

# The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association  
1320 Hartford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116

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## New Rules for Synodical Conventions

Operating under the Euripidean principle "Leave no stone unturned," the previous President's Task Force for Synodical Structure and Governance convinced the 2010 Synodical Convention to change just about every aspect of the Missouri Synod in some way or another. Among those changes are a significant alteration to the way that the Synod elects its president (Resolution 8-17), as well as seven other revisions to elections, appointments and procedures (Resolutions 4-05, 4-07, 4-09, 8-13, 8-14A, 8-16A and 8-39.). The convention also referred to committee the proposed procedure for caucus election of synodical delegates at district conventions (Resolution 8-05B) which may come back to the 2013 convention for consideration.

**Congregations need to be aware that the pastor and layman they appoint to serve as their delegates to the 2012 district conventions will vote for the President of the Synod in 2013.** This is a significant change from previous conventions and, along with Resolutions 8-13 and 8-39, denies the right of election of three synodical officers by synodical delegates.

**"...the resolutions...reduced some of the powers of synodical delegates and increased some of the powers of the Synodical President."**

Synodical delegates will come to the 2013 convention with a president already elected, a slate of five first vice-presidents already "selected" by him, and the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod already elected by the Synod's Board of Directors in consultation with and with the concurrence of the President of the Synod. These changes reduce the rights and powers of synodical convention delegates.

How will the synodical president be elected in 2013? Resolution 8-17 amended synod bylaws 3.12.2.1, 3.12.2.2 and 3.12.2.3. The initial nomination process in bylaw 3.12.2 remains as before. Each congregation of synod will be eligible to nominate two rostered synod clergy for president and two rostered synod clergy for first vice-president. As previously, congregations receive these ballots in the mail and name their nominees at a regular or special voters' meeting. Ballots must be received by the Synodical Secretary's office no later than five months prior to the opening date of the convention, which would be early February 2013.

After the deadline and an audited tally, the three nominees for president who receive the most number of votes will become the candidates for that office. Brief biographies will then be published in the *Convention Workbook* and on the Synod's website (Bylaw 3.12.2.1).

Four (4) weeks prior to the national convention, that is, early June 2013, the previous year's district delegates will receive ballots with the three nominees' names. Each delegate will vote for one candidate. If no candidate receives a majority, the person with the least votes will drop off the ballot, and another vote will be taken. Two weeks prior to the national convention the president-elect will be notified and his election will be made public.

For the election of the first vice-president, the twenty nominees who receive the most number of votes will become the candidates for office (Bylaw 3.12.2.1). Brief biographies of these men will also be published in the *Convention Workbook* and on the synod's website. After his election, the president will "select" five out of these twenty men for consideration by the convention. Delegates to the convention will then have a slate of five candidates for this, the first of all elections to actually be held at the convention hall (Bylaw 3.12.2.4.)

**This procedure for first vice-president is really only "half-an election" since the president can "weed out" anyone he doesn't like, or who doesn't fit his political posture.** In the past, conventions sometimes chose first-vice presidents who were a bit different in style or posture from the president in order to help moderate the president's style or position. Evidently the President's Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance felt that the occasional (and mostly private) conflicts between president and first vice-president outweighed letting the synodical delegates decide how the presidency would be characterized for the new triennium.

Resolution 8-39, just ratified by more than two-thirds of congregations voting on the changes to the Constitution (Article X.A.4, X.B.1, XI.E and XI.F), changed the election  
...continued...

In this Issue of

**The Lutheran Clarion**

<b>New Rules for Synodical Conventions.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Why Celebrate the Walther Bicentennial?.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Walther...Coming Soon in Video .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Conditions of Membership, Res 8-30B.....</b>	<b>4</b>

of the position that was Vice President-Finance-Treasurer and also the title. That position is now called the "Chief Financial Officer" of the synod and that office holder will report directly to the LCMS Board of Directors (Bylaw 3.4.1 to 3.4.1.4) which will evaluate him and may depose him. The CFO will be appointed by the Directors for three-year terms and may serve an unlimited number of terms. More significantly, the CFO's appointment must have the "concurrence of the President of the Synod." Clearly **Resolutions 8-13 and 8-39 concentrate more power in the president of the synod since he gets to "select" and veto the appointments of two out of the four top officers of the Synod.**

Resolutions 8-14A and 8-16A mandate regional elections of Vice Presidents Two through Five and the LCMS Board of Directors. For some period of time now a synodical bylaw (2007 Bylaw 3.3.5.1) has prevented more than one director from being from the same district. Now the slates for directors and Vice-Presidents Two through Five will be dictated by regions: East/Southeast, Great Lakes, Central, Great Plains and West/Southwest. For the precise borders of these regions, see *Reporter Online* (April 2011), "COP meets with LCC" (<http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=18441>).

