

“AND WHAT COMMUNION HAS LIGHT WITH DARKNESS?”

**A REPORT ON THE 2001 CONVENTION OF
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD**



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To the Reader:

Greetings to you in the Name of our Risen Savior!

The following report was presented to the voters of Salem Lutheran Church (Malone, Texas) immediately following the 2001 Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It was, therefore, written before the horrific events of last September: the unionistic and syncretistic worship services which occurred in New York in the aftermath of the worst terrorist attack in the history of the United States. Although I was tempted to update the paper in the months since those events, I finally decided to leave it 'as is'—and thus to allow the analysis of the 2001 Synodical Convention to stand on the weight of the events in St. Louis, without being influenced by later events.

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At its 2001 Convention, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LC—MS) stood at a crucial point in its history; a point without ready historical parallel. The LC—MS has faced doctrinal crises before, but, in the end, when the votes were counted, those who were more faithful to our Confessional Lutheran heritage were granted the victory. In recent years, however, it proved easier to settle for the ‘easy out’; it was easier for those who desired to be faithful to see the opponent choose to leave the field, or retreat to safety (for a time), rather than seek out and remove the tumor of false doctrine and practice. As the 2001 Convention approached, it became apparent that the ‘bill’ for many years of neglect was coming due. A sense of unease grew within confessional circles around the synod, and yet many of the conservative groups seemed virtually paralyzed when it came time to take decisive action. At last the clock ran out, and the confessional Lutherans of the synod were unprepared to stand against the onslaught in St. Louis.

For a generation since *Seminex* (in fact, since the ‘Statement of the 44’ in 1945), we have watched the liberals steadily gather and build their support. When, on occasion, particular situations have moved in a positive direction, little time would pass before the apparent gains would slip away. All the while, an indifference to pure teaching has grown. Doctrinal error has spread more and more widely. Liturgical chaos has swept away centuries of the Church’s heritage, leaving a confused muddle and a confusion of tongues, so that no Missouri Synod Lutheran can safely expect any particular practice at an altar of our fellowship.

The air of desperation, and the fear of what was to come, was evident from the opening of the convention. The issues of this convention were not worldly matters such as pension programs; there was a clear sense that what was at stake was *the truth itself*.

Evidence of the danger faced by the synod can be found within the official report of the synodical president. In the third part of the president's report, Dr. Robert Kuhn declared:

We live at a time when truth is seen as merely a matter of taste, or opinion, or consensus or personal preference. As we move together into the new millennium, we courageously retain and proclaim the entire truth of God's Word, in every point. ... If we really want to have something to say to a culture and a world in such desperate need of truth, then all the more we must cling to the Sacred Scriptures and the faithful exposition of that Word found in our Lutheran Confessions. (*Today's Business*, p. 202)

Kuhn readily acknowledged, however, that there are those within the synod who are prepared to lead the LC—MS away from the pure proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and return to the darkness and error of those who view the Holy Scriptures as if they were but the writings of man. Dr. Kuhn declared:

We went through the Seminex crisis nearly thirty years ago in which a number of pastors and professors wanted to lead our Synod away from a strong trust in the absolute truthfulness and reliability of Holy Scripture. Sadly, some of them continue to disturb our Synod working for a compromising approach to doctrine and practice. They do so very carefully, often with pious sounding phrases and words, but their threat to the Synod is a very real and present danger. With love for our brothers and sisters who would have us move away from the truth of the Word, we must say 'No.' (*Today's Business*, p. 202)

Dr. Kuhn demonstrated integrity as he did not hesitate to "name names" and identified the Jesus First and Day Star Arising political organizations as those who sought to lead people away from the teachings of Holy Scripture. Again, Kuhn stated:

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it truly hurts me that in our Synod, in the past several years, there have arisen groups that claim to be Jesus First, or that they are trying to shine like stars, when it is obvious they are attempting to advance an old liberal theology and practice, an agenda that has haunted this church body since the days of

Seminex and even before. Delegates, my fraternal and heartfelt encouragement to you as president of our Synod is to beware of this agenda and how they are suggesting to carry it out. It would be detrimental to head in this direction. This is not the path we should follow. There is a much better way. (*Today's Business*, p. 203)

Kuhn realized that the path which the liberals of the Jesus First and Day Star group are treading leads in the same downward path on which the ELCA has preceded us. Kuhn acknowledged that this broad path leads in the way of destruction—a way from which God's people must be delivered.

Some churches that claim the name Lutheran left the well-worn path. Is this really the path our Synod wants to take? I don't think so. There are many who have left the well-worn path and have become entangled in trails choked with the overgrowth of error, strangling deception and ending in the treacherous cliffs of false teaching and ultimate destruction. (*Today's Business*, p. 203)

Dr. Kuhn correctly identified the threat which confronted—and still confronts—us. Sadly, his warning came far too late, and many victories were accomplished by those seeking the broad and easy path. The eagerness to cast our heritage behind us was so great that the liberals trumpeted their victories. Former Synodical President Ralph A. Bohlmann, talked about the importance of bringing change to the Church, and challenged traveling in the “deep ruts” of our heritage, declaring in his address on July 19:

Those who ask question about such things should not be ignored, let alone criticized, as too often happens among us. Just leave things alone? No, not really. In fact, God Himself sometimes acts in a very direct way to remind us that some things cannot simply be left alone, as He did not a few months ago when He called President Barry home to Himself in heaven.

Bohlmann proceeded to thank God for Kieschnick, and told the delegates that God wants us to change, and move forward boldly.

