

A SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE CLERGY IN THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD TOWARDS  
ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH ORGANIZATION:  
AN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH AN  
ASSOCIATION

by

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#### ABSTRACT

Sociological theory has occasionally related ecumenicity to bureaucratic organization and clerical sponsorship. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is organizationally unique in so far as it has been a continuous and discrete entity since its formation in 1847. Within the past fifty years it has experienced a significant growth in membership, bureaucratic organization, clerical administration, and a concomitant interest and participation in ecumenical relations, particularly with other Lutheran groups. In 1969 it declared pulpit and altar fellowship with The American Lutheran Church. This overture towards ecumenicity is thought to provide an excellent opportunity for a better understanding of the relationship between bureaucracy, leadership and ecumenicity.

Survey research was used to gather the data, which is analyzed in terms of the respondents' background and attitudes towards ecumenicity, and in terms of a cross-tabulation between selected items judged to elicit

differentiated attitudes on either ecumenicity or the church (organization and leadership). Results suggest that a less authoritarian perception of the role of the church, of the leadership, a greater acceptance of bureaucracy, and a perceived agreement with the perspectives of Synodical officials is associated with a more positive ecumenical attitude.

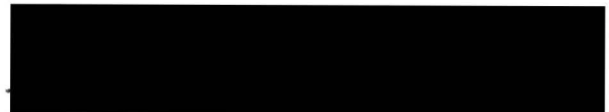


TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF ECUMENICITY - PAST AND PRESENT. . . . .	1
II. SYNOPSIS OF THE ORGANIZATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEADERSHIP OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH- MISSOURI SYNOD . . . . .	8
III. ECUMENICAL RELATIONS . . . . .	15
IV. RESEARCH . . . . .	23
V. CONCLUSION . . . . .	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	56
APPENDIX I . . . . .	59
APPENDIX II. . . . .	60
APPENDIX III . . . . .	67

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1. Missouri Synod Clergy - Educational Backgrounds . . . . .	25
2. Father's Occupation of Missouri Synod Clergy. . .	25
3. Highest Academic Degree of Missouri Synod Clergy. . . . .	27
4. Seminary Training of Missouri Synod Clergy. . . .	27
5. Synodical Offices Held by Missouri Synod Clergy. . . . .	27
6. Educational Background by Fellowship Support. . .	28
7. Age by Fellowship Support . . . . .	29
8. Clerical Implementation of Fellowship by Their Support of Fellowship . . . . .	29
9. Missouri Synod Clergymen's Perception of Agreement with TALC by Their Support of Fellowship. . . . .	30
10. Clerical Perception of Fellowship with TALC as Beneficial by Support of Fellowship. . . . .	31
11. Clerical Perception of Progress Towards Lutheran Union by Their Support of Fellowship . .	31
12. Clergymen's Perception of Future Fellowship by Their Current Support of Fellowship with TALC. . . . .	32
13. Projected Progress in Ecumenical Relations with Conservative Administration by Current Support of Fellowship . . . . .	33
14. Clergymen's Perception of Synodical Official's Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship. . . .	33
15. Clergymen's Perception of District Official's Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship. . . .	34

## TABLE

Page

16.	Clergymen's Perception of Fellow Conference Clergy's Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship. . . . .	35
17.	Clergymen's Perception of Own Congregation's Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship. . . . .	36
18.	Church's Primary Role to Give Answers . . . . .	42
19.	Perception of the Role of the Church as Authoritarian (Closed) by Ecumenical Orientation . . . . .	43
20.	Church to Censor Teaching which Produces Doubting or Questioning . . . . .	44
21.	Perception of the Role of the Church as Authoritarian (Closed) by Ecumenical Orientation . . . . .	45
22.	Increased Bureaucracy Will Have Negative Effect on Church Affairs. . . . .	46
23.	Negative Opinion of Church Bureaucracy by Ecumenical Orientation. . . . .	47
24.	Direction of Synod Depends on Leaders . . . . .	48
25.	Perception of Leadership as Determining Synod by Ecumenical Orientation . . . . .	49
26.	Difference in Perspective between Leaders and Local Pastors . . . . .	50
27.	Perception of Divergence between Synodical Officials and Local Clergy by Ecumenical Orientation . . . . .	51