The bylaws for regionalization mean that, for the Board of Directors, one layman will be elected from each region, with five others elected at-large (two clergy, two laymen, one commissioned minister), "up to three at-large laypersons appointed by elected members of the Board of Directors..." (Bylaw 3.3.4.1) with such appointees having specific skill sets. Not more than two persons can be from the same region. For Vice Presidents Two through Five, each congregation of the region can nominate two candidates for these Vice-President positions prior to the convention. **This is a new process and congregations need to be aware of their responsibilities here (See Bylaw 3.12.2.5).** A deadline is not stated for this. It is clear: **floor nominations at the convention for any regional election, i.e., Vice Presidents Two through Five and Directors, will be prohibited!**

Resolution 4-09 changed the procedure by which the President appoints convention "Floor Committees". NOW, he must do so "in consultation" with the Council of Presidents and synodical Vice-Presidents, but they do not have veto power over his selections. Evidently the previous members of the Council of Presidents and the Praesidium wanted to have more influence on the selection of these key committees. (See Bylaw 3.1.7.)

Resolution 4-05 changes the order of elections, from the most important offices to the least, so that a candidate who is on multiple ballots will not be denied a higher office if he or she is elected to a lower office first. Resolution 4-07 changes some minor procedures of convention preparation, including the availability of the *Convention Workbook* online and the submission of overtures and nominations by electronic means. This is actually a very helpful resolution as it reduces the number of hours re-

quired by Synodical staff to type up resolutions for the *Convention Workbook* which therefore will be available for study much earlier than in previous years IF congregations use the electronic means of submission.

Overall, the resolutions reviewed here, which were proposed and highly recommended to the 2010 convention by the previous President's Task Force on Synodical and Governance, reduced some of the powers of synodical delegates and increased some of the powers of the Synodical President. Whether "good, bad, or ugly," **they are the bylaws congregations must be aware of now** in order to exercise their rights as members of the Synod.

**The Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland**

Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN

## Why Celebrate the Walther Bicentennial?

One occasionally hears the comment that we should not be concerned with the past but, instead, should concentrate on the future. This comment is based on the premise that the conditions in our culture and society have significantly changed over the years such that the past no longer is relevant. In the religious sphere, this view has been coupled with the comment that our church no longer is our "grandfather's" church. In the face of these contentions, it is a valid question to ask: Why Celebrate the Walther Bicentennial? In this layman's opinion, not only is it a valid question but the answer also is vital to our desire to remain faithful confessing Lutherans. The failure to remember and celebrate the work of our forefathers in the Lord's kingdom can result in a failure to remember their confessional teachings that distinguish our beloved Missouri Synod from other church bodies.

### A Heads Up to Our Clarion Readers



LCA sent DVD's of its 2010 LCA Conference presentations on Synodical matters to all 2010 Synodical Convention delegates and others. LCA is now in the process of producing DVD's of its 2011 Conference presentations which included: Catechesis, Articles VI and VII of the Synod's Constitution on Conditions of Membership and the Synod's Relation to Members, Worship, the Synod's New Structure, Synod's Youth Program and Seminary Matters as well as Concordia Theological Seminary work in Africa and Russia.

The 2010 Synodical Convention by resolutions called for study by all congregations and Synodical entities of Constitution Articles VI and VII and Worship practice **prior** to the 2013 Synodical Convention. LCA hopes to have these new DVD's in the hands of YOUR 2010 Synodical Convention **Circuit Delegates** by the end of May. LCA strongly urges all "Missourians" to contact your Circuit Delegates of 2010, arrange to borrow the set of two DVD's and then study them in congregational groups as well as individually. See the November 2010 and January 2011 *Lutheran Clarion* issues for details on the presenters.

**A limited number of these DVD sets will be available at a cost of \$10.00. Checks should be sent to Dr. Daniel Jastram at 1320 Hartford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55116.**