Since the convention, the liberals have begun to openly brag about their victory. Rev. Stephen C. Krueger, the leader of Day Star Arising wrote in his article, “2001 Convention: Reflections from the “Toxic Left””:

It was a week I wouldn't have missed for anything. If the DayStar conversation and Jesus First Leadership organizing were tested at this convention, as David's going up against a Goliath-sized machine, by the grace of God we passed the test not only with flying colors but with a new found confidence that the synod must and will take our evangelical and mission-minded concerns seriously.

This was, predictably, a Barry [Kuhn] convention but with a Kieschnick surprise. What's more, despite the stacked committees 3, 5 and 7 to punctuate the Barry era with an exclamation point, the era ends not with a bang but with a disorganized, right-wing whimper. You couldn't help but notice that those accustomed to having access to power for the past decade did score some predictable victories, but they lost a great deal, too, as the power of the gospel [sic] kept bubbling up in the winsome ways it always does. The controllers were resoundingly chastened.

The situation was so utterly controlled by the liberals that several committees appeared to simply “shut down” rather than bring any more resolutions to the floor and watch them get stood on their heads by the liberals. Krueger also noticed this fact, and declared:

The 2001 convention will be known as much for what it didn't say as for what it said. Many of the nasty, anti-evangelical resolutions [sic] which preoccupied our pre-convention attention from Barry-stacked committees 3, 5 and 7 never made it to the floor.

...

The Committee to consider Task Force stuff on Synod/District relations was so intimidated by the “thumbs down” voice of the church (that's us), that Committee 8 (Garwood, Wyoming) came up with nothing but softballs.

Committee 3 (Pittelko, English, not reelected and turned conveniently sick during the last few days ... thus turning the committee reports over to Iowa East's Gary Arp), never got around to gutting joint ministry with the ELCA, considering the flawed Church

Growth Study and asking RIM to disband. We would have taken them to task on each of those items and they knew it. [article on Day-Star website]

The liberals have room for confidence. They were able to shut down a convention which confessional Lutherans *should have* been able to guide. Furthermore, they managed to distort a number of key resolutions. Several of the resolutions which passed are irreconcilable with the Scriptural and Confessional doctrine.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP AND DOCTRINAL CONFUSION

One of the most stunning blows for our confession came on Sunday, the first day of the convention: the declaration of fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL). The LC—MS was warned in advance of the false teaching and practice of the ELCL. The ELCL is served by women pastors and “evangelists”—a practice clearly forbidden by God’s Word.

1 Corinthians 14:34–35: Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

1 Timothy 2:11–14: Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

In addition, the ELCL has been in fellowship with the Anglican Church since the 1930s (in fact, an Anglican archbishop apparently participated in the ordination of Latvian Archbishop Vanags). The ELCL is a member of the unionistic, liberal Lutheran World Federation (as is the Lanka Lutheran Church of Sri Lanka—another synod with which the Missouri Synod declared fellowship at this convention!). Any *one* of these points mandates that no Lutheran church body have fellowship with the ELCL if they desire to remain faithful to Holy Scripture and the Book of Concord.

One thing which is quite telling is the attitude which the Latvian Church takes toward fellowship with the Missouri Synod. According to Professor Erling Teigen, the following was reported in *The Baltic Times* (July 5-11, 2001 edition, p. 5):

The most telling quote is from Vanags: “Relations with Missouri have developed since the end of the Soviet era, he said. The Missouri Synod has contributed to the cost of establishing a Lutheran academy to train people for ordination. But he added that he did not wish to damage relations with the Lutheran World Federation, of which the Latvian church is a member. ‘There is tension between the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation, but we shouldn’t play games according to their rules. We establish our own rules and develop friendly relations with all churches.’”

When the issue of fellowship was discussed on the convention floor, everyone readily acknowledged that the Latvian Lutherans do, indeed, have women pastors and dozens of female “evangelists”, as well as the other offensive matters identified above. As a sop to the consciences of the confessional Lutherans, an amendment was added, “That this declaration of fellowship does not acknowledge that those women who have been ordained are recognized as ordained clergy who can serve in the capacity of ordained clergy in the LCMS.” (*Today’s Business*, p. 221) However, this statement misses the key point: the ordination of women is in violation of the clear teachings of holy Scripture—it is false doctrine and wicked practice to allow women to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry. Professor Kurt Marquart (Concordia, Ft. Wayne) spoke out from the convention floor, noting that there was *nothing* in the Latvian’s constitution which prevented them from continuing to ordain women, despite their fellowship with the LC—MS. Nevertheless, the fellowship was adopted by a more than 90% majority.

Twenty years ago, the Missouri Synod broke fellowship with the ALC when that church body *was discussing* the ordination of women; now our synod does not find such unbiblical practice to be divisive of church fellowship. The synod’s past action readily testifies that the leaders of synod knew that this course of action was in violation of our confession. By not refusing fellowship because of the ELCL’s adherence to false doctrine, the Missouri Synod has acquiesced to the notion that women’s ordination is not

unscriptural. The Missouri Synod, by this action, has made itself a partaker in another man's sins.' Dr. Francis Pieper, a former president of the LC—MS and former president of Concordia Seminary—St. Louis, observes in his *Christian Dogmatics*:

Scripture warns us emphatically against this species of *peccata actualia* [actual sins]: "Neither be partakers of other men's sins" (1 Tim. 5:22). One who practices church fellowship with those who in their doctrine depart from God's Word becomes guilty of their sin. 2 John 11 states explicitly: "He that biddeth him [who does not bring the doctrine of Christ] Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." (vol. 1, page 569. Concordia Publishing House)

From the standpoint of history, it will probably be found that this is the moment at which the Rubicon has been crossed; the step has been taken which will eventually lead the Missouri Synod to ordain women. *None* of the overtures submitted to the convention calling for women's ordination were rejected.

