the true nature of our Lord's work. As for the commentary itself, in individual



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sections Guelich offers satisfying—or, at least, thought provoking—interpretations. Examples are his comments on the term "apostle" and on the "leaven" of the Pharisees and Herod as disbelief of our Lord's "signs." According to Guelich, the statement that Jesus nearly "passed by" the disciples when walking on water is the language of divine epiphany.

Nevertheless, much of the commentary is preoccupied with discussing which material has its origin in the oral tradition, which is an addition by the early church, and which comes from the hand of the evangelist himself. At one point Guelich observes that the question of whether one particular saying came from Jesus or the church "is moot." This statement could serve as a critique of most of the commentary itself. Even if the author's analyses never called into question the authority of the canonical text (and some of them do), they would contribute little or nothing to our understanding of the meaning of the text under consideration. For the reader willing to plow diligently through the commentary, it does offer material of value. However, most busy pastors and students will probably find the value unequal to the cost of the time which would have to be invested.

Paul Deterding  
Satellite Beach, Florida

A GUIDE THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Celia Brewer Marshall. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1989. 158 pages. Softcover, \$14.95.

As the reviewer thumbed through this book for the first time he thought, "At last, an Old Testament workbook which can be used for undergraduate Bible introduction or even adult education." Though this text was developed by the author for high-school-level Old Testament survey courses, it could easily be used on an introductory college level. It contains convenient maps, charts, and timelines throughout.

The majority of the workbook questions are well worded and attempt to draw the student into a deeper understanding of the Bible. The suggested class activities and assignments are creative and reveal the author's experience in capturing the imagination of high school or early-college-age students. The same can be said of the sections which present ancient Near Eastern parallels to the biblical material such as the Gilgamesh Epic, the "code" of Hammurabi, the Hittite suzerainty treaties, and the Baal epic from Ugarit.

Unfortunately, one cannot use this workbook without endorsing the modern critical approach to the Old Testament. Not only, indeed, is the approach critical, but most of the theories presented are outdated even in critical circles. The Hebrews are identified with the *apiru*, even though this identification has been attacked since the work of Mendenhall in the 1950's. The amphictyonic thesis which was advanced in the thirties by Alt and Noth is used unreservedly to describe Israel during the conquest and the period of the judges. The competing views of Israel's entrance into Canaan—conquest, "peaceful infiltration," and "internal revolt"—are not even mentioned.

In addition, there are some bothersome errors and omissions in this work. In explaining dates the author states that the first century A.D. consists of years 1-99, the first century B.C. of years 99-1, and the first millennium A.D. of years 1-999 (two 99 year centuries and one 999 year millennium!). She states that no separation was made between words in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts, whereas many early Northwest Semitic inscriptions (including Hebrew ones) contain, in fact, some type of word divisions (space, line, dot, etc.). The Sumerians are called a Semitic people, whereas the jury is still considering their ethnic origin, and Sumerian is definitely not a Semitic language. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles are not treated at all.

Despite these criticisms, Marshall's book stirs up feelings of admiration and frustration. The reviewer admires its strengths. He is frustrated that no one has produced a book as attractive as this one to teach Old (and New) Testament introduction on the undergraduate level from a sound, confessional perspective.

Andrew E. Steinmann  
Cleveland, Ohio

**SANCTIFICATION: CHRIST IN ACTION. EVANGELICAL CHALLENGE—LUTHERAN RESPONSE.** By Harold Senkbeil. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989. 204 pages. Paper, \$8.95.

With the growing dominance of Evangelicals in Protestant circles, it seems as if sanctification as a topic in theology has become their private domain. Pastor Harold Senkbeil, a graduate of this seminary, sets forth the Lutheran doctrine of sanctification in contradistinction to Evangelicalism with a profundity which will meet the highest theological criteria of our Lutheran heritage and a style which will be understood by

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lay people. Senkbeil's thesis is evident in the title. The Christian's life is Jesus Christ in action. Sanctification is an extension of christology. The discussion is divided into six chapters. The first deals with the sophistication of the Evangelical movement, its appeal to the modern man, and its attraction to Lutherans. The section on its historical roots traces the origins of Evangelicalism to Calvin, Pietism, and New England Puritanism. The teaching of Charles Swindoll is chosen as an example of the Evangelical view of "how to grow in sanctification." Senkbeil provides a thorough critique from a Lutheran perspective. The author's own position is set forth in another chapter, "Christ in Action: A Lutheran View of Sanctification, More than a Life Style." A final chapter shows how the characteristic Lutheran views on the sacraments, absolution, and worship play a role in sanctification.