Dr. C. F. W. Walther, who was born October 15, 1811, is recognized as "The Founding Theologian" of the Missouri Synod.<sup>1</sup> He has been characterized regularly by historians as "a true son and student of Luther,"<sup>2</sup> "Luther's Greatest Pupil,"<sup>3</sup> the "American Luther,"<sup>4</sup> and the "Luther of America."<sup>5</sup> The Bicentennial of his birth occurs in 2011. To be sure, the Centennial of Walther's birth was widely celebrated by the Missouri Synod in 1911. For example, special joint congregational worship services for celebration of his birth Centennial were held in cities with large memberships of Missouri Synod Lutherans, e.g., in Chicago,<sup>6</sup> Milwaukee<sup>7</sup> and St Louis.<sup>8</sup> Featured at these rallies were mass choirs and sermons or orations given by leaders of Synod, including the president of Synod, district presidents, and professors of our colleges and seminaries. Sermon outlines as aids for pastors for the Centennial celebration in congregations were published in *Homiletischen Magazin*.<sup>9</sup> The Centennial celebration in 1911 was only about a quarter century after Walther's death in 1887 and many of the pastors at that time had studied under Walther. Because now another 100 years have elapsed, one may wonder whether it is still vital to celebrate his birth Bicentennial.

**“One can truly say that the Lutheran Church in our land is indebted to [Walther] more than any other man for the entire one hundred years.”**

*Lehre und Wehre, 1911*

The first place to start looking for an answer to the question is in the Bible. We know that God works in history and works everything for his purpose.<sup>10</sup> We can be sure that God has not forgotten His church and that He continues the work of Christ through His church. God has always sent His church at particular times men of God, through whom He has poured out His gifts especially abundantly for His people (Moses, Elijah, Luther). In the church of the Reformation after Luther's death as the pure teachings became more and more lost, God sent forth Dr. Walther, through whom He richly bestowed His gifts upon the church here in America. Even such people who stood in opposition to Walther acknowledged at the time of his Centennial anniversary: "One can truly say that the Lutheran Church in our land is indebted to him more than any other man for the entire one hundred years."<sup>11</sup> Although much has been written about Dr. Walther, it is this writer's belief that what God has given to the Lutheran Church in America through Dr. Walther was well summarized and succinctly stated in 1911 in three salient points:

- "1. Through him He brought God's Word and Luther's teachings to authority again;
2. Through him God gave us a faithful ministry; and
3. Through him God gave us a well disciplined congregational polity."<sup>12</sup>

It is thus clear that "Our Synod has received great, wonderful blessings from God. Do we thank God for these

blessings?"<sup>13</sup> We truly have an opportunity for remembrance and to mutually encourage us to give proper thanks by celebrating the two-hundredth birth anniversary of Dr. Walther, through whom God gave us such wonderful blessings. In so doing we will be following the scriptural teachings of the Psalmist: "I remember the days of old, I meditate on all that Thou hast done." Ps. 143:5.

We can only speculate how the course of the Lutheran Church in America might have been different had God not sent us His servant Dr. Walther. One cannot prove the negative, but we can make a plausible assumption based on observation of what has happened over the years where the confessional Lutheran teachings<sup>14</sup> championed by Walther in the Missouri Synod have been ignored or cast aside, and it presents a troublesome and challenging picture.<sup>15</sup> We need to thank God for providing our Synod at its inception with the theological leadership of Walther, and this can be done by Missouri Synod congregations giving support to a Bicentennial celebration of his birth in the year 2011 as they did for the Centennial celebration in 1911.

**Scott J. Meyer**, B.S., M.B.A, J.D., Retired  
Patent Attorney Monsanto Company  
Board Chairman - Concordia Historical Society

- 1 That term has been ascribed to Walther, who, with F. C. D. Wyneken and J. K. W. Loehe, was one of "Three Important Leaders," in the founding of the Missouri Synod. See, e.g., the aside by Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., in an article by Rev. William J. Schmelder, "A Synod is Born," *The Lutheran Witness*, Vol. 116, No. 4, April 1997, pp. 8-14, at p. 10.
- 2 Martin Günther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther. Lebensbild* (St. Louis: *Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag*, 1890), p. 180, citing *Allg. Syn.-Bericht* 1869, p. 22.
- 3 Anon, "Dr C.F.W. Walther, Luthers grösster Schüler, Kurze Lebensgeschichte," *Concordia Familienbote*, Oak Park, Ill, Year 3, No. 6 (Oct 1911), pp. 1-4.
- 4 C. F. W. Walther: *The American Luther*, Edited by Arthur H. Drevlow, John M. Drickamer, Glenn E. Reichwald (Mankato, MN: Walther Press, 1987).
- 5 Rev. H. H. Walker, "Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, D.D., the Luther of America," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4 (Winter 1957), pp. 171-178, Reprinted from the *Lutheran Quarterly*, July 1912.
- 6 The Chicago celebration was held Oct. 22, 1911, at the Seventh Regiment Armory, Wentworth Ave. and 34<sup>th</sup> St. It consisted of a 3:00 P.M. afternoon service in German at which Rev. W. C. Kohn, Pres. Northern Illinois District, and Prof. M. Luecke, Director of Concordia College, Ft Wayne, Indiana, gave the festival sermons; and a 7:45 P.M. evening service in English at which Rev. Fr. Brand, Pres. Central Illinois District, and Prof. E. Hove, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. gave the orations. See *Fest-Programm*, Severinghaus & Belfuss Co., Printers, Chicago, Ill.
- 7 The Milwaukee celebration was held at the Auditorium, Oct 22, 1911, consisting of one service with both German and English parts in which a German festival sermon was given by Rev. Fr. Pfothenhauer, Pres. Missouri Synod, and an English oration was given by Rev. C. Gausewitz, Milwaukee, Wis. and a president of the general body of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. See *Programm für die Walther-Jubelfeier*, Rundschau Publ. Co., Germania Gebäude, Milwaukee, Wis.
- 8 The St Louis Celebration was held in the Coliseum, in May 1911, and attended by about 22,000 Lutherans coming from all parts of our country. See the description of this "soul-stirring" event by Professor Louis Wessel, Concordia ...continued...