The synod's weakness on the doctrine of fellowship was again demonstrated while considering resolution 3-06, "To Reach Out Aggressively to Emerging Lutheran Churches." The final resolved, "That he [the synodical president] work to establish altar and pulpit fellowship with these church bodies as expeditiously as possible," was amended to add the words, "*when full agreement in doctrine and practice exists.*" However, this amendment passed by a mere 52.9%! The synod came within three percentage points of publicly repudiating even giving lip service to our doctrine of fellowship, since unamended it would have called for fellowship without requiring doctrinal agreement. (Of course, the decision to go into fellowship with the Latvian and Sri Lankan churches demonstrates that the synod's doctrine of fellowship has already been abandoned *in practice*.)

Resolution 3-07A, "To Commend 'The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship' and the CTCR Report on the Synodical Discussions," was the setting of another serious battle over the doctrine of fellowship. The document referenced, *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship*, is an admirable document (and could have done the synod a great deal of good if its principles were observed at the convention!). However, the convention voted to consider a substitute resolution by Rev. Stephen Krueger (DayStar Arising) which would have gutted the original commendation, and returned

the document to the CTCR for restudy. In the end, the original resolution was adopted by a 70% majority, but only after an extended conflict, and with the knowledge that a substantial percentage of the delegates openly reject the synod's understanding of fellowship. Arguably, many among the 70% don't actually agree with the document (after all, who voted for fellowship with Latvia?), and may have voted to support it simply because it was the 'product' of an official board of synod.

Actually, the significance of the synod even *having* a doctrinal position was undermined at this convention. Resolution 7-18, "To Clarify What is Included in the Doctrinal Position of Synod," was intended "to prevent confusion and contention regarding the relationship of doctrinal resolutions and doctrinal statements." The resolution would have made it clear that "all doctrinal statements and resolutions, although they originate differently, are of equal weight in describing the Synod's understanding of Art. II of its Constitution [the article on adhering to the Lutheran Confessions]." (*Today's Business*, p. 125) The resolution was utterly defeated, receiving only 12.3% of the vote.

Resolution 7-22A, "To Clarify Opinion of Commission on Constitutional Matters," declares:

Resolved, That Districts of the Synod are to make faithful applications of doctrinal resolutions of the Synod to the congregations of their Districts; and be it further

Resolved, That Districts of the Synod do not have the right to approve actions of congregations which are not in accord with doctrinal resolutions of the Synod (*Today's Business*, p. 185)

Several delegates rose in opposition to this resolution, declaring that since the synod was only "advisory," no doctrinal statement of the LC—MS should be binding on congregations. In the end, the resolution passed with only 59.9% support. In other words, 40.1% believed that districts *should not* "make faithful applications of doctrinal resolutions" to congregations in their districts. Thus it appears nearly half the delegates believed that the synod should be able to pass doctrinal resolutions, as long as they don't necessarily mean anything at the parish level.

The utter insignificance of the synod's doctrinal position was further demonstrated during discussion on Resolution 2-09A, "To Encourage Responsible Use of *This Far by Faith*." *This Far by Faith* was a joint LC—MS/

ELCA hymnal project to develop a hymnal for use by African-Americans. When the project was finished, the Missouri Synod doctrinal reviewers rejected the hymnal because many of the hymns were heretical, and Concordia Publishing House was not permitted to sell the book. When this resolution was brought to the floor, an amendment was urged which would have required no use of the hymnal until the book was corrected (doctrinally-speaking). After all, the Constitution of the Synod requires “Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school” as a condition of membership in the synod. A hymnal which was rejected by doctrinal review is, by definition, not doctrinally pure. All sides (both advocates and opponents of *This Far by Faith*) agreed that at least ten percent of the hymns in the book teach false doctrine. However, the amendment to delay use until the heresy was removed was rejected, receiving only 23.8% support, and the unamended resolution was passed by 93%. Thus, the synod in convention commended use of a hymnal which brings any congregation using it into direct conflict with a condition for membership in the synod.

DISAGREEMENT REGARDING ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

In the Augsburg Confession, we teach “that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of the saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered.” (VII:1) The pure Word and faithfully administered Sacraments are called “marks” of the Church, because one can use them to locate the Church; where the Word is taught faithfully, where the Sacraments are rightly administered, there is the one holy Church. All Christians are concerned for the purity of the Word and Sacraments, “For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel...” (AC V:2) Without the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments, there will not be faith, therefore we are concerned for their purity, so that no false doctrine is mixed in, which might stand in the way of another person’s faith, nor do we allow any corruption of the Sacrament to take it away from Christ’s institution,

lest there would be the danger that what is administered would be, in fact, no Sacrament at all.

Agreement in the pure Word of God and right administration of the Sacraments is central to Church fellowship; if there is not 100 percent agreement, there can be no Church fellowship, because such agreement expresses fellowship of shared faith. We confess in the Apology (or “Defense”) of the Augsburg Confession:

The Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward signs, but it consists especially in inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God; which fellowship nevertheless has outward marks so that it can be recognized, viz. the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ. (AP VII/VIII:5)

Without such agreement in the “marks” of the Church, there can be no fellowship. The Word and Sacraments are established by Christ Jesus; they are the objective, and only, standard for fellowship. Any disagreement with the pure Word and right administration of the Sacraments is an admission that Church fellowship does not exist, and any deviation from these marks risks depriving us of God’s means of grace.

