The Rise and Fall of the Synodical Conference

Introduction to the course

The course contents

I. The Formation –
II. The Election Controversy –
III. The Years of Stress –
IV. The Bitter Road to Division –

What we will try to learn

1. How doctrine led to unity
2. The election controversy
3. Doctrinal details matter
4. Practice versus doctrine
5. How doctrinal laxity led to disunity

How to prepare for each session

1. Read the assigned materials.
2. Answer the questions for each topic.
3. Consider the issues that are being raised by the readings.

I. The Formation

A. 1 Kings 12:26-33; Daniel 3; "Prussian Union of Churches" until **after 1918** heading in Wikipedia; *Christian, Lutheran, Confessional*, 127-136
What was the Prussian Union?

B. Who were the "Old Lutherans"?

C. "Saxon Lutheran immigration of 1838-39" in Wikipedia
What triggered the Saxon migration?

D. "Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" until **Synodical Conference** heading in Wikipedia
Why was Pastor Martin Stephan relieved of his leadership role?

E. "The Election Controversy," 45-65
In what way did the early history of the Wisconsin Synod differ from that of the Missouri Synod?

F. Why was Lutheranism in America so fragmented?

G. What were the General Synod and the General Council?

H. Who were the major players in establishing the Synodical Conference?

II. The Election Controversy

A. A Lutheran Catechism on Predestination; *Simply Lutheran*, pp. 185-193; *Predestination* in the People's Bible Teachings series
Why do universal justification and election seem to be in conflict?

B. What is synergism?

C. "The Election Controversy," 65-108; Read and understand Appendix I
What does *intuitu fidei* mean?

D. What did C. F. W. Walther's position on election center on?

E. What is the importance of Friedrich Schmidt?

F. Read and understand Appendix II
Why was the work of Georg Stöckhardt important?

G. Read and understand Appendix III
How did the Missouri Synod's actions force the Ohio Synod out of the Synodical Conference?

H. How did other Synodical Conference members react to the 13 theses?

III. The Years of Stress

A. "The Election Controversy," 114-135
How does a free conference work?

B. What was the outcome of these free conferences?

C. "The Election Controversy," 141-156; *Christian, Lutheran, Confessional*, 137-139
What caused the fragmentation of the Norwegian Synod?

D. Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Wikipedia
What led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod?

E. "The Election Controversy," 191-198
What sparked the Inter-Synodical Movement?

F. "The Election Controversy," 198-217
What was the inherent problem with the work of the Inter-Synodical Committee in Chicago?

G. "The Election Controversy," 186-191
How did merger mania affect the Synodical Conference?

IV. The Bitter Road to Division

A. "LCMS and WWI" paper
What were the major effects of World War I on Lutheranism in America?

B. "Military Chaplaincy" paper
What were the issues that caused stress in the Synodical Conference over the chaplaincy program?

C. "The Election Controversy," 231-270; *Christian, Lutheran, Confessional*, 143-145
Why did the *American Lutheran* so trouble the Missouri Synod?

D. Why did the issue of fellowship with the ALC so mesmerize the Missouri Synod?

E. Why was the joint prayer issue so important to the members of the Synodical Conference?

F. How did differences in the doctrine of church and ministry play into the growing problem?

G. How did the *Common Confession* catalyze the synodical breakup?

Appendix I - Differences between Iowa and Missouri

The teaching of the Iowa theologians can be summarized as follows:

1. Prevenient grace gives human beings a free will which can assent to the prodding of grace in conversion. This assent is a refraining from resisting the working of grace.
2. It can therefore be said that salvation depends on a person's own personal decision.
3. This assent or decision is not a meritorious cause of salvation but an explanatory reason.
4. Election in the strict sense is in view of foreseen faith which is a condition of election but not a meritorious cause. Rather it is an instrumental cause.
5. Election in the wider sense—God's eternal plan to save all who believe in Jesus—is the cause of faith.
6. The different destinies of two people who hear the gospel is not to be found in the hidden will of God but in the different attitudes of the two people. This difference in the two attitudes is the enigma that cannot be explained.
7. Iowa accused Missouri of teaching absolute predestination and irresistible grace.

Missouri's teaching during this portion of the controversy can be summarized this way:

1. Conversion is instantaneous—there is no middle ground. A person is either a believer or an unbeliever. The ability to cooperate and a free will come only after conversion.
2. Election is a free act of God's grace without any consideration of human willingness, merit or worthiness. Election does not take place *intuitu fidei*.
3. Election is the cause that procures, works, and guarantees salvation.
4. Those who are not elect will remain lost not because God has predestined them to damnation but because of their own sin and unbelief.
5. Election *intuitu fidei* imposes a human condition on God and makes faith a cause of election which undermines salvation by grace alone.
6. The reason why some are chosen and not others is a mystery of God's hidden will.
7. Missouri accused Iowa of synergism.

Appendix II – Missouri's 13 Theses on Election

1. We believe, teach, and confess, that God loved the whole world from eternity, created all men unto salvation, none unto damnation, and that He earnestly wills the salvation of all men; and we therefore reject and condemn with all our heart the contrary Calvinistic doctrine.
2. We believe, teach and confess, that the Son of God came into the world for all men, that he bore and expiated the sins of all men, and that He fully redeemed all men, none excepted; we therefore reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine with all our heart.
3. We believe, teach, and confess, that God calls through the means of grace all men earnestly, that is, with the purpose that they should, through these means, be brought to repentance and faith, also be preserved therein unto their end, and thus be finally led to blessedness, conformable to which purpose God offers them through the means of grace the salvation wrought by Christ's atonement and the power to embrace this salvation by faith; and we therefore reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine with all our heart.
4. We believe, teach, and confess, that no one perishes because God was not willing that he be saved, passed by him with His grace, and because He had not also offered him the grace of perseverance and was not willing to bestow the same upon him. But all men perish because of their own fault, because of their unbelief, and because they contumaciously resisted the Word and grace unto their end. The cause of this contempt of the Word is not God's foreknowledge (*vel praescientia vel praedestinatio*), but man's perverted will which rejects or perverts the means and the instrument of the Holy Spirit, which God offers unto it through the call, and it resists the Holy Spirit who would be efficacious and operate through the Word, as Christ says: Matt. 23:37, How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not. (Form. of Concord p. 718 par. 41.) Therefore we reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine with all our heart.
5. We believe, teach, and confess, that the elect or predestined persons are the only true believers, who truly believe unto their end or yet at the end of their life; we reject therefore and condemn the error of Huber, that election is not particular, but universal and pertains to all men.
6. We believe, teach, and confess, that the divine decree of election is unchangeable and that therefore no elect person can become reprobate and perish, but that every one of the elect will surely be saved; and we therefore reject and condemn the contrary Huberian error with all our heart.
7. We believe, teach, and confess, that it is foolish and soul-endangering, leads either to carnal security or despair to endeavor to become or be sure of our own election or eternal happiness by means of searching out the eternal secret decree of God; and we reject and condemn the contrary doctrine as an injurious fanatic notion with all our heart.
8. We believe, teach, and confess, that a true believer ought to endeavor to become sure of his election from God's revealed will; and we therefore reject and condemn the opposite Papistical error that one may become or be sure of his election and salvation only by means of a new immediate revelation.