***Thank You to Balance-Concord, Inc.***

*Balance-Concord, Inc., has been a most faithful contributor to The Lutheran Clarion in honor of the sainted Rev. Raymond Mueller and the sainted Rev. Edgar Rehwaldt, both of whom faithfully served the Synod and Balance-Concord, Inc., for many years.*

*The Clarion is most appreciative of such continued support from Balance-Concord, Inc., as well as the wonderful support of our readers. These contributions make it possible to bring you substantive articles by respected and qualified authors on issues affecting YOUR Synod. Please continue your support. It is both appreciated and needed.*

- Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, in his *Festival and Occasional Sermons* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. 256-61.
- 9 W. C. Kohn, "What has God given to the Lutheran Church of America through Dr. Walther?" *Homiletischen Magazin* 35 (1911), pp. 314-16; W.C. Kohn, "We should thank God for the Blessings that He has given His Church through Dr. Walther." *Ibid.* 35 (1911), pp. 316-18, translated by this writer.
  - 10 See, e.g., Isaiah 10:24-27; 11:16, where the prophet Isaiah refers to the deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus to bear witness to the historical fact that God has saved His people before. This means that He can do it again and will deliver His people from oppression by the Assyrians.
  - 11 *Lehre und Wehre*, 1911, p. 97, quoted by Rev. W.C. Kohn in his two sermon outlines for the Walther Jubilee, 1911, in *Homiletischen Magazin*, Vol. 35, 1911, p. 314-18, at p. 314, supra note 9.
  - 12 *Homiletischen Magazin*, *Ibid.* p. 315-16.
  - 13 *Ibid.* p. 316.
  - 14 Expressed by the Motto: *Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr', Vergehet nun und nimmermehr!* (God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure, Shall now and evermore endure). *Concordia Familienbote*, supra note 3.
  - 15 For a collection of papers on the challenges facing the Missouri Synod concerning the doctrines of church and ministry, an area in which Dr. C. F. W. Walther provided theological leadership, see *Church and Ministry: The Collection of Papers of The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Theological Convocation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Edited by Jerald C. Joerz and Paul T. McCain (St. Louis: The Office of the President, LCMS, 1998). For a recent review of the departure of some Lutheran church bodies from the historic Lutheran teachings against the ordination of women pastors, see *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, A Collection of Essays, Edited by Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).

## Dr. C. F. W. Walther: Coming To You Soon In Video

October 25, 2011, marks the 200th anniversary of the birthday of Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the first president of both The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In honor of this historic event, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis is producing a five part high definition video series which will follow the life of Dr. Walther, present a history of the The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Synod), and - through studying Dr. Walther's life and teachings - provide viewers with a better understanding of the importance of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

The five-part DVD series will include commentaries by well-known Walther scholars and professors from both seminaries of the Synod including Dr. Gerhard Bode, Dr. Thomas Egger, Dr. Cameron MacKenzie, Dr. Thomas Mantefel, Dr. Lawrence Rast and Dr. William Schumacher. Viewers will travel across the globe from Wittenberg, Germany to Wittenberg, MO. Each of the five parts will focus on a particular area of Dr. Walther's life, *viz*:

- Part 1:** Explore the theology of Lutheranism vs. Rationalism which the early church sought to escape. Where do we see Rationalism today? You may be surprised!
- Part 2:** A study on the Ten Commandments, Martin Luther, the theology of the Two Kingdoms and the importance of repentance, confession and absolution. Is there a place for private confession in today's Lutheran church?
- Part 3:** Viewers will learn about the chaos, confusion and conflict that plagued the early church in America as it struggled to answer theological questions pertinent to day-to-day life in America. What is a "church"? What is the role of the laity? What is the role of the clergy?
- Part 4:** Hear Dr. Walther's teachings on the invisible church, the visible church, the Law and the Gospel.
- Part 5:** The video series concludes with the legacy of

Dr. Walther and his impact on modern society. It concludes with interviews of Synodical President Harrison; former Synodical Presidents Gerald Kieschnick, Robert Kuhn and Ralph Bohlmann; Concordia Seminary president Dr. Dale Meyer and former Concordia Seminary Presidents John Johnson and Karl Barth.