Christ Jesus instituted the Sacraments, and we are bound to the words and elements He has given to us. Because they are instituted by God, man cannot choose to omit or change the words which God has attached to the Sacrament, nor may he alter the elements; that is, water in Holy Baptism and bread and wine in the Holy Communion. As one of the greatest Lutheran theologians, Johann Gerhard, rightly observed:

Accordingly, since the holy evangelists, like St. Paul, mention no other external elements than bread and wine in describing the institution of the holy Lord’s Supper; since Christ used and sanctified no other element for this Sacrament; since no place in the Scripture which treats of the Lord’s Supper mentions even a single other element; since it befits the true disciples of Christ to abide by His ordinance and institution, John 8:31; since the promise of Christ concerning the sacramental reception of His body and blood is expressly dependent upon the bread and wine; and finally, since bread

and wine are the essential elements of the holy Lord's Supper, it follows that under no circumstances can or should one substitute other elements, which might be comparable, in place of bread and wine.

This has been the consensus of faithful Christians in every generation. When false teachers among the American Protestants (especially among the Methodists and some Baptists) began to deviate from Christ's institution, their action was driven by their Prohibitionist ideology. Their conviction that any consumption of alcohol was sinful led them to violate Christ's institution; thus some among them began to substitute grape juice or 'denatured' wine (so-called wine from which all the alcohol has been removed) in obedience to their unbiblical dogma.

However, the 2001 Synodical Convention opened the door to such violations of Christ's institution. Resolution 3-16 ("To Encourage Use of Only Wine in Administration of the Lord's Supper") states:

Resolved, That the congregations be *encouraged* to use only wine for the Sacrament; and be it further

Resolved, That the theological faculties of our seminaries be commissioned to offer guidelines to pastors and congregations in meeting the needs of those who feel they cannot drink wine. (*Today's Business*, p. 81)

Do we merely "encourage" the use of water in Baptism? Do we merely "encourage" the proclamation of God's Word (and not, for example, the Moslem Koran) in preaching? Do we merely "encourage" the use of bread in the blessed Sacrament? Jesus said "This do"—to merely "encourage" would be like reducing the Ten Commandments to Ten 'Helpful Suggestions.' On Friday of the convention, President Kuhn declared that the resolution *could* have declared that congregations "shall" use wine, and that a deliberate decision was made to only "encourage." The matter was made even worse when one of the "whereas" was modified to read "wine, or reduced alcohol [i.e., denatured] wine..." (*Today's Business*, p. 382). The resolution passed with 81.6% support. As a doctrinal resolution, this is a statement of the LC—MS's official position: The LC—MS now merely encourages the use of wine—merely encourages what Jesus commanded, saying, "This do." Article VII of the Augsburg Confession declares "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly adminis-

tered” (§1) and that unity in the Church requires “agree[ment] concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.” (§2) Such unity concerning the administration of the Sacraments no longer exists in the LC—MS if some are now officially permitted to deviate from Christ’s institution, while others uphold it.

INCORRECT TEACHING CONCERNING THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY

Ever since the 1989 synodical convention in Wichita, the synod has wrestled to put an end to a practice which violates our confession. According to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, “Of Ecclesiastical Order, they teach, that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called.” Call and ordination are no minor matter: the Lutheran Confessions declare “it is manifest that ordination by a pastor in his own church has been appointed by divine law” (Treatise, §65)—matters of divine law should always be of great concern to the Church! Thus, the Confessions declare: “Wherefore it is *necessary* for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect and ordain ministers.” (Treatise, §67. Emphasis added.)

In 1989, citing an ‘emergency’ situation regarding a lack of ordained clergy, the convention created a category of ‘lay ministers’ (sometimes called ‘lay deacons’). Such individuals, lacking ordination and call, were permitted to perform a number of roles in the Church, including Word and Sacrament ministry. It was noted at the time, and in the years which followed, that this was clearly in violation of the Augsburg Confession. The situation became even more confusing as women were admitted to the lay ministry roster (a fact easily verified by consulting *The Lutheran Annual*).

After the election of Dr. Barry, steps were taken to begin shutting down the lay ministry program. It was decided that the program would be phased out, and all participants would either be colloquized into the pastoral office, ordained, and called by a parish, or they would be removed. The final step was to be taken at this convention, with Resolution 3-08, “To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations.” This would have required male participants in the lay ministry program to

enter education programs leading to ordination, and that all would complete such training by December 31, 2004. All districts would have to shut down their lay ministry programs by September, 2002, and the resolution specifically stated, “*Resolved*, That after the last day of this convention no new or renewal licenses to serve as a lay deacon shall be offered;”. If the resolution had passed, it would have brought the synod out of its false practice. That, however, did not happen.

The liberals introduced an *alternative* resolution: Resolution 3-08B. This resolution proposed rescinding the actions of the 1995 convention, which required lay ministers to enter a DELTO (Distance Education Leading To Ordination) program. Resolution 3-08B offered *no* recommendations for educational requirements for the DELTO programs. All a candidate would need was:

1. Currently be a member of an LCMS congregation which would accept him after DELTO.
2. Be a member of an LCMS congregation for at least five years.
3. Be recommended by his District President.