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY  
OF ECUMENICITY - PAST AND PRESENT

Ecumenicity has become a much valued social activity among contemporary churchmen. Behaviourally, it has expressed itself in mergers, advisory councils, conciliatory agreements, and fellowship actions. Ecumenicity is a religious movement towards, if not Christian unity, at least towards a working tolerance and appreciation of other denominations in North America.

Given its widespread expression in the contemporary situation,<sup>1</sup> it is difficult to understand why so little attention has been given to ecumenical movements by sociologists. While one can assemble a sizable bibliography of sociological works on the diversity, separation and emergence of religious groups, the same cannot be said about the opposite tendency for contemporary religious groups to seek unity, the characteristics of these unions, or the attitudes and perceptions of those involved.

What little has been written on ecumenical endeavours has broadly related it to the changing *external*

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<sup>1</sup>One need only think of such recent church mergers as the United Church of Christ (1957) or the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (1958) or the Lutheran Church in America (1962) for organizational mergers. Churches also express ecumenicity through co-operation in such councils as the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches.

(environmental) and/or the changing *internal* (organizational) context.

In terms of the external or environmental context, ecumenicity has been seen as a response to the attunement of the "social sources" of denominational differences. Robert Lee (1960) has argued that the social factors which were responsible for the proliferation of religious groups (Niebuhr, 1957),<sup>2</sup> are no longer operative in the current movement for church unity. Focussing on the reduction of social differences along class, sectional, racial, and ethnic lines and the emergence of a new cultural unity - for example, the common use of the English language, similar life-styles, personal freedom to marry across ethnic and denominational lines, urbanization, and industrialization - Lee suggests that denominations have become more similar (common-core Protestantism) because these groups have ceased to reflect distinctive types of social and religious experience.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Niebuhr, writing in 1929, argued that the religious diversity in America reflected the social divisions of class, race, sectionalism, and nationalism. Accordingly, religious diversity reflected not so much theological differences, which served more as a rationalization of these divisions, but rather, represented an "...accommodation of Christianity to the caste-system of human society....The division of the churches closely follows the division of men into the castes of national, racial, and economic groups.", p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Lee's thesis of the emergence of a 'common-core Protestantism' is based on five indices: doctrinal consensus (even at the cost of ill-defined and ambiguous meanings), interchangeableness of the membership, interchangeableness of the ministry; the growing similarity in organization and power structure, and the common ethos in American Protestantism of activism, friendliness, humanistic concern, and non-intellectual simple faith.

In addition to a reduction in the social bases for denominational differences, Peter Berger (1967) and Bryan Wilson (1966) have both noted that the typically secularized context of contemporary society has changed the mentality of the general public which prefer religious contents directed toward the private sphere of their lives; this in order to make them consonant with their secularized consciousness. Consequently, there is a religious emphasis on family and personal-psychological problems and a concomitant de-emphasis of traditional theological cleavages. This development of "doctrinal consensus" facilitates cartilization and ecumenical discussions.

By contrast, the changing *internal* or organizational context has been given more attention by sociologists. In contemporary society, religious organization is increasingly expressed as a *bureaucracy*.<sup>4</sup> Berger notes that religion in pluralistic situations, (such as Canada and the United States, where its status is that of a voluntary association), becomes dominated by an economic logic in the secularization process. This leads to the rationalization of religious structures which in the contemporary context is expressed as a bureaucracy.

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<sup>4</sup>Bureaucracy in sociological literature includes such characteristics as "...specialized roles and tasks; the prevalence of autonomous, rational, and non-personal organizational rules; and a general orientation to rational, efficient implementation of specific goals." From S. N. Eisenstadt. 1964. "Bureaucracy, Bureaucratization, and De-bureaucratization." *Complex Organizations*. ed. A. Etzioni, p.270.