Re-enactments of key scenes in Dr. Walther's life will drive the video forward. Included will be a soundtrack composed by internationally renowned musician Peter Mayer and female vocalist Erin Bode just for this DVD series. This DVD series is designed to be a valuable resource for pastors, schools and churches for use in Bible studies, classrooms and Confirmation classes. Consider hosting a movie night and use these DVD's as a great outreach to your community!

### Get excited about our Lutheran Church history and heritage!

Prepare to visit the early Lutheran Church in America, circa 1840. Prepare to meet this early hero of the church: Dr. C. F. W. Walther - a man who sacrificed his homeland, his health and nearly his life...For the freedom to speak freely, to believe freely, to live freely...To save his Church and the Faith for those he loved...AND for us who would come after.

Concordia Seminary plans to distribute the videos to each LCMS congregation in early September. Your prayers and financial support are needed. The filming schedule is short for this **major** undertaking.

Participants, except for actors, are donating their time and talents. All funds received will be used for the production and distribution of the videos. It is our prayer that you will assist Concordia Seminary in this wonderful project.

**John Klingler**

Chief Information Officer, Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, MO.

### The Walther Video

*Lutheran Clarion* readers are urged to support this worthy project. Contributions sent to:

**Lutheran Concerns Association**  
**1320 Hartford Avenue**  
**St. Paul MN 55116-1623**



will be matched up to a grand total of \$1,000.00 by the Horizon Fund of Pilgrim Lutheran Church of West Bend, WI.

## Synod-wide Study on Conditions of Membership, Resolution 8-30B

At the 2010 convention in Houston, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted Resolution 8-30B "Congregations Walking Together in Mission with Covenants of Love: To Study Article VI [Conditions of Membership] of Synod's Constitution."<sup>1</sup> The resolution cited concerns about misunderstanding and misapplications of the synod's Constitution Article VI, namely, matters of "subscription to . . . [synod's] Constitution, renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school, and examination and approval of [congregation's] constitution and by-laws by the district."

The resolution called for a synod-wide study document on these matters to be produced by the President of the Synod,

in consultation with the Council of Presidents (hereafter COP), the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (hereafter CTCR), and the Commission on Constitutional Matters (hereafter CCM); that study of this document will “involve the COP, the districts, circuits, and seminaries”; and finally that “the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to engage in the study.”

When the study has been completed at all levels, then the Commission on Handbook (hereafter COH; formerly the Commission on Structure), in consultation with and the **concurrency** of the President, CCM, and COP, will submit a proposal to the next convention in 2013 to “clarify and affirm or amend Article VI.” Thus the final action of all this study will be the decision in 2013 to clarify and affirm Article VI **OR** amend it.

I am very glad that the 2010 convention did not amend LCMS Constitution Article VI. That action, based on what was proposed, could have been catastrophic in several ways. The former President’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance (hereafter Task Force) had proposed to the synod that it change Article VI and the convention had this proposal in the form of Overture 8-30.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the convention wisely sent the proposal, in modified form, to the “committee of the whole,” i.e., the entire synod for discussion and reflection. I hope that this synod-wide discussion is productive and I encourage you all to participate in it. My paper only intends to give my own opinion at this early stage in the process.

My basic opinion about Constitution Article VI is a quote from one of the trustees at my former congregation in Oak Park, Illinois: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” I am not convinced that Article VI is broken and I don’t think that it is unclear, except for the terms “unionism and syncretism” in Article VI.2. I will talk about those terms in a little bit.

I am convinced that there are many members of synod’s leadership who would like to change the synod’s:

- 1) strong stand on the Bible and the Lutheran confessions;
- 2) official practice of church fellowship;
- 3) requirement that books and other resources used for worship, catechesis, and schools be doctrinally sound; and, oddly enough,
- 4) requirement for the “blameless life” of its church-workers.

I base this conviction on the changes proposed for the synod by its leadership in Overture 8-30. I believe that these proposals will return in various ways in the upcoming discussion, so the rest of my paper will be spent in their criticism.