9. We believe, teach, and confess: (1) That election does not consist in the mere fact that God foresaw which men will secure salvation; (2) That election is also not the mere purpose of God to redeem and save men, which would make it universal and extend in general to all men; (3) That election does not embrace those 'which believe for a while' (Luke 8:13). (4) That election is not a mere decree of God to lead to bliss all those who would believe unto their end; we therefore reject and condemn the opposite errors of Rationalists, Huberians, and Arminians with all our heart.

10. We believe, teach, and confess, that the cause which moved God to elect, is alone his grace and the merit of Jesus Christ, and not anything good foreseen by God in the elect, not even faith foreseen in them by God; and we therefore reject and condemn the opposite doctrines of the Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians and Synergists as blasphemous, dreadful errors which subvert the Gospel and therewith the whole Christian religion.

11. We believe, teach, and confess, that election is not the mere divine foresight or prescience of the salvation of the elect, but also a cause of their salvation and of whatever pertains to it; and we therefore reject and condemn the opposite doctrines of the Arminians, Socinians, and of all Synergists with all out heart.

12. We believe, teach, and confess, that God has also concealed and kept secret many things concerning the mystery of election and reserved them for His wisdom and knowledge alone, into which no human being is able and ought to search; and we therefore reject every attempt to inquire curiously also into these things which have not been revealed, and to harmonize with our reason those things which seem contradictory to our reason, may such attempts be made by Calvinistic or Pelagianistic or Synergistic doctrines of men.

13. We believe teach and confess, that it is not only not useless, much less injurious, but necessary and salutary that the mysterious doctrine of election, in so far as it is clearly revealed in God's Word, be presented also publicly to Christian people, and we therefore do not agree with those who hold that entire silence should be kept thereon, or that its discussion should only be indulged in by learned theologians.

Appendix III – Ohio's 4 Theses on Election

1. If by election we understand, as is done in the Formula of Concord, the entire "purpose, counsel, will, and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, vocation, justification, and salvation," we believe, teach, and confess that election is the cause of our salvation and everything that in any way pertains to it, therefore also our redemption and vocation, of our faith and perseverance in faith. Thus understood, election precedes faith as the cause precedes its effect.
2. But if by election, as the dogmaticians generally do, we understand merely this, that from eternity God elected and infallibly ordained to salvation certain individuals in preference to others, and this according to the universal way of salvation, we believe, teach, and confess that election took place in view of Christ's merit apprehended by faith, or more briefly stated but with the same sense, in view of faith. According to this understanding faith precedes election in the mind of God, as the rule, according to which one selects, precedes the election itself, and thus election properly speaking, is not the cause of faith.
3. The mystery in election consists not in this, that we do not with certainty know from the Word of God according to what rule God proceeded in the selection of persons, but in this: (a) That no one except God knows who belongs to the elect; (b) That we creatures are unable to fathom and comprehend the wonderful guidance and dispensation of the grace of God towards individuals as well as whole nations.
4. The certainty of the individual that he belongs to the elect is, before his hour of death, conditional or regulated [*geordnete*] certainly, that is, bound to a certain condition or order; under this condition and in this order, however, it is infallible. The theses assert that the Formula of Concord teaches election in a wide sense of the term including the whole order of salvation. They claim that election in the narrow sense of the term must include foreseen faith as a cause of election so that there is no mystery in a hidden will of God but a mystery in knowing who is to be numbered among the elect.

The Rise and Fall of the Synodical Conference

Lesson I - The Formation

A. The history of state religions

1. The impetus for a state church
   a. Jeroboam established state religious sites to prevent people from going to Jerusalem.
   b. Nebuchadnezzar established an idol for all the people to worship together whenever they heard the appropriate music.
   c. The Roman emperors had themselves declared gods to whom incense was to be burned, and they treated those who failed to burn incense to them as traitors.
   d. The Christian church became the state church of the Roman Empire in AD 394.

2. Roman Catholicism
   a. The pope declared that he had authority over all secular rulers.
   b. Until the Lutheran Reformation, the popes used this "authority" to regularly interfere in the working of secular governments.
   c. The popes expected help from secular rulers to enforce church edicts and decrees.

3. The legacy of the religious wars
   a. The Peace of Augsburg which ended the Smalcaldic War permitted states and free cities in Germany to choose whether they would be Catholic or Lutheran. The ruler or the city council decided which religion all members of that state or city would practice.
   b. The Peace of Westphalia which ended the Thirty Years War permitted states and free cities in Germany to decide whether they would be Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed (Cal-vinistic).
   c. The situation became complicated when the rulers of states that had been Lutheran con-verted to Calvinism or when rulers obtained new territories that had a different religion than in their homeland.
   d. The Hohenzollern, the rulers of Brandenburg and subsequently of Prussia, converted to Calvinism and encouraged Calvinist migration into their nominally Lutheran state.

4. The changing landscape of Germany
   a. Frederick Wilhelm II (Friedrich the Great) used his army to grow Prussia into a major regional power and positioned it for rapidly increasing its size.
   b. Frederick Wilhelm III married a Lutheran and became upset that they could not take Holy Communion together.
   c. The defeat of Napoleon permitted Prussia to grow substantially, and the king saw the need to unite the Lutheran and the Reformed churches into one organization.
   d. He used the 300th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation to begin coercing Lutheran and Reformed churches to merge administratively and to start using one liturgy.

B. The response to the Prussian Union.

1. The power of the king
   a. Absolute monarchy had reasserted itself after the defeat of Napoleon. The king tried to leverage his extended power to force compliance.

b. The complexity of the issue allowed resistance to form to his decree.

2. The strategy of foot-dragging
   a. The Reformed churches generally were willing to accept the new arrangement because the king was one of them, and they believed over time they would subvert Lutheran teachings.
   b. Many Lutherans resisted, but the Lutheran church had been weakened by Pietism and Rationalism, so that some congregations saw no reason not to comply.
   c. After 12 years, the union liturgy was changed to be more accommodating to Lutherans, and most Lutheran congregations finally accepted the union format.
   d. The king began using sterner measures to force compliance.

3. The Old Lutherans
   a. Those who still refused to accept union liturgy were called "Old Lutherans" because they followed the practices of the old Lutheran theologians.
   b. When their churches were taken over by unionists, they met secretly in other places. Their pastors were sometimes jailed for failing the follow the union liturgy.
   c. By 1835, Old Lutheran groups were forced to leave Prussia for more tolerant Lutheran countries or for America and Australia.