The spread of bureaucratic structures in the religious context has the consequence that different denominations increasingly resemble one another organizationally, irrespective of their various religious traditions. Further, all bureaucratic organizations make and meet demands that are similar in so far as they are rationally based.

Berger has noted that the bureaucratization of religious organizations lays the social-psychological foundation for ecumenicism. Ecumenicism is demanded by the pluralistic situation, because competition becomes too costly in terms of "public image" presentation, and in terms of maintaining duplicate (and often surplus) structures and services. Ecumenicity reduces the number of competing units through mergers, and enables the remaining units to organize and rationalize the distribution of "members" by agreements among the reduced pool of such competing units.

The importance and role of the clergy in the functioning of religious bureaucracies has been described by Ronald Bohr (1968). He has noted that religious organizations, especially in the North American context, tend to develop operationally towards a presbyterian polity whatever their heritage; this because of the development of a centralized bureaucracy and the balance of power between lay monetary support at the local level and clerical administration at the national level.

At the national level these organizations are dominated by clergy-administrators who have almost complete control over the routine functioning of the organization because: 1) the lay delegates to the governing conventions meet infrequently; 2) are generally less informed than the clergymen-administrators on church affairs; and 3) show deference to these clerical executives.<sup>5</sup> Further, within the organizational context, the power structures are essentially one-party systems, with the dominant party in control of the lines of communication, the theology, and the entrance to leadership positions. Thus, at the national-administrative level, the clergy are in control of the denominational bureaucracy.

Wilson has noted that ecumenicity is primarily a clerical goal or cause. First, it is a response to a perceived diminishing in professional status of the clergy. That is, ecumenicity affords the opportunity for some clergy to enhance their status in so far as the clergy of smaller denominations are able to associate and contemplate equality with clergy of larger, more "orthodox" denominations. Secondly, ecumenicity gives the clergy generally an opportunity to assert their separation from and authority over the laity by virtue of asserting their common pro-

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<sup>5</sup>Bohr also notes that the lay delegates may not reflect a cross-section of the organizational membership. Rather, they tend to over represent the affluent, members of 'prestige congregations', the elderly, and the geographically closest, (Bohr, 1968:4).

fessional specialization with fellow clergy, and enables them to exercise greater administrative authority in a larger, more centralized organization.

Thus, the ecumenical movement has been viewed as a response to the pluralistic-secular *context* or religious organizations, their *bureaucratic organization*, and as primarily a *clerical cause*. However, some studies, (Bohr, 1968; Scherer, 1963) have suggested that there may be differences among the clergy of a given denomination in terms of perceptions of and attitudes towards the denominational bureaucracy and its administrative leaders, and therefore one may hypothesize, differences in their support of various ecumenical involvements.

The Luthern Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) is the second largest Lutheran denomination in the United States, with over three million members. It is organizationally and ecumenically different from other major Lutheran denominations in the United States. It is organizationally unique in that it has been a continuous and discrete entity since its formation in 1847. The other two major Lutheran denominations in the United States, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and The American Lutheran Church (TALC or ALC) are both products of a series of mergers, (see Appendix I). Together, these three Lutheran bodies comprise 95 per cent of all Lutherans in the United States. It is ecumenically unique in that unlike the other major Lutheran denominations,

it has not actively participated in intra-denominational ecumenical ventures. The LC-MS is not a member of the National Council of Churches and until recently did not fellowship with any Lutheran or non-Lutheran group.

In 1969 the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod set an historic precedent when, at its biennial convention it voted to approve pulpit and altar fellowship with The American Lutheran Church, an important ecumenical step. Because of such factors as its continuous organizational history, its strong confessionalism, its anti-union tradition, its strong congregational polity, its relatively recent bureaucratization of its central organization, and the controversy surrounding the vote for fellowship, it is felt that this overture towards ecumenical relations with another Lutheran group may provide an opportunity for a better understanding of the relationship between bureaucracy and ecumenicity.