Why am I so reticent when it comes to changes to a constitution? It is because a constitution is a legal foundation for the institution that is built upon it. An institution includes people, property, assets, non-financial values, and important functions, which we in the church call “mission and ministry.” Unnecessary change to a constitution can threaten everything that is built on it. With about 2.3 million persons, over six thousand congregations with their assets, \$1.8 billion insurable value of capital assets (excluding land) in the synod, and \$514 million in unrestricted net assets in the synod,<sup>3</sup> there is a whole lot of weight sitting on top of a few pages of LCMS Constitution.

With this in mind, let’s consider how the supporters of Overture 8-30 and the Task Force wanted to change our synod.

Overture 8-30 proposed deleting the requirement in Article VI.3 that all church-workers rostered by the synod have a blameless life.<sup>4</sup> This is really a shame, because the first biblical requirement for a pastor is that “the bishop must be blameless” (I Timothy 3:2). Is this too much of a restriction in the 21st century? Is it too hard for our church-workers to live up to? Apparently the Task Force thought so. Why? I don’t know, and I won’t speculate.

Overture 8-30 included revisions to the religious confession of synod’s members. Present Article VI.1 states that a condition for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod includes “acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II (Confession),” which points to Article II.<sup>5</sup> Present Article II states that each of synod’s members “accepts without reservation” the Scriptures “as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice” and accepts all of the Book of Concord “as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Overtures 8-30 made three proposed changes to the confessional requirement of our church. First, it changed the required action from “acceptance” to “subscription.”<sup>7</sup> Second, it added “subscription to the Constitution” of synod. Third, it added a new, one-sentence confession of faith that was invented by the authors.<sup>8</sup> Were these changes good? I don’t think so and let me explain why.

Regarding the first change, “acceptance” is an ongoing, internal act of religious commitment, while “subscription” is a single-occasion, external action of commitment with legal consequences. This is admittedly a minor change, but it doesn’t add clarity, so why change it? Furthermore, the proposed change in Article VI.B.1 talks about “**continued** subscription.”<sup>9</sup> What does that mean? Does that mean synod members have to sign their names in a book at **every** convention? Again, this doesn’t add clarity, so why change it?

Regarding the second change: What does it mean to “subscribe to the Constitution” in proposed Article VI.B.1?<sup>10</sup> This confuses the traditional Lutheran discussion of “confessional subscription” with enrollment in

...continued...

### **Please Support Lutheran Concerns**

There is much remaining work to be done to return our Synod to the Church of our Grandfathers and Reformation fathers! The Lutheran Concerns Association is dedicated to the effort to reclaim our full Lutheran heritage for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but we cannot achieve this long-range goal alone.

We need your continued help so that a truly Lutheran church body will be there for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In some small way we at the Lutheran Concerns Association desire to be helpful in preserving our faith, under the Lord’s blessing, so that the treasure of pure doctrine and right practice will be known for generations yet to come.

Would you prayerfully consider assisting us in this on-going effort with your tax deductible donations? Please send checks to:

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an organization. Signing the constitution is a good practice, but it is of a different nature from “confessional subscription.” This change raises more questions than it answers.

Regarding the third change, there is the new, innocuous-looking, one-sentence confession of faith in proposed Article II, for which—it appears—the Bible and Book of Concord are **merely** “confessional bases.”<sup>11</sup> It reads, without parenthetical citations:

The central doctrine of the Scriptures that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, alone is the Savior of the world, and that only “out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith” in Him is there forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.”<sup>12</sup>

I think this is an attempt to make a confession of faith out of some phrases from the Reformation, namely, **solus Christus**, **sola gratia**, and **sola fide**. But it fails for three reasons. First, Lutherans do not make up new confessions without sufficient reason. When they need to make a confession of their faith, they always point to existing orthodox creeds or confessions, as the confessors did in the **Augsburg Confession** (e.g., AC I) and as our founding fathers did in their 1847 constitution. What is the sufficient reason for the new confession proposed by the President’s Blue Ribbon Task Force? What great conflict among us does it settle? None that I can see.

Second, this new confession fails, because the statement that “Jesus . . . alone is the Savior” actually falls under the topic of the “Cult of the Saints” in the **Augsburg Confession** (AC XXI, 2). Lutherans have never said that our polemic against the Roman Catholic cult of the saints is our central doctrine. Third, the new confession fails because it omits the office and work of Christ, which Luther in the **Smalcald Articles** calls “the first and chief article” of our doctrine (SA II, 1, 1). The new confession talks only about the benefits that come from Christ, but not about the office and work of Christ. By the way, I think the main verb is missing in this one-sentence confession.