C. The Saxon migration

1. The situation in Saxony
   a. Although independent of Prussia, Saxony also tried to merge the Reformed and Lutheran churches. In the land of Luther there was much resistance.
   b. In Dresden Pastor Martin Stephan began preaching a confessional Lutheran message in his church. It attracted people from neighboring congregations and students from the Uni-versity of Leipzig.
   c. A small band of pastors followed Pastor Stephan in his battle against rationalism and church unionism. These men decided that they needed to leave Saxony.

2. The plans to emigrate
   a. An emigration society was formed after the government began harassing Stephan for his teachings.
   b. A total of 707 people signed up to leave with Stephan, and a common treasury was created.
   c. The pastors and laypeople sailed from Bremen in five chartered ships in 1838. One ship and about 105 people were lost in the passage.

3. The new land
   a. The ships first landed in New Orleans in January 1839.
   b. The people then traveled by riverboat up the Mississippi to St. Louis.
   c. Within six weeks about 80% of these immigrants moved south 100 miles to Perry County where they found favorable land.

D. Formation of the Missouri Synod

1. Trouble in Perry County
   a. Stephan had been elected bishop, but he soon tried to become a dictator in all aspects of the lives of the settlers.
   b. The settlers were mostly students and professional men, ill-prepared for farming and the harsh life on the frontier.

c. Finally, Stephan's dictatorial behavior and apparent involvement in sexual misconduct caused the settlers to expel him and sent him across the Mississippi into Illinois.

2. New leadership

   a. The settlers built a one-room, log-cabin seminary, and Pastor C. F. W. Walther became the leading teacher.
   b. After expelling Stephan, he assumed leadership of the community as well as becoming president of the seminary.

3. The Löhe effect
   a. Wilhelm Löhe, a parish pastor in Bavaria, became interested in the plight of the Lutherans in American and began raising funds for them.
   b. He also began training pastors and eventually sent 80 pastors to America. Many settled in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.
   c. Löhe also helped with the founding of Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Fort Wayne.

4. The organization of the Missouri Synod
   a. Meetings between the Lutherans in Missouri and those in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana from 1844 to 1846 led to the desire to form an orthodox Lutheran church body.
   b. The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, eventually shortened to the Missouri Synod, was formed in Chicago by 12 pastors and 14 congre-gations in 1847. Walther was elected its first president.
   c. Soon afterward a split with Löhe's followers occurred over the doctrine of the church and ministry.

E. The Founding of the Wisconsin Synod

1. The roots
   a. In 1828 the United Rhine Mission Society was formed in Germany.
   b. In 1837 the society sent John Mühlhäuser as a missionary to North America.
   c. In 1848 Mühlhäuser moved from New York to the growing German community in Wisconsin.

2. The organization of the Wisconsin Synod
   a. Mühlhäuser began his work in Wisconsin in coordination with the pastors of other Protestant churches.
   b. He then began working with other pastors who indicated that they wanted to be Lutheran, although they had been trained by unionistic missionary societies.
   c. A small group of pastors met in 1850 in Granville Wisconsin and formed the First Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin. Mühlhäuser was elected president.
   d. The synod grew to 17 pastors and 3 teachers by 1858, but it was troubled by whether its pastors were firmly committed to Lutheranism.

3. The change in the nature of the synod
   a. In 1860 Pastor Johann Bading was elected president of the synod.
   b. Bading pushed all congregations to abandon the use of the union catechism.
   c. In 1865 a seminary was established in Watertown to reduce the synod's dependence on unionistic German mission societies.

d. Pastor Adolf Hoenecke became the professor of theology and led the effort toward sound Lutheranism.

4. Alliances changed.
   a. In 1868 the Wisconsin Synod severed its ties with the German mission societies. It would henceforth have to train its own pastors and raise its own funds.
   b. Relations with the Minnesota Synod were improving as it also tried to find its way to confessionally sound Lutheranism.
   c. The purge of those practicing unionism had changed the negative opinion of the Wisconsin Synod held by the leaders of the Missouri Synod.

F. The Nature of Early American Lutheranism

1. Geographical differences
   a. German Lutherans were the largest group, but they came from many different German states.
   b. Scandinavian Lutherans came from countries that often shared monarchs and that were out of the mainstream of Europe.
   c. A minority of Lutherans came from the Baltic states and countries where Lutheranism was not a state religion (e.g., Hungary, the Netherlands).

2. Theological differences
   a. Many German Lutherans had been united by the Book of Concord.
   b. Some German Lutherans had been deeply affected by Pietism and/or Rationalism.
   c. Some German Lutherans were committed to the Prussian Union agenda.
   d. Many Scandinavian Lutherans only accepted Luther's Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession.
   e. Many Scandinavian Lutherans had been deeply affected by Pietism.

3. Organizational differences
   a. Some Lutherans had bishops.
   b. Some Lutherans believed in a democratic synod that controlled member congregations.
   c. Some Lutherans believed in the congregation as the highest authority.

G. Divisions in American Lutheranism

1. The isolation of early Lutherans
   a. Lutherans in the 17th century were few in number in North America.
   b. Pastor Heinrich Mühlenberg traveled the eastern colonies in the 18th century trying to start small Lutheran synods in the various areas where Lutherans were located.
   c. Because of their different roots, doctrinal unity was difficult to achieve.

2. The General Synod
   a. This super-synod was formed by synods from New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina.
   b. There was no doctrinal standard that was enforced, and some churches favored compro-mises with the Reformed.
   c. When the General Synod admitted a synod in 1864 which was indifferent to the Lutheran Confessions, five synods left in protest.

3. The General Council
    a. The protesting synods were joined by others who formed the General Council in Fort Wayne in 1867.
    b. Although more confessional than the General Synod, it tolerated differences on the Millen-nium, pulpit and altar fellowship, and lodge membership, despite adopting the Akron-Galesburg Rule.

4. Growing dissatisfaction with the General Synod and General Council.
    a. The Iowa and Ohio synods asked questions about the doctrinal positions of the General Council and its willingness to enforce doctrinal positions.
    b. When these questions were not satisfactorily answered, Midwestern synods began with-drawing from the General Council.

H. The Founding of the Synodical Conference

1. Increasing doctrinal discussion
    a. The Missouri Synod began having doctrinal discussions with the Norwegian Synod in 1857 about establishing fellowship.
    b. Due to their negative experience with the General Council, the Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, and Minnesota synods joined the discussions over the next 15 years.

2. The organizational meetings
    a. In 1870 the Ohio Synod contacted the Illinois, Missouri, Norwegian, and Wisconsin synods seeking interested parties for a union of Midwestern confessional synods.
    b. Meetings in Chicago and Fort Wayne in 1871 laid the foundation for the creation of the Synodical Conference.

3. The creation of the Synodical Conference
    a. The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America was organized in Mil-waukee in July of 1872 and consisted of the Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Norwegian, Ohio, and Wisconsin synods.
    b. The member synods agreed to share clergy and educational facilities and to cooperate on evangelism and mission work.
    c. In 1876, the Synodical Conference recommended that all congregations using a particular language (e.g., German or Norwegian) should be organized into state-specific synods.