District Presidents would be allowed to place existing lay ministers as vicars within parishes of their districts. Requirements that all lay ministers enter the DELTO program were seemingly-abandoned, resolving instead that all lay ministers be ‘asked’ to enter seminary or a DELTO program. Several delegates observed from the floor that its adoption would signify a direct rejection of the Augsburg Confession; but their protests were to no avail. This resolution passed, receiving a 53% vote, over the express objections of Committee 3 (the Committee on Theology and Church Relations). The clear words of our Augsburg Confession that no one should preach or administer the Sacraments “unless he be regularly called” cannot be called the practice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Indeed, part of the confusion which has overwhelmed the Missouri Synod is based in the plethora of ‘ministries’ created by the synod. At this convention, synod voted to add “Director of Family Life” to the roster of Ministers of Religion-Commissioned. Little explanation is given as to what this ministry entails; the rationale for Resolution 7-15 says, “The need for congregations and schools to provide ministry in the area of family life is steadily growing.” (*Today’s Business*, p. 124.) There is nothing in this explanation which reveals why such ministry requires the creation of a whole new office, or even

what the actual task of such a Director of Family Life would be. The resolution to create this new category received a majority of votes at the convention, but as was later reported in synodical newspaper, *The Reporter*:

Delegates voted 686 to 410 on July 17 to add directors of family-life ministry to the Synod's roster of commissioned ministers. The chair declared the resolution adopted. Only later did officials realize that adding a new classification of workers to the roster requires an amendment to the Constitution—and that requires a two-thirds vote. Because the resolution fell short of a two-thirds majority—only 62.6 percent of delegates voted for it—it actually failed. (“Oops! Closer look reveals convention mistakes,” August 2001, p. 3)

When Resolution 7–14 (“To Place Directors of Parish Music on Roster of Synod”) was debated on Thursday of the convention, the synod's attorney came to the microphone and warned the convention that such an action could endanger the IRS reexamining the exemptions of *all* of the rostered church workers (except for pastors). Nevertheless, the resolution passed with 73.2%.

With such a growing confusion regarding the office of the holy ministry, one scarcely knows what to expect in the years to come. It is worth noting that Rev. Kieschnick declared in his acceptance speech: “I also believe that our Synod should explore the clearly acceptable biblical role of prophetess and its implications for women in the church in the 21st century.” Rev. Kieschnick declares that he is opposed to the ordination of women, but as yet this office of “prophetess” has not been defined.

NO ACTION TAKEN REGARDING CHARISMATIC HERETICS

For years, the LC—MS has been afflicted by the presence of the Charismatic “Renewal in Missouri” (RIM) movement, which has advocated a Charismatic view of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, undermining reliance on the Scriptures' promises of God's grace coming to us through the Word and the Sacraments. For nearly a decade, President Barry's office negotiated with RIM representatives, trying to lead them to repentance. At the last synodi-

cal convention, there was a drive to bring the matter to a conclusion within the next three years. In 1998, Resolution 3-12A instructed the synodical president to “report to the next convention of the Synod regarding the results of these continuing discussions and bring a recommendation so that a God-pleasing conclusion may be brought to this matter.” (*Today’s Business*, p. 16) The sole resolution dealing with the RIM false teachers shows what meager fruit the discussions have produced. The fact that, ultimately, the synod took *no action whatsoever* at the convention reveals an utter collapse of commitment to deal in a decisive fashion with RIM.

President Kuhn writes in his report to this convention:

What needs to be said at this point is that it is extremely difficult to say exactly how much progress has been made with the members of this charismatic organization that continues to exist in our Synod. ... Further, both presidential appointees and RIM representatives stated during the discussions that there are no common understandings of key terms such as “tongues” and “prophecy” and “revelation.” ... The bottom line clearly is this: the charismatic movement and the teachings of God’s Word are incompatible. There are some who may hope to “Lutheranize” charismatic theology, but finally it is not possible. (*Today’s Business*, p. 16)

Two overtures addressed the problem of RIM: (1) 3-127, “To Require Disassociation from Renewal in Missouri” and (2) 3-128, “To Ask Renewal in Missouri to Disband.” Overture 3-127 observed that the CTCR “has in the past thoroughly studied the entire charismatic movement and has found it fraught with false doctrine (1972; 1977; 1994)” and “has, in its convention report, found *Renewal in Missouri (R.I.M.)* to be at odds with the doctrinal position of the LCMS...”. The overture also would have required all RIM members to formally recant “of all pentecostal/charismatic beliefs in general and all ties/associations with *Renewal in Missouri (R.I.M.)* in particular, and that this letter of recantation be sent by ‘certified mail’ to the synodical President no later than 12-31-01...” This overture would have taken the doctrinal matters at stake as something which is important. The doctrinal errors of the RIM movement members need, like any sin (especially public sin), to be repented of.

Needless to say, this overture was *not* the one which ended up in the *Today's Business*. Instead, Resolution 3-18 (“To Ask Renewal in Missouri to Disband”) took its direction from the mild 3-128 overture. Resolution 3-18 has only one “resolved”:

That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention through the office of the synodical President ask Renewal in Missouri in the spirit of unity and walking together to disband as a standing organization and to join the Synod in rejecting charismatic practice, which is not in accord with the teaching of Scripture.

The resolution had no “teeth”—the Charismatics did not need to fear any discipline if they don’t follow the synodical president’s request. RIM members also would not have been required to disavow their false doctrine; they would only be called upon to reject “charismatic practice”—which can be interpreted as telling them, in essence, ‘believe and teach whatever you want, but please don’t make us watch you put your doctrine into practice.’ If the RIM charismatics (who claim 600 LC—MS pastors in their ranks) had decided to ignore such a resolution (as they have apparently ignored three CTCR documents), nothing would have happened to them, and they would have been allowed to continue to spread their teaching.