Senkbeil's book could not be more timely. Many Lutherans are adopting Evangelical theology and life styles and are convinced that they are still conservative and confessional. Nothing could be further from the truth, as Senkbeil points out in a style which is always easy to read. He uncovers the allure of Evangelicalism: "Sure, God saves me by grace, but then he expects me to perform. With his Spirit he gives me the power I need to get started, but then it's up to me. By continuing in close fellowship with him and my fellow believers, I will be inspired to produce the kind of life that is pleasing to him. Spectacular power is available; all I have to do is reach out and grab it" (p. 119). The center of the Christian life is Christ and not some modified form of synergism in Evangelical form. The subtitle of the book says it all: "Christ in Action." This book is recommended without any hesitation for pastor and people alike.

David P. Scaer

SAVED BY GRACE. By Anthony A. Hoekema. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989. Index. 277 pages. Hardcover, \$22.95.

Anthony Hoekema's name is familiar to most readers because of his well-received *Four Major Cults*, published in 1963. The reviewer was happy to give that book a favorable review at the time (*The Springfielder*, Summer 1964) and to recommend it to his students in a survey course on religious bodies in America. There is much to commend this present volume on soteriology as well, the third in a series of doctrinal studies

which also includes books on Christian anthropology (*Created in God's Image*) and eschatology (*The Bible and the Future*). In the event, the book was the "swan song" of Hoekema, long-time professor of systematic theology in Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids; he died in 1988, having retired from teaching ten years earlier.

In his prefatory remarks Hoekema candidly states that his theological approach to soteriology "is that of evangelical Christianity, interpreted from a Reformed or Calvinistic perspective" (p. xi). This approach means that in the main, except for contemporary references to views and theologians of a later date, his stance in theology is generally in agreement with that of L. Berkhof, his predecessor at Calvin Seminary and the esteemed author of the classic work of Calvinian theology in America, *Systematic Theology* (first published in 1939 and often reprinted), a study which in its one-volume format was decidedly more academic and attentive to philosophical categories. Both, however, endeavor to remain loyal to the Reformed confessions (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort) which are still upheld by many in the generally conservative Christian Reformed Church.

Hoekema allows that "Reformed soteriology has much in common with other evangelical soteriologies," granting at the same time that "it does have certain distinctive emphases." Thus, for example, the decisive factor in a person's salvation is not his own agency but the sovereign grace of God which works toward that end, but not without the decision of faith on each individual's part—a curious bowing in the Arminian direction of the Reformed family. What happens in time has its roots in the eternal decree of the sovereign Lord, whose saving grace is bestowed only upon the elect, upon those who have been chosen by God in Christ to be His own. The gospel itself is to be seen as inviting all hearers to accept Christ as Savior, but it is efficacious only in those who are the elect. The believers who come to faith because God has chosen them will never lose their salvation but will be kept securely with unyielding perseverance under God's sovereign care.

Regeneration is viewed narrowly as the monergistic and irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit working in the individual who is to be saved. It is to be distinguished from conversion and understood as the (instantaneous) beginning of the new spiritual life implanted by the Spirit. Baptismal regeneration is rejected, for "in Reformed theology baptism is not considered a means whereby regeneration is bestowed, but rather a sign and seal of our regeneration" (p. 108). Conversion, faith, and repen-

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tance in that order are seen as following upon and evidencing regeneration—a gradual process in the sinner's pilgrimage toward salvation. Repentance—rather than being seen as tantamount to contrition, worked by the law convicting the sinner of his transgressions and so preparing his heart for the gospel's call unto faith—is described as the fruit of conversion, turning the believer away from sin and toward the pursuit of godliness, thus confusing repentance with sanctification (in the narrow sense), which is the fruit of faith. It becomes evident that the proper spheres of law and gospel have been reversed in the way so clearly articulated in Barth's famous formula that the law is the necessary form of the gospel of which the content is grace.