4. Organizational decisions
    a. How new congregations would be incorporated into the organization was a matter of con-tention because of overlapping areas of work.
    b. In 1878 it was agreed to work toward three larger synod bodies, the Wisconsin Synod in the north central area, the Missouri Synod in the southwest, and the Ohio Synod in the east, but this would only apply to German-speaking churches and not Norwegian-speaking or English-speaking churches.

319 – On My Heart Imprint Your Image

On my heart imprint your image,
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
Have no pow'r to hide your face.
This the superscription be:
Jesus crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation.

The Rise and Fall of the Synodical Conference

Lesson II - The Election Controversy

A. The doctrine of election

1. Universal grace – God wants all to be saved.
   a. "[God] wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4
   b. "As I live, declares the LORD God, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from their way and live." Ezekiel 33:11
   c. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

2. Objective justification – It is accomplished.
   a. "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished!' Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit." John 19:30
   b. "He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again." 2 Corinthians 5:15
   c. "He [Jesus] entered once into the Most Holy Place and obtained eternal redemption, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood." Hebrews 9:12

3. Only those elected will be saved.
   a. "He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of his will." Ephesians 1:4–5
   b. "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14
   c. Jesus said "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is given to him by my Father." John 6:65
   d. "When the Gentiles heard this, they were rejoicing and praising the word of the Lord. All who had been appointed for eternal life believed." Acts 13:48

4. The logical issues
   a. If the almighty God wants all to be saved, how can all not be saved?
   b. If He has elected only some to be saved, how can He want all to be saved?
   c. Are some people merely "extras," who are not part of God's saving plan at all?

B. False doctrines concerning election.

1. Election is a euphemism for God's recognition of good people.
   a. "And they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matthew 25:46
   b. "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matthew 13:43
   c. "You see that a person is shown to be righteous by works and not by faith alone." James 2:24

2. God elects those who choose to accept Christ (decision theology).
   a. Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." Acts 16:31
   b. Jesus said, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28
   c. Jesus said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." Matthew 23:37

3. God elects those who persevere in faith.
   a. "Continue to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Philippians 2:12
   b. "So let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12
   c. "Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him by being firm in the faith." 1 Peter 5:8–9

4. Grace was never universal.
   a. " 'I have loved you,' says the LORD. But you say, 'How have you loved us?' 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the LORD. 'I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau.' " Malachi 1:2–3
   b. The LORD said, "For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague so that you would have been wiped off the earth. However, for this very reason, I caused you to stand: so that I could show you my power, and that my name would be made known over the entire earth." Exodus 9:15–16
   c. "God shows mercy to whom he desires, and he hardens whom he desires." Romans 9:18

C. How the issue of election arose

1. Preliminary skirmishes set the stage.
   a. Wilhelm Löhe disagreed with Walther over the doctrine of the ministry. Efforts to resolve this dispute led to several men leaving the Missouri Synod and forming the Iowa Synod in 1854.
   b. In 1858 a dispute arose between the Missouri and Iowa synods over whether the Millen-nium was acceptable Lutheran teaching. Iowa resolved that it was.
   c. The Iowa Synod adopted a laxer stance on church unity than the Missouri Synod.

2. The sparring on the doctrine of election began.
   a. Some Lutheran theologians in the 17th century used the term *intuitu fidei*. What did they mean by it?
   b. The initial writers for Missouri (William Sihler and Ottomar Fürbringer) in the 1850's said that it meant election in view of foreseen faith.
   c. In 1863 Walther wrote an article declaring that foreseen faith cannot be a cause of election because that is a Semi-Pelagian teaching.

3. Election and conversion
   a. In 1868 Johann Hügli presented a paper to the Northern District of the Missouri Synod that echoed Walther's position and helped to solidify Missouri's teaching.
   b. Pastors in the Iowa Synod accused Walther of slavishly following Luther concerning the bondage of the human will.
   c. Iowa argued that prevenient (i.e., anticipatory) grace gives humans a free will which can enable a person to make a decision for Christ. Response to prevenient grace is therefore the basis of election.

4. Missouri opposed the introduction of a human element in conversion.
    a. Conversion is instantaneous, without human contribution.
    b. Election is a free act of God's grace (i.e., through grace alone).
    c. People are lost, not through predestination, but because of their own sin.

D. Walther worked to create a clear definition of election.

1. Walther's essay series
    a. Walther's essays to the Western District of the Missouri Synod were intended to clearly state Lutheran teachings in a manner that set them apart from false teachers.
    b. Walther discussed election as part of the series in 1877, five years after the Synodical Conference was formed.
    c. He pointed out that the word used for "foreknew" in Romans 8:28-30 means "previously chosen."

2. Walther's five theses on election
    a. Thesis I states that salvation is certain since it has been in God's hand from eternity.
    b. Thesis II states the gracious will of God is the cause of our saving faith.
    c. Thesis III states it is false to claim that man in any way influenced God's election.
    d. Thesis IV states that God does not preassign anyone to hell, but they are condemned to go there solely because they have not repented of their sins and believed on Jesus.
    e. Thesis V states that God is not obligated to reveal to us the details of how He carries out His work of election and conversion.

3. Walther's essay was favorably received by the Synodical Conference convention in 1878.

E. The initial reaction to Walther

1. Pastor Friedrich Schmidt
    a. Schmidt had been a student and colleague of Walther at the St. Louis Seminary.
    b. Schmidt learned Norwegian and became a professor in the Norwegian Synod.
    c. Schmidt at first defended Walther when Norwegian Synod professor Ole Asperhim attacked his position on election in 1878.
    d. Schmidt changed sides on the issue in 1879 after not receiving a call to Concordia Seminary the previous year.

2. Walther responded in his 1879 essay to the Western District of the Missouri Synod.
    a. The intent of Scripture is to lead to comfort and security, not troubling doubts.
    b. The doctrine of election is a doctrine of comfort.
    c. We must not probe the secret divine foreknowledge but must heed the revealed will of God.
    d. We should not use election to temper our reliance on the universal and objective justify-cation as the cause of our salvation.
    e. The Christian life should serve as a seal that a person is one of the elect.

F. Schmidt's crusade against Walther and the response

1. Schmidt founded the journal *Altes und Neues* in 1880.
    a. Schmidt used the journal to attack Walther for rejecting *intuitu fidei* (predestination in view of faith) for "predestination as the cause of faith."

b. He argued the "analogy of faith" required accepting *intuitu fidei*, an argument which opened a can of worms.
c. He claimed that Walther's position was equivalent to Calvin's irresistible grace.

2. Professor Georg Stöckhardt
   a. Stöckhardt was an exegete on the Concordia St. Louis faculty.
   b. He published an article supporting Walther which drew on the scriptural passages which specifically spoke about election and on the Formula of Concord.
   c. He pointed out that Schmidt's position was "read into" the critical verses, not "read from" them. The analogy of faith cannot be used to attempt to harmonize different doctrines of Scripture.