However, as we observed above, the convention failed to pass even such a mild resolution. As the Day-Star liberals gloat on their web-site: “Committee 3 ... never got around to gutting joint ministry with the ELCA, considering the flawed Church Growth Study and asking RIM to disband. We would have taken them to task on each of those items and they knew it.” (Stephen Krueger, “2001 Convention: Reflections from the ‘Toxic Left’”) In fact, alternative resolutions were introduced during the week that would have called for even *more* “dialog” with RIM (e.g., *Today's Business*, p. 372)—even though the false teachings of the Charismatic movement were addressed by the synod as early as 1972! One alternative resolution even proclaimed, “That we recognize that RIM, with the Synod, stands in opposition to the errors and abuses of the charismatic movement”! (*Today's Business*, p. 371) The synod has not kept its own commitment to bring this matter to a conclusion; indeed, there is presently no sign that the RIM members will *ever* face the choice of either repenting or leaving the synod, especially when RIM claims the support of roughly one out of ten pastors of the LC—MS.

ISSUES OF “DIVERSITY” AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The primary buzzwords of the modern “political correctness” movement are “diversity” and “tolerance.” Used in conjunction, these terms are usually used to demand everything must be tolerated... except that which is deemed ‘intolerant.’ Thus, “political correctness” usually denounces anything traditional as ‘white’ or ‘male’ (and therefore either antiquated or evil). In the past, the LC—MS has generally stayed away from such faddish leftist assaults on tradition. Thus it was shocking to read as follows in the Mission resolutions in *Today’s Business*:

Resolution 1–06, “To Encourage Diversity of Leadership”

WHEREAS, Synodical elections as well as electoral circuit representation allow and tend to encourage the continuation of **primarily Caucasian male representation**, therefore overlooking other gifted and talented leaders in the service of the Lord and church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS **celebrate the diversity** of peoples being brought into LCMS congregational membership and **resolve to elect and appoint** substantially more leaders **from other than just male Caucasian background** in the next triennium by **special recruiting efforts** of local and national church leaders;

Resolved, That the Synod’s President, District Presidents and the Synod’s Board of Directors implement appropriate actions at the national and District levels and encourage action **at the congregational level**. (Emphasis added)

In other words, the synod did not choose the ‘right kind’ of leadership through the democratic process. In the views of the guardians of “political correctness,” democracy in the synod cannot be trusted because it selects white men to serve in positions of leadership. Thus, they have determined that the synodical and district leaders need to encourage action “at the congregational

level” that will ‘fix’ our actions and views to fit the supposed need for “diversity.” How long will it be before the LC—MS has quotas like the clergy recruitment quotas in the ELCA? After all, half of the delegates are *pastors*, and every one of them is a man. By the logic of this resolution, the synod would need to have women serving in half of all its pulpits or else require women to serve as every one of the congregational delegates so that there can be “diversity.”

This odd little resolution found its way to the floor as Resolution 1-06A with the “politically correct” language intact. An effort was made to delete the reference to Caucasian males, but that amendment was defeated. At least one delegate pleaded from the floor that we *not* divide our synod along lines of gender and race. In the end, however, the resolution passed by an 81.8% majority.

Sadly, this strange resolution was not alone. In Resolution 1-07 (“To Recognize Need for Variety in Mission Outreach”), it was resolved: “That the Synod in convention celebrate opportunities to minister to *diverse* cultures both in this country and around the world, recognizing that differences among the various cultures will necessitate differences of approach;”. What does this mean? Does God’s Word change from nation to nation? Do some cultures need Word and Sacrament, while others need something else? Isn’t the division between Law and Gospel universal? The severe confusion regarding proper mission work was highlighted when one delegate moved an amendment to add the words “God-pleasing” the final resolved of this resolution so that it would read: “*Resolved*, that we implore God’s blessings upon all **God-pleasing** efforts to share the Good News of Jesus Christ...” The convention *rejected* this amendment! Apparently, it doesn’t matter if an effort is God-pleasing or not: we will urge people to carry it out anyway. (Both the Crusades and the Inquisition could be described as efforts to “share the Good News of Jesus Christ.”) Naturally, Resolution 1-07 passed with a 93% majority.

Resolution 1-08 (“To Recognize and Share Results of Increased Diversity”) continued the drive for “political correctness” by first offering the carrot (“*Resolved*, That the 2001 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod thank God for the rich diversity that He is bringing to our church”) and then the stick (“*Resolved*, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reflect this increased diversity through its official publications and communications”). What on earth does this mean? Do people pick up

the *Lutheran Witness* and think, “Wow. This publication really doesn’t reflect the fact that there are black or Asian or Hispanic people in synod”? Apparently so, because one delegate got up and declared his congregation couldn’t use Concordia Publishing House materials because they were ‘all white.’ The resolution passed with a 92.7% majority.

It would be nice to ignore these resolutions as simply silly, but they have implications, and their authors are deadly serious: the LC—MS *will* be forced to become “diverse” (by their definition), and if that means reeducating folks, then so be it. Apparently congregations will no longer be trusted to see to their own affairs, if they don’t choose the ‘right’ people (in the eyes of the politically correct).

CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

The centralization of power in the hands of the synod’s leadership has gone on for some time now, and several resolutions demonstrated that this trend will continue and probably accelerate. Resolution 7-08, “To Add New Bylaw to Govern Dissolution of Synodwide Corporate Entities” was approved by 87.7% of the delegates. Before this resolution passed, a vote of the synod in convention was required before a corporation of synod could be eliminated. A number of delegates expressed their concern that too much authority was being centralized in the hands of the synod’s leaders. Imagine what it would be like if a congregation’s board of trustees could decide to close a church and sell its building without a vote of the congregation—that is the kind of power that was transferred to the Board of Directors. Now any corporation of the synod (such as the entire Concordia University System, the Concordia Historical Institute, or Concordia Publishing House) can be dissolved by the synod’s Board of Directors. This is far too much power for a small handful of people to wield in a synod with over 6,000 congregations and 2.5 million members.

When Resolution 7-04A (“To Promote Truth and Integrity in Convention Overtures”) was read, delegates observed from the floor that it would have a “chilling” effect on the synod. Existing Bylaws prohibited publication in the Convention Workbook of any material which “upon advice of legal counsel, may subject the Synod or the corporate officers of the Synod to civil

action for libel or slander...” This is wise; obviously the synod should not knowingly defame people. However, Resolution 7-04A states:

The synodical President shall determine if any overture contains information which is *materially in error*, or contains any *apparent* misrepresentation of truth or of character. He shall not approve inclusion of any such overture in the convention manual and shall refer any such overture to the District President who has ecclesiastical supervision over the entity submitting the overture for action. If any published overture or resolution is found to be materially in error or contains any misrepresentation of truth or of character, it shall be withdrawn from convention consideration and referred by the President of the Synod to the appropriate District President for action;...

The call for District Presidents to take “action” (read: discipline) against congregations simply because their resolutions were “materially in error” is a daunting prospect indeed. The resolution did not offer any needed protection to the synod, nor is there necessarily any malice behind a congregation presenting a memorial which is “materially in error”: we all make mistakes. However, as several delegates observed, such a change to the Bylaws would naturally lead congregations to censor themselves, rather than face “action” at the hands of their District President. The result will probably be that congregations will refrain (whether they ought to or not) from sending in any memorial that they believe could be controversial with their District President or the Synodical President.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

We have seen that grievous errors have entered the Missouri Synod and that these errors have the support of the synod in convention. They are not errors which have ‘casually intruded’ by the misstatement of an individual pastor, or even the false teaching of a small group. One of the great teachers of the Lutheran Church of the 19th century, Dr. C. P. Krauth, observed in his *magnum opus*, *The Conservative Reformation*:

When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking *toleration*.

Its friends say to the majority: You need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. The Church has her standards of doctrine; of course we shall never interfere with them; we only ask for ourselves to be spared interference with our private opinions. Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert *equal rights*. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth, because it is truth, is partisanship. What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is *ipso facto* nonessential. Anybody who makes account of such a thing is a disturber of the peace of the church. Truth and error are two coordinate powers, and the great secret of church-statesmanship is to preserve the balance between them. From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert *supremacy*. Truth started with *tolerating*; it comes to be merely tolerated, and that only for a time. Error claims a preference for its judgments on all disputed points. It puts men into positions, not as at first in spite of their departure from the Church's faith, but in consequence of it. Their recommendation is that they repudiate that faith, and position is given them to teach others to repudiate it, and to make them skilful in combating it. (p. 195-196)

Given that this is true, what are the implications for us as individuals and as a congregation? If error has now reached its 'third stage' in our synod, what are the implications for us? God's Word is very clear when it comes to the importance of making the right confession of the faith:

1 Tim. 4:16: Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

1 Tim. 6:3-5: If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings; perverse disputings of men of

corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

2 Tim. 1:13: Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

St. Paul says that the teaching of, or indifference to, false doctrine is a mark of those falling away from the faith: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

The response which Christians are to have toward those who teach false doctrine is equally clear. As we just cited, St. Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 6, “from such withdraw thyself.” The reason for such withdrawal is that such people “teach otherwise” and a false teacher “does not consent to wholesome words.” (v. 3) In other words, their confession is a different confession; their preaching does not match the biblical message.

In 2 Corinthians 6, St. Paul instructs his readers: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (v. 14) Such fellowship is impossible, because two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. (Amos 4) In verse 17, St. Paul cites Isaiah 52 as follows: “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” The Christian is to be “separate” from those who do not hold the true faith. And St. John reiterates this, declaring in his second Epistle: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (v. 9–11) The Christian is not even to bid “God speed” to the false teacher, nor let such a person into his house—the implications for Church fellowship are, therefore, obvious. Certainly the faithful Christian does not lend his support to those who teach a different doctrine; nor does he associate his name with those of the false teachers.

We know that the faithful fathers of the early church taught the same biblical doctrine of separation from error. Irenaeus wrote in the second century: “The apostles as well as their disciples exercised such great caution not even to converse with any of those who deceitfully tried to pervert the truth by their own fabrications” (cited in *Church and Ministry*, p. 135). Cyprian wrote in the third century, “We must remain separate from the heretics as far as they themselves have separated themselves from the church” (ibid). St. Ambrose wrote in the fourth century: “When a church spurns the faith and does not possess the foundation of the apostolic preaching, we must desert it in order that we may not besmirch ourselves with the stain of perfidy. That is what the apostle clearly demands when he says: ‘Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition’ [Titus 3:10].” (ibid.)