In a long chapter Hoekema traces the scriptural, forensic understanding of justification back to the time when Luther broke through into the clear light of the gospel and saw that the "righteousness of God" in Romans 1:17 referred, not to God's own personal holiness or punitive righteousness whereby He visits judgment upon sinners, but to an imputed righteousness, the forensic declaration to sinners which God pronounces freely upon sinful mankind and which becomes the sinner's treasured possession by faith. Hoekema rightly states: "At that moment the Protestant Reformation was born. Bells began to ring in Luther's soul. Peace and joy now flooded his being. Romans 1:17 now became for him the very gate of Paradise—the key which unlocked the Bible" (p. 152).

In treating sanctification Hoekema rejects the idea that the believer has in him both the old man and the new man (the old self and the new self); yet he ends somewhat ambivalently by acknowledging that thereby he does not wish "to deny that the believer still has an old or sinful nature . . . [and] in addition to his or her old nature, a new nature, by which he or she is now enabled to do what pleases God" (p. 214). The distorted view of perfectionism (as advocated by Wesley) is rightly rejected as out of tune with Scripture and the believer's existential experience in this world. In consistency with Calvin's teaching, the third use of the law is not only upheld but also emphasized as "the *principal* use." A chapter on the perseverance of the true believers closes the book, with emphasis on *true* believers—the elect, those who once they are in faith (by God's sovereign decree) are forever secure.

If we have been critical of Hoekema's theology, it is, of course, because our Lutheran stance in soteriology opposes Reformed predilections at various points. From the Reformed point of view the book is an excellent production, clearly and candidly written. The Christian reader

can find much to uplift the spirit in these pages.

E. F. Klug

**PATTERN IN EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.** By Allen Cabaniss. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1989. 112 pages. \$17.50.

This is a slight book, but its suggestiveness gives it an inherent value beyond its size. Cabaniss is emeritus research professor of history in the University of Mississippi and a Presbyterian by confession. He is also a scholar long interested in matters liturgical, both ancient and modern. In a style deceptively simple, Cabaniss presents here an overview of evidence for the "pattern" or shape or order of early Christian worship and concludes, on the basis of this evidence, with his own suggestions for the present day. His voice is moderate and his advice relevant for those interested in adapting Christian worship to present pluralistic contexts while maintaining Christian, confessional integrity.

Cabaniss is aware of the impossibility of divorcing substance and style: "how we pray should reflect our belief and what we believe should be expressed in our worship. If we disjoin the two we make our worship mendacious and our faith intangible" (p. x). The principle of *lex orandi lex credendi* (the pattern of praying is the pattern of believing) is to be upheld. Cabaniss' overarching advice is "maintain the basic structure" and "keep the rationale" (p. x). Yet there is both in Cabaniss' research and in his own suggestions a movement toward simplicity and intimacy which is very much in touch with modern American sensibilities.

Cabaniss does not intend to lay bare a theology of worship from early Christian sources. He is specifically interested in uncovering evidence for an order of worship in early Christian liturgy. He begins with the earliest description of actual Christian worship, the First Apology of Justin Martyr (c. 140 A.D.). A summary of Justin's presentation indicates that early Christian worship consisted of these major parts: (1.) Scripture reading, often lengthy, followed by a homily of exhortation and intercessory prayer, and (2.) the kiss of fellowship, the presentation of eucharistic food, prayers and thanksgivings, and the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ (I Apology 65-67). Absent from this description is any mention of singing, place or time, arrangement of the assembled people (although there was a "president"), or length of service—and any explicit connection between the eucharist and the death of Jesus. In a second chapter Cabaniss finds the same pattern of worship indicated in the short description which Pliny, governor of Bithynia, gives in his letter to the

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emperor, Trajan (c. 110 A.D.). Again Christian worship is divided into two parts: instructional and eucharistic. The "song" (*carmen*) to Christ "as to a god" mentioned by Pliny may indicate singing, but may just as well denote simply "elevated speech" (pp. 11-18). A brief discussion of I Clement, the Didache, and Ignatius of Antioch concludes the second-century evidence, although they add little to the quest for a pattern. Others may think that Ignatius gives evidence which Cabaniss ignores. Ignatius' talk of the bishop being "in the place of the Father" certainly refers to the bishop's position in the liturgical assembly and, one may suspect, after the pattern indicated in Revelation 4.