3. Formalizing Walther's teachings
   a. President Schwan of the Missouri Synod called a pastoral conference in Chicago in 1880 to seek unity on the election doctrine. More than 500 pastors attended.
   b. The conference discussed and adopted 13 resolutions that expressed the doctrine of election to the extent that it is laid out in the Scriptures and condemned Calvinistic ideas and any role of man in the conversion process.
   c. The 13 theses were subsequently adopted by the Missouri Synod in convention and also by the whole Synodical Conference in 1882.

G. The Ohio Synod leaves the Synodical Conference.

1. The meeting of synod presidents and professors.
   a. The meeting was ill-structured because the president of the Synodical Conference had recently died.
   b. The issue that was central to the debate was the meaning of "foreknew" in Romans 8:29.
   c. After an impasse was reached, the notes were destroyed, but the possibility of future meet-ings was derailed by Schmidt's refusal to be silent on the matter.

2. Matthias Loy entered the fray.
   a. Loy was president and the leading theologian of the Ohio Synod at the time of the con-troversy.
   b. He began publishing the *Columbus Theological Magazine* in1881 and immediately took up the election issue.
   c. Loy argued that some of Walther's statements could be understood to mean the double predestination taught by John Calvin.

3. The Missouri Synod raised the ante.
   a. The Missouri Synod officially adopted the 13 theses in 1881.
   b. It instructed its delegates to the Synodical Conference not to negotiate with any synod that had publicly called Missouri Calvinistic.
   c. This threatened the seating of the Ohio delegation at the next Synodical Conference meeting.

4. The Ohio Synod called their own special convention in 1881.
   a. They adopted four resolutions which declared that there was a wide and narrow sense in which election was to be understood. While the confessions spoke of the wide sense, the narrow sense must also be accepted, which involves *intuitu fidei*.

b. The Ohio Synod then resolved to withdraw from the Synodical Conference.
c. Nine Missouri Synod pastors and several teachers withdrew and joined the Ohio Synod.

H. Reaction of other Synodical Conference members

1. The Wisconsin Synod
   a. Wisconsin Synod's Adolf Hoenecke, a university-trained theologian, rejected the idea that man played any role in conversion.
   b. Hoenecke helped alleviate the concerns of some Wisconsin pastors that Walther had gone too far by getting Walther to restate his position more clearly and by explaining the dangers of going beyond Scripture in trying to understand God's actions.
   c. Several regional pastoral conferences considered the doctrine of election.
   d. In a joint meeting in 1882, the Wisconsin and Minnesota synods accepted Walther's teachings on election. This caused a few pastors and congregations to leave these two synods, but the vast majority agreed with the decision.

2. The Synodical Conference
   a. Schmidt continued his attacks on the Missouri Synod and began attacking the Wisconsin Synod.
   b. Formal complaints about Schmidt's behavior were made to the Norwegian Synod, but it did not act on these before the 1882 Synodical Conference convention to which Schmidt was a delegate. The Conference barred Schmidt's seating.
   c. It then passed the 13 theses unanimously, except for the vote of one Norwegian Synod pastor.

3. The Norwegian Synod
   a. Faced with internal struggles, the Norwegian Synod withdrew from the Synodical Con-ference in 1883.
   b. It retained fellowship with the rest of the members of the Synodical Conference and intended to rejoin when it got its house in order.

4. The unresolved peace
   a. The issues in the Norwegian Synod will be further considered in the next lesson.
   b. The verbal battles over election subsided because within the Synodical Conference there was complete agreement on the doctrine of election, and those outside saw no point in continuing the controversy.
   c. The Iowa and Ohio synods, which had developed similar positions on election, began irregular discussions on a closer working relationship but were more than 40 years away from formally acting on the relationship.

384 – By Grace I'm Saved

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless,
My soul, believe and doubt it not.
Why waver at this word of promise?
Has Scripture ever falsehood taught?
So then this word must true remain:
By grace you, too, shall heav'n obtain.

By grace, God's Son, our only Savior,
Came down to earth to bear our sin.
Was it because of your own merit
That Jesus died your soul to win?
No, it was grace, and grace alone,
That brought him from his heav'nly throne.

By grace! On this I'll rest when dying;
In Jesus' promise I rejoice.
For though I know my heart's condition,
I also know my Savior's voice.
My heart is glad; all grief has flown
Since I am saved by grace alone.

The Rise and Fall of the Synodical Conference

Lesson III - The Years of Stress

A. What is a "free conference"?

1. The matter of fellowship
   a. When churches do not have a formal fellowship arrangement, their leaders cannot sit as brothers to discuss theology.
   b. When there are some apparent theological differences, they cannot meet to hold talks about establishing fellowship.
   c. These two conditions effectively prevent churches from formally discussing divisive teachings.

2. The free conference
   a. A free conference is a gathering of members of various church bodies to discuss doctrinal matters without actually representing the church bodies of which they are members.
   b. There are no worship services or other religious activities conducted as part of the meetings at a free conference.
   c. Various speakers are invited to present formal papers on the topic for which the free conference was called.

3. Importance of free conferences
   a. Free discussion of papers helps remove misunderstandings that can result from reading a written paper for which there is no chance for discussion.
   b. A free conference helps the participants put the doctrine that is the subject of the free conference into clearer focus.
   c. Papers presented often become the framework of the doctrinal positions that church bodies then adopt.

B. Outcome of Free Conferences on Election

1. The presentation of the Missouri Synod position
   a. Dr. Franz Pieper was the main speaker on the topics of election and conversion at the free conference held at Northwestern College in 1903.
   b. Members of 12 synods were in attendance.
   c. Pieper tried to smooth the rough edges of Walther's position.

2. The issue of the analogy of faith raised by the Ohio Synod.
   a. The analogy of faith is the teaching that every doctrine of Scripture must be considered in terms of whole Scripture.
   b. Based on the analogy of faith, all doctrines in the Bible must be reconcilable with each other because God has given man the ability to gain such an understanding.
   c. Opponents argued that each doctrine must independently be based on *sedes doctrinae*, that is, verses that clearly state that doctrine. Other verses which reference that doctrine must be understood in the light of the *sedes doctrinae*.
   d. Human reason should not be expected to be capable of reconciling all the teachings revealed by God's revelation. God only expects people to believe the teachings that are revealed, not reconcile them to meet human logic.

3. The nature of conversion

    a. The members of the Ohio and Iowa synods argued that conversion was a process. There was first the prevenient grace that resulted from objective justification and the preaching of God's Word. (Step 1)
    b. People who heard the Word were thereby given the free will to choose to believe in Christ as their Savior or to reject Him. (Step 2)
    c. Members of the Synodical Conference argued that because people were dead in sin, conversion by the Holy Spirit had to be instantaneous, creating a new man in the heart that believed the saving message.
    d. People could reject the message once they had believed it, but they could never on their own believe it because sinful man cannot have free will.