Of all the proposals to come out of the Task Force, this was the most damaging to who we are as confessional Lutherans, because it implies you can replace our Lutheran confessions with one sentence. Talk about Gospel reductionism! You cannot reduce the Lutheran confession of faith to one sentence. At the beginning of the Christian church, Peter’s confession (Matthew 16:16) was sufficient. But one sentence is not sufficient today, when every false teacher claims to speak for Christ. Besides, what does a new confession have to do with “Structure and Governance”?

The religious confession in LCMS Constitution Article II is one of six-cornerstones that define who we are as the Missouri Synod. These six cornerstones were laid down by C. F. W. Walther in his letter to Adam Ernst of August 21, 1845.<sup>13</sup> In summary they were:

- 1) that we confess that the entire content of the Scriptures and the Book of Concord is our sincere belief;
- 2) that we prohibit all syncretistic activity by members of the synod;
- 3) that synod’s primary purpose is the maintenance of the unity and purity of Lutheran doctrine;
- 4) that synod has only an advisory relationship to congregations;

- 5) that lay delegates have equal voice and votes with clergy; and
- 6) that significant matters, such as changes to the Constitution, must be voted on by all congregations in synod. Change or remove any one of those cornerstones and the whole institution will be different, and may well collapse.

Overture 8-30 deleted the requirement in present Article VI.4 that books and other resources used for worship, catechesis, and schools be doctrinally sound. The present language uses the word “exclusive use,” the proposed language deletes the word “exclusive use.” Did the Task Force think that it would be a good thing if our congregations do not **always** use doctrinally sound materials? I know this happens, but we don’t need to sanction it. That is like legalizing marijuana in California, because many former hippies who live there use it anyway!

Finally, there is the matter of “syncretism” and “unionism” in present Article VI.2. It presently states:

Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:

- a) Serving congregations of mixed confessions, as such, by ministers of the church;
- b) Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession;
- c) Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.<sup>14</sup>

The proposed language in Overture 8-30 stated:

Non-participation in activities which compromise a member’s subscription to the confessional basis of the Synod, such as:

- a) Practicing altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations or clergy holding a different confession from that of the synod (unionism, syncretism); or
- b) Supporting organizations or causes that promote a position contrary to the confessional basis of the Synod (unionism, syncretism).<sup>15</sup>

The proposed language replaces “unionism and syncretism” with “activities which compromise a member’s subscription to the confessional basis of the Synod.” This language is so vague that it could never be used in a church court to condemn a real violation. Since we subscribe to the Holy Scriptures, any sin that is described there could, by this proposed language, be cause for removal from synod.

The proposed language replaces “unionism and syncretism” with “altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations or clergy holding a different confession from that of synod.” This would allow joint worship, which we have always opposed. “Altar and pulpit fellowship” was the definition used by the Lutheran General Council in its definition of church fellowship known as the “Galesburg (Akron) Rule.”<sup>16</sup> Why didn’t the Task Force tell the synod that it was changing our doctrine of church fellowship from the old Missouri doctrine to that of the General Council, which later became the Lutheran Church in America? Besides all that, the proposed language would allow fellowship with the ELCA, since its members officially “hold” the same confession as the LCMS.

The proposed language replaces “heterodox tract and missionary organizations” with “Supporting organizations or

causes that promote a position contrary to the confessional basis of the Synod.” Let’s see how that works. I guess all members of the Democratic Party would be thrown out of the synod, since that party is officially pro-abortion. I guess all members of the Republican Party would be thrown out too, since that party unofficially shows partiality to the rich (James 2:1-9). I guess I would be thrown out, since I am a long-time member of the National Geographic Society and they promote Darwinism.

I said that “unionism” and “syncretism” were unclear terms. This is the only problem that I can find in Constitution Article VI. “Unionism” doesn’t show up in any dictionary, except the **Concordia Cyclopedia**, published by CPH. There it is defined as “various degrees of co-organization, joint worship, and/or cooperation between religious groups of varying creeds or religious convictions.”<sup>17</sup> This is a pretty good definition, and I could accept that as a parenthetical insertion to define “unionism.”

“Syncretism” is defined in the **Cyclopedia** as a “Union, or effort to unite; in religious context practically a synonym for unionism.”<sup>18</sup> That is pretty good too, although it is different from other religious dictionaries. I think even better is the definition in Schaff-Herzog, “Not exactly a compromise between different tenets, but a union on the basis of such tenets as were common to both parties.”<sup>19</sup> This latter definition fits its historical origin in the syncretistic controversies of the 17th century, from which the term has come to us.