As a faithful student of Holy Scripture, Martin Luther rightly understood the danger which is posed to Christians when they follow false teachers. “We are not free from blame if we have a wrong faith and follow false teachers. The fact that we did not know will be of no help to us, for we were warned beforehand. Besides, God told us to judge what this or that person teaches and to give an account. If we fail to do this, we are lost. Therefore the soul’s salvation of each person depends on his knowing what is God’s Word and what is false teaching.” (*What Luther Says*, p. 636, #1955) Luther also observes: “If one associates much with heretics, one finally also makes oneself partaker of their false doctrine, their lies, and their errors; for he who touches pitch soils his hands with it.” (*What Luther Says*, p. 646)

Basing its teaching on the Holy Scriptures, our Lutheran Confessions declare: “churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, *provided they otherwise are in unity with one another in doctrine and all its articles, and also in the right use of the holy Sacraments*” (FC SD X:31). In the context of discussing Roman Catholic errors, the Confessions observe:

This being the case, all Christians ought to beware of becoming partakers of the godless doctrine, blasphemies and unjust cruelties of the Pope. On this account they ought to desert and execrate the Pope with his adherents, as the kingdom of Antichrist; just as Christ has commanded (Matt. 7:15): “Beware of false prophets.” And Paul commands that godless teachers should be avoided and execrated as cursed (Gal. 1:8; Tit. 3:10). And (2 Cor. 6:14) says:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what communion hath light with darkness?” (Treatise, §41)

The Confessions also clearly enunciate the impossibility of surrendering or equivocating on even a single article of the faith: “These are the articles on which I must stand; and if God so will I shall stand even to my death. And I do not know how to change or to concede anything in them. If any one else will concede anything, he will do it at the expense of his conscience.” (SA III/XV.3)

The Missouri Synod began because our theological forefathers left Germany in order to be able to faithfully hold to the Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Approximately 700 Christians left everything which they had known in Germany to settle on the American frontier. Inscribed in some of our synod’s earliest doctrinal statements is the insistence that Christians must have fellowship *only* with other orthodox Christians. In 1852, the synod adopted the theses of C. F. W. Walther’s *Kirche und Amt* (*Church and Office*). One of the most important of these theses is Thesis VIII:

Although God gathers for Himself a holy church of elect also where His Word is not taught in its perfect purity and the sacraments are not administered altogether according to the institution of Christ Jesus, if only God’s Word and the sacraments are not denied entirely but both remain in their essential parts, nevertheless, every believer must, at the peril of losing his salvation, flee all false teachers, avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox pastors wherever such may be found. (p. 20–21)

The central thrust is repeated in sub-article B: “Every believer for the sake of his salvation must flee all false teachers and avoid all heterodox congregations or sects.” (p. 21) Here there is no room for compromise because the soul of the Christian is at stake. As Walther elaborated:

Whoever has learned to know the false doctrine of the sects and their teachers and despite this fact continues to belong to them is indeed still in the church but not of the church. Such a person does not belong to the divine seed that is hidden in the sects. His communion with the sects is not a sin of weakness, with which the state

of grace can exist, for such a person acts willfully and contrary to the will of God, who in his holy Word commands us to flee and avoid false teachers and their false worship. (p. 114)

Walther did not hesitate to apply this principles to the Missouri Synod. In 1879, Walther declared in a convention essay:

Pastors must direct people to Christ and say, “You see, we proclaim the pure Word of God, which contains the eternal Gospel. *That is why* you should cling to us, and that is why we maintain that the moment we no longer do that, you should leave us! For salvation is not in any way dependent on us, nor on the Missouri Synod. So, if it does not proclaim the pure Word of God, it is worthless, and you should leave it.” (*Essays for the Church*, vol. II, p. 61)

This is something the Missouri Synod needs to remember! It should prefer to go out of business (*untergehen*) rather than to let the church suffer harm by its continued existence. Those who want to see the Synod continue under all circumstances, regardless of whether that would harm the kingdom of Christ, are not being led by the Spirit of Christ but by the spirit of selfishness, and instead of being a building stone in the kingdom of Christ, they are a hindrance to God. (*ibid.*, p. 62)

For many years, the synod faithfully upheld this biblical understanding of the necessity for total agreement in all articles of the faith in order for there to be fellowship. The *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (hereafter *Brief Statement*), adopted by the synod in 1932, says the following regarding Church fellowship:

28. *On Church-Fellowship.* — Since God ordained that His Word *only*, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:31, 32; 1 Tim. 6:3, 4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17. We repudiate *unionism*, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divi-

sions 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.

The *Brief Statement* goes on to explain that “The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name, nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is *actually* taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications.” (§29)

Our congregation accepts and upholds this teaching. Our constitution’s statement of purpose declares that the only reason this congregation exists is “for the express purpose of disseminating the Gospel truth according to the Confessional Standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Book of Concord of the year 1580 A.D.” (Article II) Article III builds on this understanding, stating our unconditional adherence to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and saying, “No doctrine or practice shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with the Holy Scriptures and these Symbolical Books,” and “All controversies which may arise in the congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.” Finally, Article IV declares:

This congregation with its pastor shall be a member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod so long as said synod shall be completely true and faithful to the Confessional Standard set forth in Article III and shall honor and respect the God-given responsibilities bestowed upon the congregation and its pastor. The pastor bears particular responsibility for informing the congregation of the doctrinal integrity of the synod.

As your pastor, I deliver this report to you in fulfillment of this responsibility under Article IV: under Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the constitution of our congregation, I must inform you of the doctrinal situation within the LC—MS. I ask you to consider the matters you have read and that you assess whether the synod is “*completely true and faithful* to the Confessional Standard.”

In what is sometimes called his “farewell address,” Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River an in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the

LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:14–15) The Triune God requires faithfulness in His people in every generation. May the unchanging God who has redeemed us with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, grant us a strengthening of our faith, that we will not be ashamed to make such a confession in our age. Amen.