4. Six conferences produced no agreement on the three main issues.
    a. Predestination in view of faith (*intuitu fidei*) or predestination into faith.
    b. The analogy of faith or *sedes doctrinae*.
    c. Two-step conversion or instantaneous conversion.

C. The Fragmentation of the Norwegian Synod

1. The Schmidt effect
    a. Pastor and Professor Friedrich Schmidt had attacked the position of C. F. W. Walther on election in 1880, but most members of the Norwegian Synod ignored him.
    b. Schmidt resorted to aggressive methods in his pursuit of followers for his cause.
    c. The battle became physical in a confrontation at Norway Grove in 1883 in which pastors were roughed up by opponents of their position.

2. Seeking peace
    a. A Peace Committee at the synod convention in 1884 failed to resolve the issue.
    b. Pastor Koren presented a paper to a pastoral conference later in 1884 which defended the majority of the Norwegian Synod against two charges by Schmidt.

3. Formation of the "anti-Missouri" group.
    a. Schmidt's followers formed the "anti-Missouri" group in 1885 and demanded the resignation of the synod leadership and the seminary faculty.
    b. In 1886 the anti-Missouri group established its own seminary at St. Olaf College.
    c. After the Norwegian Synod condemned the founding of the new seminary in 1887, the dissenters were forced out of the synod.
    d. In 1890 the dissenters joined with the Norwegian-Danish Synod and the Norwegian-Danish Conference to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church.

D. The Evangelical Lutheran Synod

1. Norwegian free conferences
    a. The various Norwegian synods tried to find common ground to move toward church union through numerous free conferences from 1871 to 1888.
    b. After the rupture in the Norwegian Synod, it and the Hauge Synod withdrew from further talks. The remainder formed the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1890.
    c. This resulted in three theologically very differently Norwegian synods.

2. Efforts at reconciliation
    a. Representatives of the Norwegian Synod and the United Church met several times over the next decade, but issues of doctrine and procedure prevented any progress toward unity.
    b. A formal union committee was formed at the request of the Hauge Synod and worked through key doctrinal issues over the first decade of the 20th century, but the Norwegian Synod held its ground on the doctrines under discussion, and the talks failed.

3. Final efforts at unity
    a. The Norwegian regional social organizations desired religious unity.
    b. Members of the different synods worked together to prepare a common Norwegian hymnal (published in 1912).
    c. In 1912 a new union committee produced the Opgjòr, which in effect allowed both doctrines of election to be held within a merged organization.
    d. The members of the Synodical Conference objected to the compromise, but they were not allowed to speak to the Norwegian Synod convention.
    e. The Opgjòr produced tremendous strife within the Norwegian Synod, but it was eventually approved.
    f. In 1917 the three Norwegian synods merged to form the (Norwegian) Evangelical Lutheran Church.
    g. A small group withdrew from the new church to form what is now called the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) and applied for membership in the Synodical Conference.

E. The Inter-Synodical Movement

1. The movement had an unusual start.
    a. It developed out of a meeting of pastors from the Missouri and Minnesota synods in Sibley County, Minnesota (1915).
    b. The meeting was to plan for the 400th anniversary of Luther's posting of the 95 theses.
    c. This led to a wider Lutheran gathering, including the Ohio Synod, at which the doctrine of election was discussed.
    d. Twelve pastors from the three synods signed the three theses that they drafted.

2. The movement grew.
    a. A larger meeting of pastors was held in St. Paul in 1916 to consider the theses.
    b. A hundred pastors from various synods attended, but seminary professors were not allowed to speak.
    c. During several more conferences, theses were refined, approved, and circulated to a wider audience of pastors.
    d. Many pastors of various synods signed these "St. Paul Theses," and two more meetings in 1917 added to the momentum to declare this a resolution to the doctrinal stalemate.

F. The Chicago (Inter-Synodical) Theses

1. A hopeful beginning
    a. The Michigan, Minnesota, and Nebraska synods merged into the Wisconsin Synod.
    b. The Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, and Ohio synods all sent official delegations to the first meeting in Chicago in 1919.
    c. This new Inter-synodical Committee met six times in 2½ years. Ten theses on conversion were approved.

2. The talks expanded
    a. The Buffalo Synod joined the discussion in 1923.
    b. The committee began drafting antitheses and discussing other doctrines that had historically separated the synods.
    c. By 1926 it appeared that doctrinal unity was close to being reached, with theses and antitheses on most doctrines already agreed to.
    d. The Missouri Synod appointed an Examining Committee to review the Chicago Theses. Some wording changes were suggested.

3. Difficulties began to surface.
    a. The issue of church fellowship was yet to be resolved, with the Iowa and Ohio Synods having relations with the national Lutheran Council.
    b. The ELS raised objections when the Iowa and Ohio synods began negotiating a fellowship agreement with the Norwegian Lutheran Church.
    c. When the final report of the Inter-synodical Committee was published in 1928, the two committee members from the Ohio Synod filed a disclaimer with the report concerning the omission of *intuitu fidei*.
    d. Many members of the Missouri Synod objected that the theses were not written tightly enough and that the Ohio and Iowa Synods had declared fellowship with the Norwegian Lutheran Church, despite its having two contradictory doctrines on election.
    e. The Missouri Synod rejected the Chicago Theses in its 1929 convention and instead directed that a Brief Statement of its doctrinal position be drafted (adopted in 1932).
    f. The Wisconsin Synod took no action on the theses.

G. Lutheran Mergers

1. The Wisconsin Synod
    a. The Michigan Synod had split over non-substantive issues, and it was necessary to reunite the parts.
    b. In 1917 the Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska synods, which had been working together within the Synodical Conference, finally decided to merge to gain efficiency.
    c. There was some sentiment for merging the Wisconsin and Missouri synods so that churches of the two synods would not be working separately in the same communities. This movement failed to gain traction.
    d. Following defections, additions and mergers, the Synodcial conference consisted of the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, the Evangelical (Norwegian) Lutheran Synod and the Slovak Synod in 1920.

2. The United Lutheran Church
    a. In 1918 the General Synod, the General Council, and the General Synod of the South merged to form the United Lutheran Church in America.
    b. The driving forces were to do joint work and the need to gain size to become a significant player among the Protestant church bodies.
    c. Doctrinal differences between the bodies had not been clarified and were easy to overlook. While the General Council had a stronger confessional standard, it never enforced it. While the southern group was politically more conservative, it was not a major force in that area of the country.

3. The American Lutheran Church
    a. The Iowa Synod differed from the rest of the Midwestern German Lutherans on the nature of their subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. Iowa insisted that for fellowship only the narrowest view of the confessions needed to be held. Those items which were not related to saving faith or not mentioned were open questions (adiaphora).
    b. The Ohio Synod initially held the same position as the Synodical Conference on all subjects except election. Its use of the analogy-of-faith approach, however, gradually undermined its doctrinal positions. Despite this, it merged with the Iowa Synod in 1930 to form the American Lutheran Church.
    c. The rejection of the Chicago Theses was the final straw which led to the merger of the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods into the American Lutheran Church.
    d. Fellowship between the ALC and the Norwegian Lutheran Church was regarded as a hostile move by the Synodical Conference.