Another way at getting at the problem of lack of definition would be to insert a quote from the Missouri Synod’s Brief Statement of 1932. It states:

We repudiate unionism, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divisions in the Church (Romans 16:17, 2 John 9-10), and involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely (II Timothy 2:17-21).<sup>20</sup>

The weakness here is that “church-fellowship” is not defined. That definitional weakness has been an occasion for debate and division in our synod since the 1940s.

If my proposal of the definition of “unionism” in the **Concordia Cyclopedia** does not satisfy, then the synod’s leadership and membership need to restudy the history of our doctrine of church fellowship and its major expressions in our confessions and official dogmatics. This should start with Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X, 5, which condemns church practices that “give, or are designed to give, the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from” other churches, or when such practices “create the illusion . . . that these two opposing religions have been brought into agreement and become one body . . . or will allegedly result [in such a union], little by little,” by such practices.<sup>21</sup> Next would be the discussion in the Baier-Walther dogmatics,<sup>22</sup> in Pieper’s dogmatics,<sup>23</sup> in **The Abiding Word**,<sup>24</sup> and in the 1954 treatise from the synodical president’s office **Another Fraternal Endeavor**.<sup>25</sup> The recent history of these issues should also be reviewed in Hermann Sasse’s Letter #20<sup>26</sup> and in Kurt Marquart’s **Anatomy of an Explosion**.<sup>27</sup>

These books and documents can refresh the Missouri Synod’s memory about what it has rejected with the words “unionism” and “syncretism” and why it has rejected those

things. If this results in renewed commitment to a truly Lutheran doctrine of church fellowship, then this debate will have a constructive result in our Missouri Synod.

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- <sup>1</sup> See *Convention Proceedings 2010, 64<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* [hereafter Proceedings] (St Louis: LCMS, 2010), 168-169. The Constitution of the Synod may be found in: *2007 Handbook, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* [hereafter Handbook] (St Louis: LCMS, 2007); references in this paper to the Constitution or Handbook refer to this edition.
- <sup>2</sup> See *The Final Report of The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance, 64<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* (St Louis: LCMS, 2009), 21-22, 1.5-1.6; and *Today’s Business (Proposed Resolutions), 2010, 64<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* [hereafter Today’s Business] (St Louis: LCMS, 2010), 154, 161.
- <sup>3</sup> Financial figures from the report of Thomas Kuchta, Vice-President-Finance-Treasurer, in: *Convention Workbook: Reports and Overtures, 2010, 64<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* (St Louis: LCMS, 2009), 72-73.
- <sup>4</sup> Today’s Business, 159.
- <sup>5</sup> Handbook, 13.
- <sup>6</sup> Handbook, 11.
- <sup>7</sup> Today’s Business, 161.
- <sup>8</sup> Today’s Business, 158.
- <sup>9</sup> Today’s Business, 161.
- <sup>10</sup> Today’s Business, 161.
- <sup>11</sup> Today’s Business, 158.
- <sup>12</sup> Today’s Business, 158.
- <sup>13</sup> C.S. Meyer, ed. *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 143.
- <sup>14</sup> Handbook, 13.
- <sup>15</sup> Today’s Business, 161.
- <sup>16</sup> See E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 311-313.
- <sup>17</sup> Erwin Lueker, ed., *Concordia Cyclopedia* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 784,
- <sup>18</sup> *Concordia Cyclopedia*, 747.
- <sup>19</sup> Philip Schaff, ed., *A Religious Encyclopedia . . . based on the Real-Encyclopedia of Herzog, Plitt, and Hauck*, 3 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889), 3:2278-2279.
- <sup>20</sup> See *This We Believe: Selected Topics of Faith and Practice in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St Louis: LCMS, 2010), 67.
- <sup>21</sup> Theodore Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 611.
- <sup>22</sup> Johann William Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, 3 vols., ed. C. F. W. Walther (St Louis: Lutheran Concordia-Verlag, 1879), 3:665-672 (III.xiii, 37).
- <sup>23</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3:425-427.
- <sup>24</sup> Theodore Laetsch, ed., *The Abiding Word: An Anthology of Doctrinal Essays for the Year 1945, Volume One* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 286-287.
- <sup>25</sup> *Another Fraternal Endeavor* (St Louis: LCMS, 1954).
- <sup>26</sup> Hermann Sasse, “Confession (Confessionalism) and Theology in the Missouri Synod (1951), Letters to Lutheran Pastors, No. 20,” in Feuerhahn and Kloha, eds., *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse*, Concordia Seminary Monograph Series #2 (St Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1995), 189-220.
- <sup>27</sup> Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977), especially pp. 49-63.

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