*It is hypothesized that a variance in ecumenical attitude among Missouri Synod clergymen (randomly sampled), that is, support versus non-support of fellowship, will be associated with a different attitude towards and perception of the bureaucracy and leadership of this Synod.*

However, before reporting on the survey data on this question, it is instructive to review briefly the development, organization, leadership, and ecumenical orientation of the Missouri Synod.

## II. SYNOPSIS OF THE ORGANIZATION, DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod originated<sup>6</sup> in the religious migration of about 700 Saxons to the United States under the charismatic leadership of Martin Stephan in 1838. Although the group as a whole was composed of persons of a high occupational and educational level, the leadership was primarily clerical. Stephan assumed complete organizational control, while other clergy in the group became his lieutenants.

Economically and politically, this early group was controlled by the clergy. Accusations of immorality led to the ultimate expulsion of Stephan and precipitated a crisis in the group which was instrumental in shaping the later organizational structure of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The immediate effect of Stephan's expulsion was to split the group into two factions: lay and clergy. While the clergy wished to continue under the clerical leadership of the civil community proposed by Stephan, the laity wished extreme congregational polity with the clergy closely supervised doctrinally and excluded from all business meetings of the congregation.

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<sup>6</sup>Much of this early history is taken from the excellent material of the following: Munding, 1947; Everett, 1968; Baepfer, 1947; Forster, 1953; and Wentz, 1955.

C. F. W. Walther, a young lieutenant of Stephan, was called to be pastor of the Saxon congregation in St. Louis in 1841. While pastor of this congregation he implemented a compromise whereby the laity had power by majority vote to regulate financial and spiritual matters, while the clergy exercised authority over the spiritual welfare of the parishioners. This compromise was incorporated into the congregational constitution which was unique at the time for its checks and balances of power in the relationship between the clergy and laity.

In 1844 Walther published the Lutheran journal, *Der Lutheraner*. As a result of this journal, other Lutheran leaders, notably Drs. Sihler and Wyneken, who were in agreement with the Saxon brand of Confessional Lutheranism, contacted Walther about the possibility of forming a confessional synod, and he agreed.

The final form of a Synodical constitution was drafted at St. Louis in session with Walther's congregation. The presence of the congregation during the formulation of the constitution was unique, being the first synodical constitution in America in which both the laity and clergy had a direct part in writing. This was reflected in the balance of power and the type of limitations placed on the power of each group.

During the nineteenth century and pre-World War I period, the Missouri Synod was insulated from the influences

of American denominationalism (Mead, 1954) generally, and from other Lutheran groups by its type of leadership, the character of its membership, and the entrenchment of Confessionalism, which in relation to other Lutheran groups found expression in the Synodical Conference, which will be discussed in the following section.

Since World War I the Synod has undergone dramatic changes which are related to the growth in the Synodical bureaucracy, the membership, the decline in insulating mechanisms, and a greater similarity and openness to other Lutheran and non-Lutheran denominations.

Two Synodical presidents' administrations dominate this period. They served long terms of office and spent the majority of their lives involved in Synodical administration.<sup>7</sup> Frederick B. Pfothenauer (1859-1939) was president of the Synod during what is a transitional stage between the nineteenth and twentieth century Missouri Synod Lutheranism, that is 1911-1935. During Pfothenauer's administration far-reaching changes took place in the Synodical organization. Organization at the Synodical level (committees, boards, commissions) burgeoned during Pfothenauer's administration. The convention of 1917 created a Board of Directors

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<sup>7</sup> Pfothenauer was prepared for the Presidency by serving as a District President (1891-1908) and as a Synodical Vice-President (1908-1911). He was elected to eight consecutive terms as Synodical President. Behnken served both as a District President (1926-1929) and a Synodical Vice-President (1929-1935) prior to serving nine consecutive terms as Synodical President (1935-1962).

responsible for all business matters of the Synod, introduced the Budget System, which improved the collection of funds for the Synod treasury, created a Board of Support and Pensions, and appointed a committee on Lutheran Union.