419 If God Himself Be For Me

If God himself be for me,
I may a host defy;
For when I pray, before me
My foes, confounded, fly,
If Christ, my head and master,
Befriend me from above,
What foe or what disaster
Can drive me from his love?

I build on this foundation:
That Jesus and his blood
Alone are my salvation,
My true, eternal good.
Without him all that pleases
Is valueless on earth;
The gifts I have from Jesus
Alone have priceless worth.

No sin can now condemn me
Or set my hope aside.
Now hell no more can charm me;
Its fury I deride.
No sentence now reproves me;
No guilt destroys my peace,
For Christ, my Savior, loves me
And shields me with his grace.

The Rise and Fall of the Synodical Conference

Lesson IV – The Bitter Road to Division

A. World War I's effects on Lutheranism

1. Persecution
   a. Many German Lutherans were openly pro-German before the United States entered the war.
   b. Local authorities were suspicious of all people who spoke foreign languages and demand-ed that all foreign-language publications also publish English editions.
   c. Those using German in worship and/or in their businesses were suspected of being disloyal and sometimes arrested.
   d. Anti-German propaganda was often completely false.

2. Disruption of ties
   a. Many Lutherans still had close ties to family and friends in Europe.
   b. Sometimes financial support passed one way or the other across the Atlantic.
   c. The idea of going to Europe to shoot at one's relatives troubled many Lutherans.

3. Change of language
   a. Many Lutheran churches began a hasty transition to English worship.
   b. The language change created hardships for holding daily devotions in families which often consisted of three generations.
   c. Many young people worried that close association with a Lutheran church whose history was heavily German would hamper their prospects in business and society.

B. Military Chaplaincy

1. The old Synodical Conference approach
   a. The military established camps (bases) where soldiers, sailors, and other military personnel are stationed.
   b. The church called pastors from congregations in the vicinity of the bases or called pastors to travel to multiple bases to serve its members there.
   c. The pastors were paid by the church body and cooperated with the military to arrange contact with its members and the use of facilities for worship services.
   d. In contrast, military chaplains are ordained clergymen whom the military commissions as officers and pays to conduct religious services and offer spiritual counseling for all who desire these activities at a base. The military strongly discourages sectarian teachings.

2. The impetus for participation
   a. Until the 1930's, the Missouri Synod was against involvement in the chaplaincy program because it involved providing religious support for non-Synodical Conference servicemen.
   b. By the middle 1930's Missouri districts where numerous servicemen were stationed began advocating participation in the chaplaincy program.
   c. In 1935 the Missouri Synod convention authorized looking into the issue.
   d. In 1938 the Missouri Synod agreed to become part of the permanent military chaplaincy program, while the Wisconsin Synod refused, citing fellowship issues.

3. The fellowship problem
    a. The military has no interest in the doctrines of the church. It merely wants its personnel to be emotionally fit for duty by having their spiritual concerns attended to.
    b. The military sees no need to pay clergymen of all religious sects that its service people might belong to, but it commissions clergymen to serve multiple religious groups that it thinks are similar.
    c. Those paid by the military must do what the military orders them to do.
    d. In time of war, clergymen of various Christian denominations are used interchangeably as the military thinks best for the war effort. What happens in war inevitably becomes the policy that also guides practices in time of peace.
    e. In 1951 the Missouri Synod entered into an agreement with the national Lutheran Con-ference to give communion to each other's members in the military in times of emergency.

C. The struggle for the soul of the Missouri Synod

1. The establishment of the *American Lutheran*
    a. The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau was established in 1914 by Pastor Paul Linde-mann to make the general public aware of the history and teachings of the Lutheran church.
    b. The *American Lutheran* began publication in 1918 with Lindemann as editor. Its stated goal was to provide technical assistance to ministry. In reality, however, the publication pushed ideas from the Reformed churches as good practices for Lutherans.
    c. After the adoption of the Brief Statement, in 1934 Lindemann drafted a plan to sys-tematically begin attacking the Missouri Synod's positions as outmoded and dangerous to true Christianity. He gathered some prominent writers who stated deficiencies in a way that would imply the need for change without actually repudiating the doctrines which he wanted to undermine.

2. The conservative response
    a. Several pastors charged Concordia St. Louis faculty members who had signed the Chicago Theses with error because the theses contained false doctrine. This led to internal strife and ill-will toward those defending the status quo.
    b. Pastor John Behnken defeated incumbent President J.F. Pfotenhauer for the presidency of the Missouri Synod. Behnken did not have the courage to exercise church discipline.
    c. The Missouri Synod responded to a request from the United Lutheran Church to begin doctrinal discussions, but they broke off the discussions after two meetings.

D. The lure of fellowship with other Lutherans

1. The Missouri Synod formed a standing Committee on Lutheran Church Union.
    a. It was formed in response to an American Lutheran Church request, and its purpose was to carry out doctrinal discussions with other Lutheran churches.
    b. Six meetings with the ALC based on the Brief Statement led to a "Declaration of the Representation of the ALC," which broke the doctrines of the Brief Statement into three categories:
        i. Those accepted as is.
        ii. Those accepted after rewording (including several key doctrines).
        iii. Those on which it requested latitude on teaching (antichrist, conversion of the Jews, special resurrection of the martyrs, and the millennium).
    c. This statement was presented to the 1938 Missouri Synod Convention as the basis to approve fellowship between the ALC and the Missouri Synod.

d. The "Declaration" was accepted provided certain conditions were met:
    i. Resolution of remaining doctrine and practice differences.
    ii. The ALC convincing other members of the American Lutheran Conference to accept the Declaration.
    iii. The other members of the Synodical Conference approving the Declaration.
    iv. No acts of fellowship until the conditions for formal fellowship were met.

2. The war within Missouri
    a. The passage of the enabling resolution at the convention in 1938 was maneuvered to suppress opposition and legitimate questions.
    b. The opponents of fellowship launched a publication (*Confessional Lutheran*) which systematically pointed out the fallacies in the ALC Declaration and questioned the motives of those in Missouri who supported it. They demanded repeal of the enabling resolution.
    c. The *American Lutheran* printed a steady stream of articles supporting the immediate declaration of fellowship written by well-known members of the Missouri Synod.
    d. Supporters of the plan to declare fellowship worked to change the focus of the discussion from the deficiencies in the Declaration and nature of the supposed agreement to the loveless attitude of those who opposed it.
    e. The ALC did nothing to bring the members of the American Lutheran Conference into line and became adamant in their refusal to accept any more restrictions on their teachings than had appeared in the Declaration.
    f. In 1950 the Missouri Synod and the ALC presented a *Common Confession* to their conven-tions. Missouri adopted it, but the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS rejected the document. In 1956 the Missouri Synod gave the *Common Confession* a non-functioning status.
    g. The bitter battle ended when the American Lutheran Conference, minus the Augustana Synod, merged into The American Lutheran Church (TALC) in 1960, thereby forcing the restarting of fellowship negotiations with the larger and more heterodox body.