Two chapters summarize Old Testament evidence concerning worship practice and worship order (using especially Exodus and Ezekiel) and biblical and pagan evidence concerning the ideal of a celestial liturgy (using especially Ezekiel, Revelation, and Apuleius). Especially helpful in these chapters is Cabaniss' insistence that the temple liturgy was as significant for early Christian liturgy as was the synagogue. Finally, there is a chapter on New Testament evidence concerning the worship pattern or order of early Christian liturgy (pp. 43-53). Here Cabaniss finds confirming evidence that the two-fold pattern of Justin Martyr and of Pliny's letter has apostolic foundation. According to Cabaniss, especially three New Testament passages (Romans 10:14ff.; Philippians 4:6; Acts 2:42) give indications of a worship order in apostolic times. The sequence is simple, even stark: Scripture reading, homily, prayers, eucharist. Aspects of the service which "lent color and appeal" were intimacy (the house church), intense awareness of the Spirit's activity, and the use of hymns and canticles (Ephesians 4:19; Colossians 3:16). There is also within the assembly a consistent differentiation of clergy and laity, "for the early church had from its beginning made that distinction" (p. 52; James, Revelation, Galatians 2:9; 6:6; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 12:27; Philippians 1:1, etc.). Yet, according to Cabaniss, singing does not seem to have been universal in the liturgy, nor was there a confession of sins. The instructional part of Scripture reading and homily was open to all, while the "worship" leading to the eucharist was restricted to the baptized. Speaking of Paul (Romans 10:14), Cabaniss summarizes his findings: "The service begins with announcement of the mighty acts and words of God in solemn readings of Sacred Scripture, followed by adoring expressions of faith in and acceptance of God's revelation, culminating in communion with God by prayer and Eucharist. The earliest unequivocal description of Christian worship by Justin Martyr conforms to Paul's outline" (p. 63).

Cabaniss provides three appendices. The third gives an English translation of the texts of Justin Martyr's First Apology and of Pliny's letter which provided Cabaniss with the primary evidence of early Christian worship practice. This translation is helpful. But it is the first two appendices which have contemporary relevance and serve as serious attempts to make meaningful Christian worship in our day. The first appendix, "A Liturgical Structure for Today," provides Cabaniss' order of service, which is a mild elaboration of the pattern he discerned in the New Testament, Justin Martyr, and Pliny. He divides the service into instruction (the sermon and its concomitants) and worship (the eucharist and its concomitants). The action of worship should be noted by thankfulness, exultation, and joy, yet without ridding the worship of the solemnity of the eucharist. Penitential services with confession of sins should be separate from the worship service. Instruction should be "de-formalized and restored to its simpler, original 'conversational' style and content, with opportunity for questions and additions, even for disagreements" (p. 74). This whole appendix has considerable merit, yet clearly the centrality of the sermon is gone. Cabaniss suggests as "most satisfactory" a sermon after the close of the service (p. 77). The second appendix, "One for the Road," describes the eucharist as indicating a journey, a wilderness wandering, a sense of urgency and impermanence. Therefore, "the Eucharist should not be characterized as a formal supper, dinner or banquet; it should be looked upon as one's 'last' mouthful just before a journey." It should then be received standing, even walking! "Nothing should follow it but departure from the place where it was administered. It is a final act in and of itself before this world or another world engulfs us" (p. 85). The reviewer is not ready to admit to "food for a journey" as a sufficient rubric for understanding the eucharist, but Cabaniss' suggestions for practice are an example of how theological understanding can and must be expressed in liturgical form. Without such form theological understanding will be left literally unexpressed. This book deserves a reading, and the reviewer would aver that not much rearranging would be necessary to make its suggestions directly applicable to a Lutheran worship service.