1917 was also the year in which the "Lutheran Laymen's League" was organized to assist the Synod in business and financial matters. It provided an organizational means for the laymen to co-operate on the national level with Synod and District officials, who were clergymen, as under the original organization the laity were restricted to the local level in business and financial matters.

The changes in Synodical organization were partly related to the growth of the Synod. In 1853 the Synod was divided into Districts, whose organization and number have paralleled the growth of the Synod. The number of Districts steadily increased from an original four to the current thirty-seven. These Districts are currently subdivided into Circuits. The existence of Districts and Circuits has increased the number of clergy able to hold administrative positions within the Synodical organization. Another far-reaching change has been the introduction of the delegate form of representation. In 1872 representation at Synodical conventions changed to a delegate form, that is, one congregation from a group of congregations has the right to send voting delegates, rather than every congregation as originally proposed. The influence of world events,

particularly World War I, the assimilation of the membership and the concomitant use of English, and the subsequent recruiting of English speaking Americans effected a growth in membership and a transition to a more rationalized governing structure as well as a greater involvement in extra-Synodical affairs.

John Behnken was the first American born Synodical President. During Behnken's administrative career (1926-1962) the Synod not only weathered the depression successfully, but experienced a large growth in membership (from approximately 1.2 million to 2.6 million - an increase partly related to the Synod's use of English), a further growth in Synodical organization, and much progress in its relationships with other Lutheran bodies. As a whole, this period did much to shape the character of the Synod in the decade of the sixties.

During Behnken's administration there was further expansion of the Synodical bureaucracy. This was related to the growth in membership. That is, the growth in the number of congregations and Christian Day Schools caused a corresponding growth in Synodical Teacher's Colleges and seminaries. Along with the growth in membership and a concomitant growth in Synodical personnel came a demand for more services and co-ordination among the membership. However, this increase in the size and thus the cost of Synodical administration has not gone unopposed by the laity.

The 1956 convention appointed a survey commission to examine the organization in order to introduce administrative reforms and cut administrative cost. Several reforms were made, however, the great savings expected failed to materialize.

Oliver R. Harms, who succeeded Behnken, served as Synodical President from 1962-1969. His background was very similar to his predecessor, that is, he graduated from St. Louis seminary and prepared for the presidency by serving both as a District President and a Synodical Vice-President. During Harm's administration the Synod experienced its first decline in the acquisition of members joining from outside the Synod,<sup>8</sup> a decline in the per-capita annual giving to the Synod,<sup>9</sup> and a decline in the number and enrollment of Christian Day Schools. The concomitant increase in inter-

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<sup>8</sup>This is implied by the decline in adult baptisms and confirmations. This decline is probably related to many factors, including: the general stabilization and/or decline in the church membership in all denominations, occupational mobility of the membership to skilled and semi-professional occupations, which is suggested by the present presearch, that is a comparison of the occupations of the brothers of Missouri Synod clergymen with the occupations of the fathers, and the increasing urbanization of the American society.

<sup>9</sup>The "Ebenezer" offering in 1967, which was intended to raise funds for the capital expenditures of the Synod, succeeded in raising only fourteen million of the forty million dollar goal. This coupled with the trend towards a general increase in member's contributions at the congregational level suggest increasing costs at the congregational level and the member's desire that the Synod cut its budget.

Lutheran relations during this period, which Harms did much to encourage, added much to the discontent within the Synod. It was during this period that the Synodical conventions, which act as the main legislative body, voted to meet every two years, rather than three, as had been the policy.