E. Fellowship issues

1. Scouting
    a. In 1917 Dr. Theodore Graebner wrote against the Boy Scouts:
        i. They try to influence moral character without the Law and Gospel.
        ii. Their obligations are in the form of an oath.
        iii. Good deeds foster pharisaic pride.
        iv. Local troops frequently are required to participate in unionistic activities.
    b. In 1944 the Missouri Synod convention approved Boy Scout troops as long as they were contained within local congregations.
    c. In practice, this was soon breached by jamboree gatherings with other scout troops and even allowing membership in area troops where churches did not have the resources to have their own troops.

2. Seeking agreement by making the meaning of words uncertain.
    a. Lutheran standard – Do we understand the Bible the same way?
        i. Word – a word must have a unique meaning in the context used.
        ii. Thesis – a clear statement of belief including everything the Bible says.
        iii. Antithesis – a clear statement of what we reject because the Bible rejects it.
        iv. Result – those who persist in disagreeing will be excluded from the assembly.
    b. American standard – Can we redefine words so the we can agree?
        i. Word – a word need not mean the same thing to all parties.
        ii. Thesis – a thesis should be loose enough so everyone feels comfortable with it.

iii. Antithesis – antitheses are to be avoided as divisive.
iv. Result – gradually everyone will move to the most liberal position allowed.

3. Joint prayer and prayer fellowship
   a. Historically the Synodical Conference had held to the unit principle of fellowship. One was either in fellowship and could practice church fellowship in all matters or one was not in fellowship and could not practice any form of fellowship.
   b. The synods that formed the American Lutheran Church objected to this practice and claimed that it showed a hostile attitude toward those who were genuinely seeking a basis for ending the differences that divided Lutheran synods.
   c. At its 1944 convention the Missouri Synod broke ranks with the other members of the Synodical Conference and made a distinction between joint prayer and prayer fellowship:
      i. Prayer fellowship – part of church fellowship that can be exercised with another group under all conditions.
      ii. Joint prayer – prayer at inter-synodical gatherings where guidance is sought on deliberation and discussion. The Missouri Synod has frequently revised the criteria for joint prayer because it is a slippery slope issue.
   d. The Wisconsin Synod and the ELS protested this change in position.

F. Doctrine of church and ministry

1. The pre-Reformation church
   a. Congregations initially were set up where people responded to the preaching of the Gospel, and they began functioning as a church. Pastors (bishops) were placed over these congre-gations by the apostles and various types of supporting clergy were added as needed.
   b. New preaching stations often remained under the control of the pastor whose congregation started them, even when these became large enough to have their own pastor. The result was the creation of bishoprics.
   c. Over time, the Catholic Church built a hierarchy over the bishops and a well-defined structure under them as well. Ultimately, this way of doing things led to the papacy and bishops who were more political than spiritual leaders.

2. The post-Reformation church
   a. The leaders of the Reformation moved to a congregation-based structure where each con-gregation had its own pastor, and the structure over him was eliminated. He was the only theologically trained person in the congregation and the only one called to ministry; therefore, all ministerial activity in the congregation flowed from his call.
   b. In America as congregations grew, pastors could not educate the congregations' children and still do their other tasks. Men and women were needed to train the children. Did their authority come through the pastor's call, or did they have a divine call of their own?
   c. To guarantee that a congregation could count on the purity of the doctrine taught by its pastor, there needed to some way to certify the training of pastors and their continued adherence to correct doctrine. This required that the synods have the power to act as "a church" to train, discipline and coordinate the activities of pastors.
   d. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professors argued that the Scriptures do not establish either a form of church government nor do they make the office of the parish pastor the only position given divine authority. Synods, schools, and committees can also act as church just as legitimately as a local congregation and pastor.

e. The Missouri Synod rejected this concept, arguing "Lutheran tradition." In effect, each congregation was a dominion which could act as it saw fit without intervention by the synod because everything except the local congregation was of human institution.
f. Dissidents within the Missouri Synod appealed to the rights of the local congregation to ignore the synod and practice their own doctrine of fellowship. President Behnken lost control of the doctrinal situation.

G. The agony of death

1. Discipline in the Missouri Synod
   a. As turmoil within the Missouri Synod continued, Dr. Behnken could not bring himself to discipline those who did not obey the convention resolutions.
   b. After 1947 the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* covered the doctrinal problems in Missouri in depth.
   c. In 1950 President Brenner of the Wisconsin Synod asked the Missouri Synod convention to address six public disciplinary problems. The Missouri Synod politely rejected this request.
   d. The ELS protested the lack of doctrinal stability in the Missouri Synod.

2. The *Common Confession* catalyzed the breakup.
   a. Efforts to discuss the still-in-draft *Common Confession* were contentious at the Synodical Conference convention in 1952.
   b. After the *Common Confession* was completed in 1953, the Wisconsin Synod discussed breaking fellowship with the Missouri Synod as no progress was being made.
   c. In the 1954 meeting of the Synodical Conference, the *Common Confession* and the fellowship issues were discussed in papers. No agreement was reached, but the Missouri Synod was requested not to use the *Common Confession* as the basis of fellowship with the ALC.
   d. Growing concern existed in the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS that neo-orthodoxy was replacing confessional Lutheranism in the policy circles of the Missouri Synod.

3. The final act
   a. In 1955 the ELS broke fellowship with the Missouri Synod.
   b. In 1955 the Synodical Conference formed a Joint Union Committee to do a Scriptural study of all issues in controversy. Although the committee made some progress, the Missouri Synod resisted changing its practice in most areas.
   c. In 1960 congregations that had withdrawn from the Wisconsin Synod because it had failed to break with the Missouri Synod in the previous 4 conventions formed the Church of the Lutheran Confession.
   d. In 1960 the Wisconsin Synod members on the Joint Union Committee concluded that an impasse had been reached.
   e. In 1961 The Wisconsin Synod broke fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The following year both it and the ELS withdrew from the Synodical Conference, and the Slovak Synod eventually merged into the Missouri Synod.
   f. In 1969, the Missouri Synod unionists obtained their goal of fellowship with the TALC, but because of the Seminex controversy and the failure of TALC to meet certain post-fellowship conditions, the fellowship was rescinded within a decade.

536 – Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head

Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's head,
You are her one foundation.
In you she trusts, before you bows,
And waits for your salvation.
Built on the rock secure,
Your Church shall endure
Though all the world decay
And all things pass away.
Oh, hear, oh, hear us, Jesus.

Help us to serve you evermore
With hearts both pure and lowly.
And may your Word, that light divine,
Shine on in splendor holy
That we repentance show,
In faith ever grow.
The pow'r of sin destroy
And evils that annoy.
Oh, make us faithful Christians.