

APPENDIX - E

1961

REPORT OF THE FLOOR COMMITTEE NO. 2 ON DOCTRINAL MATTERS

Resolution No. 1

Subject: The Report of the Commission on Doctrinal Matters

Whereas, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has lodged many admonitions and protests with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod during the past twenty years to win her from the path that leads to liberalism in doctrine and practice (cf. Proceedings 1939, page 59; 1941, page 43f, 74ff; 1947, page 104f; 1949, page 114f; 1951, page 110ff; 1953, page 95ff), and

Whereas, Our admonitions have largely gone unheeded, and the issues have remained unresolved, and

Whereas, Many of the policies and practices which called forth our admonitions were in the field of fellowship, and

Whereas, The 1959 Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod therefore gave its Commission on Doctrinal Matters the directive "to continue and accelerate the discussions in the Joint Union Committees to bring about complete unity of doctrine and practice in the Synodical Conference ...to give primary consideration in their discussions to the area of fellowship ...to continue its efforts in the Joint Union Committees until agreement on doctrine and practice has been reached, or until an impasse is reached and no such agreement can be brought about" (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1959, p. 195), and

Whereas, The Commission has faithfully carried out this directive but now regretfully reports that differences with respect to the Scriptural principles of church fellowship - differences which it holds to be divisive - have brought us to an impasse, and

Whereas, Our Commission's Theses on Church Fellowship are not to be considered a formal confessional document (otherwise it would be advisable to expand them considerably, for instance, to preface them with the Doctrine of the Church, the Marks of the Church, etc. They were set up and used simply as a working document in the discussions of the Joint Doctrinal Committees. As such they were to express the Scriptural and historical principles of the teaching and practice of church fellowship held by the Synodical Conference), and

Whereas, The substance of these Theses is an expression of the Scriptural principles on which the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod has stood and which have guided it in its practice for many years (cf. FELLOWSHIP THEN AND NOW), and

Whereas, In the Statement of the Overseas Committee, FELLOWSHIP IN ITS NECESSARY CONTEXT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, we have found nothing to warrant any modification of our position on church fellowship, and

Whereas, In the new forum suggested by the Overseas Committee and adopted by the Synodical Conference we see no avenue leading to the removal of the differences in regard to church fellowship principles which now exists between The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and

Whereas, The doctrine of the Church has not been slighted in the intersynodical discussions in the past (cf. Synodical conference Reports 1946, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1954, and

Whereas, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has not retreated from the unscriptural position long held by it and also expressed in THE THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, but continues to defend that position and carries on fellowship practices which conform to that position (e.g., the two meetings with the National Lutheran Council on cooperative activities, July 7-9, 1960, and November 18 and 19, 1960, with a third meeting to be held October 30 - November 1, 1961; the National Lutheran Education Conference, January 8-10, 1961; the conference of Lutheran Professors of Theology, June 5-7, 1961 - all of these including conference devotions), and

Whereas, We recognize our sacred trust and the obligation to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," and also to give vigorous testimony on Church Fellowship before the church and the world; be it

Resolved, a) That we now suspend* fellowship with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17, 18⁺⁺ with the hope and prayer to God that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself, and be it further

Resolved, b) That under conditions which do not imply a denial of our previous testimony we stand ready to resume discussions with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with the aim of reestablishing unity of doctrine and practice and of restoring fellowship relations, these discussions to be conducted outside the framework of fellowship,...

* The word "suspend" as used in the resolution has all the finality of termination during the duration of the suspension, but contains the hope that conditions might some day warrant the reestablishment of fellowship.

++ "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Action by the Convention: The Resolution was adopted by a vote of 124 to 49.