### III. ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

The Synodical founders desired Lutheran unity but unity on the basis of complete agreement in both doctrine and practice. It was this desire that motivated Walther to publish *Der Lutheraner* in 1844, which led to the formation of the Missouri Synod and the organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in 1872. The latter was an inter-Synodical body which resulted from doctrinal talks among the Ohio, Wisconsin, Norwegian, Illinois, and Minnesota Synods. The conference, like the Missouri Synod, was organized as only an advisory body to the membership. Unanimous consent of the membership was required for the admission of new members and for member synods to fellowship with those outside the Conference.

In 1881 the Conference was disrupted because of Walther's position on a doctrinal issue, and as a result, the Ohio and Norwegian Synods withdrew, see Appendix I. Prior to World War I the Synod made almost no other efforts towards Lutheran unity. Beginning in 1920 the Missouri Synod's Commission on Lutheran Union held doctrinal discussions with representatives of the Wisconsin, Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo Synods. These discussions continued for forty years, but resulted in no agreements.

Shortly after The American Lutheran Church had been

formed (1961) the Missouri Synod sought to continue its fellowship talks. The 1965 convention of the Synod resolved to pursue discussions with TALC "for the purpose of seeking a God-pleasing unity and fellowship." Those discussions produced a document which indicated the existence of a scriptural and confessional basis for fellowship.

The 1967 convention of the Missouri Synod resolved to take steps towards the declaration of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with TALC; with the understanding that diversities in practice, which did not constitute a denial or contradiction of the Gospel could be resolved more easily when Christians were united - a significant departure from former years. The resolution also directed the President of the Synod to make arrangements for promoting a wider mutual recognition of the doctrinal consensus and its implications for church fellowship at the congregational level. Additionally, it directed that he, with the Council of Presidents (a body made up of the top Synodical Administrators and District Presidents) present a recommendation concerning fellowship with TALC to the 1969 convention.

This resolution resulted in the issuance of the document *Towards Fellowship* from the Office of the President. This delineated the implications of fellowship, such as cooperation in all "spiritual matters," pulpit exchanges, inter-Communion, the allowing of membership to transfer without re-instruction, permission of candidates for the

ministry to train at either TALC or Missouri Synod schools, and the permitting of pastors to be called across Synodical lines. This document provided the focus for discussions at the local level during the two year period.

Early in 1969 on the basis of little more than half of the congregational reports, Harms reported to the Council of Presidents that 67-75 per cent reported finding sufficient agreement in doctrine for fellowship, although there were differences in the understanding of such things as Scriptural inspiration and inerrancy, and Synodical involvements with church groups outside of fellowship agreements. On the basis of these reports the Council of Presidents recommended fellowship with TALC by a vote of 25 to 13. It also recommended that local congregations have the choice not to opt for fellowship if they sincerely believed that sufficient consensus did not exist.

Prior to the 1969 bi-annual national convention there were many statements and documents circulated pro and con the proposed fellowship question. The *Concordia Theological Monthly*, the official theological journal of the Missouri Synod, reported the results of a poll taken at the St. Louis seminary among "...students (who) represent a good cross section from all parts of the church and represent a wide range of attitudes" (Piepkorn, 1969:264). This poll reported that 83.7 per cent of the undergraduates and 90 per cent of all students and faculty were in favor of fellowship.

The issue, therefore, appeared to be the margin of support and its consequences for the image of the Synod (Piepkorn, 1969).

However, also circulated during this pre-convention period was a document entitled, "A Statement of Concern re: the Presidents' Recommendation" (to declare altar and pulpit fellowship with TALC). This document expressed the dissent of the signing clergy to the Presidents' recommendation for fellowship for such reasons as: the lack of real doctrinal and practical concensus with TALC as evidenced by the latter's general involvement in the ecumenical movement,<sup>10</sup> as well as its fellowship with LCA; the non-unanimous decision of the Council; and the potential for schism within the Missouri Synod should fellowship with TALC occur.