William C. Weinrich



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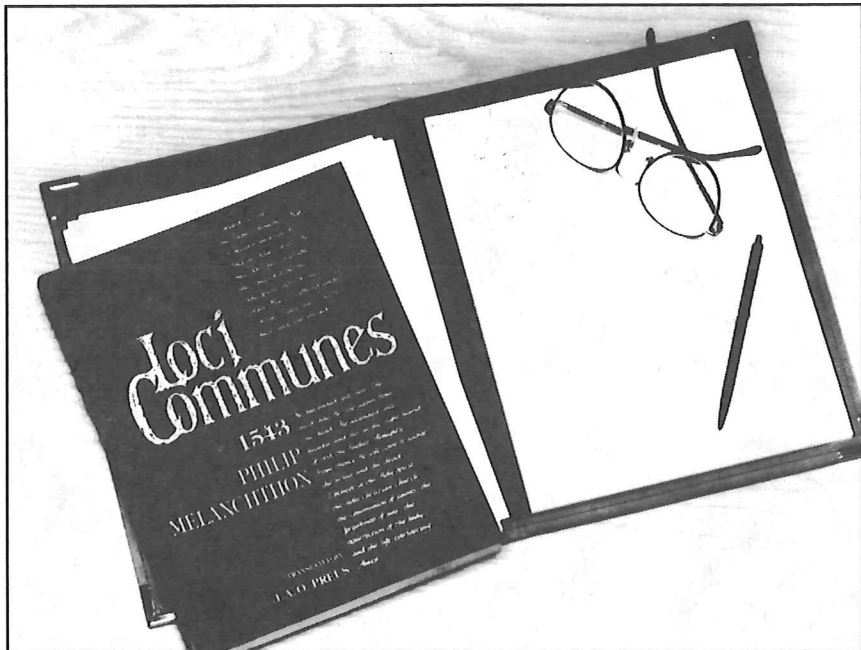
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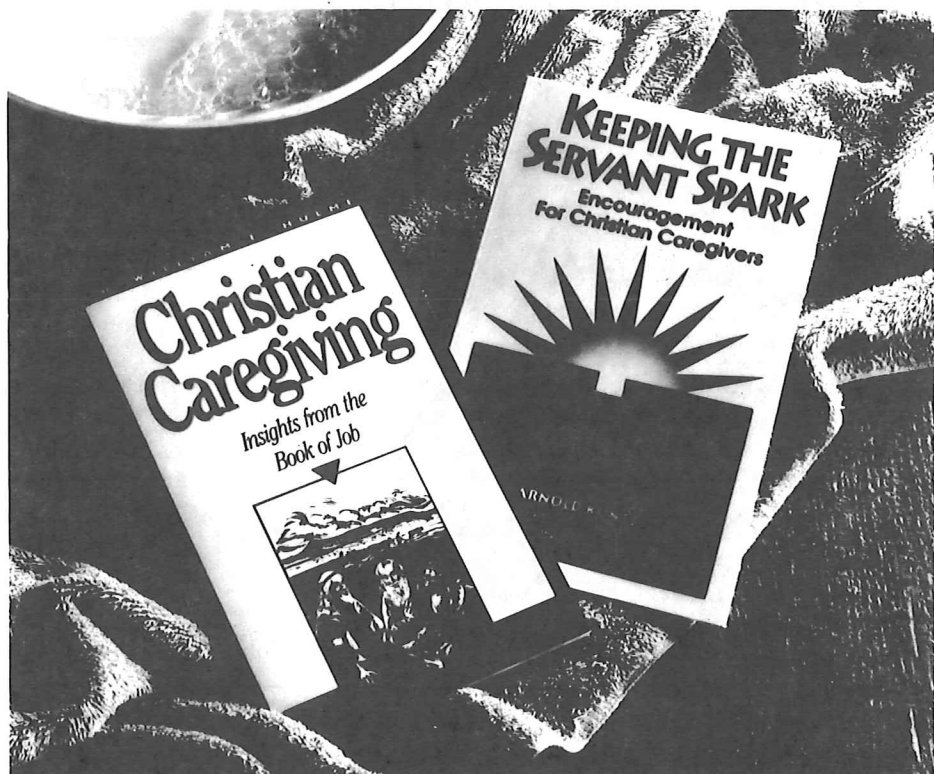
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