The exact origin of this document is not known, nor the basis for its circulation. However, it apparently was sent to those pastors who were known to be opposed to the fellowship issue, and therefore, would be likely to sign it.<sup>11</sup> An examination of the statement reveals that only 9 per cent (535) of the Missouri Synod clergy signed the document, and further, that 61.4 per cent were graduates of the Spring-

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<sup>10</sup>TALC is a member of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., and is in fellowship with the Lutheran Church in America.

<sup>11</sup>This information came from a conversation with a conservative clergyman who had been one of the signers of the document.

field seminary and 66.0 per cent were over 45 years old. Further analysis reveals that of the signers, the Springfield graduates were younger, that is 65.4 per cent of the Springfield signers were under 45 years old, while 75.2 per cent of the signers who were St. Louis graduates were 45 years or older. This would suggest that the two Synodical seminaries were graduating students with different ecumenical perspectives and that at least the St. Louis graduates as a group were more open to fellowship and ecumenical endeavours - at least with other Lutheran groups in America.<sup>12</sup>

The 1969 convention was divided on the issue of declaring fellowship with TALC. Approximately 250 memorials (or petitions) on the fellowship issue were presented to the convention. Of these 20 were in favor of fellowship; the remainder were against. Of those against, 20 per cent recommended that the question of fellowship be submitted to congregational referendum, with a recommendation of a 66 to 90 per cent majority for adoption; 50 per cent recommended that action be postponed, but that the discussions continue; and finally, 30 per cent recommended that fellowship be

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<sup>12</sup>This information was drawn from the 1967 edition of *The Lutheran Annual* - a book which gives such information as the pastor's date of graduation from seminary and his seminary of graduation. Consequently, the ages are an approximation, based on an average age of 25 years old at the time of graduation. Since the source of the sample was not random, this can only suggest possible areas of discontent and the groups most effected.

declined, for such reasons as consensus from the viewpoint of Synodical officials was not necessarily consensus from the viewpoint of the local congregation, diversity in doctrine and practice, TALC's involvement in ecumenical organizations, and the potential for disruption of the Missouri Synod.

The 1969 convention was held in Denver, Colorado, July 11-18, and was attended by approximately 2,500 persons, of which 984 were registered (voting) delegates. Two significant and contradictory events occurred at this convention. *First*, Harms, the incumbent President of the Synod for seven years and an outspoken advocate for fellowship with TALC, was defeated in his bid for re-election by J. A. O. Preuss,<sup>13</sup> the President of Springfield Concordia Seminary and outspoken conservative and advocate for delaying the fellowship question. *Secondly*, the convention voted to approve the pulpit and altar fellowship with TALC by a narrow margin of 522 to 438, that is, 54 per cent voted in favor. Controversy attended both of these events.

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<sup>13</sup>Preuss was a departure from the tradition of selecting someone who had been raised, educated, and deeply involved in Synodical administration. Preuss was a graduate of Luther College and Luther Seminary; he was ordained ELC (now a part of TALC). He later served as pastor in a church body now known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which at that time was part of The Synodical Conference. After this he joined the Concordia Seminary at Springfield, at which time he became a member of the Missouri Synod. He later became the President of the seminary, which position he occupied at the time of his election to the Synodical Presidency.

Prior to the opening of the convention, and on July 15th the fellowship question was discussed by the convention. On the evening of the 16th, the chairman of the Committee on Church Relations presented his committee's positive recommendation to declare Altar and Pulpit fellowship with TALC; this was known as resolution 3-15.<sup>14</sup> Also presented was the resolution 3-15A, given by the dissenting minority of the committee, which recommended continuance of the discussions, as it believed that sufficient unanimity in doctrine and practice had not been demonstrated.

In relation to Wilson's theory that ecumenicity is a clerical enterprise, it is interesting to note the composition of committee 3 and the composition of the signers of the minority report. Committee 3 was composed of 35 Synod personnel (28 pastors, 2 teachers, 5 professors) and 11 laymen; the dissenting minority was composed of 4 clergy and 7 laymen.

Prior to the vote by the convention, the newly elected president, Preuss, made a short address in which he recommended that he personally favored a delay in declaring fellowship, but that each should vote according to his conscience and that he, as President, would abide by the decision. The vote was cast the evening of July 16th and

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<sup>14</sup>The substance of the recommendation was essentially what had been stated in the President's study booklet, "Towards Fellowship".

the favorable result was reported the following morning. The convention had accepted ecumenical principles while rejecting ecumenical leadership.

#### IV. RESEARCH

Sociological theory has traditionally related ecumenicity to bureaucratic organization and clerical sponsorship, although recognizing that there may be differences in clerical support. Within the past fifty years, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has experienced a significant growth in membership, bureaucratic organization and clerical administration, *and* a concomitant interest and participation in ecumenical relations, particularly with other Lutheran groups. The 1969 vote to establish pulpit and altar fellowship with TALC is thought to provide an opportunity for better understanding the relationship between bureaucracy, leadership, and ecumenicity.

##### The Sample:

The research reported here is based on the returns of a mailed questionnaire (see Appendix II) which was distributed in the Spring of 1970 to a random sample of 500 Missouri Synod clergymen. Sixty per cent (298) of the questionnaires were returned of which 275 were received in time to be included in the tabulation.<sup>15</sup> The frame for the

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<sup>15</sup> Twenty-three of the returned questionnaires were unusable because the respondent refused to answer the questionnaire, or because the questionnaire could not be delivered due to death or lack of forwarding address. An examination of the non-returns on seminary, year of graduation, and region, showed no appreciable differences from the returned questionnaires.

sample was the 1967 *The Lutheran Annual* (of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod), which lists all the clergy in the Synod. The nth person from an alphabetical listing was included in the sample, unless that person was serving outside of the United States, in which case the following name with a United States address was selected.

The Questionnaire:

This instrument<sup>16</sup> was designed primarily as a survey of perceptions, attitudes, and opinions about the decision to declare pulpit and altar fellowship with TALC, Synodical leadership and bureaucracy, deviance within the Synod, the theological position of the Synod, and the ecumenical involvement in general of the Synod. The questionnaire included both forced-choice and open-ended questions.

These data were run twice: first in terms of the respondents' background and attitudes,<sup>17</sup> and again in terms of relationships between various attitudes themselves. The first analysis was intended to discover the characteristics of the respondents in the sample: their age, seminary, education, father's occupation, involvement in Synodical

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<sup>16</sup>The advantages of the questionnaire include: relatively low cost, they can be administered simultaneously, and they cover a wide geographical area.

<sup>17</sup>The data presented on these variables are from two-way tables only. There was a program for three-way tables; however, it proved to be faulty, and therefore, the results were unusable.

administration, attitudes towards ecumenicity, fellowship with TALC, and the like. A summary of the distribution of these responses, given in percentages, follows.

#### Background of the Respondents

Not surprisingly, the data suggest that the clergy in the Missouri Synod have strongly Lutheran educational backgrounds.

TABLE 1

#### Missouri Synod Clergy - Educational Backgrounds

	Elementary	High School	College
Public	39% (107)	37% (103)	10% ( 23)
Parochial	42 (110)	52 (133)	80 (220)
Both above	18 ( 50)	11 ( 31)	10 ( 24)
	99% (267)	100% (267)	100% (267)

Well over 60 per cent received education in Lutheran schools at all levels.

TABLE 2

#### Father's Occupation of Missouri Synod Clergy

Farmer	21%	( 58)
Laborer	8	( 22)
Craftsman, foremen, operators	18	( 48)
Sales, Clerical	6	( 16)
Manager	8	( 23)
Teacher, Pastor	29	( 79)
Professional	5	( 14)
Dead, NA	5	( 15)
	100%	(275)

Similarly, 29 per cent of the clergy had Lutheran teachers or pastors as fathers. Scherer's (Scherer, 1963) comprehensive study of the clergy of the Missouri Synod in 1959 indicated that 35 per cent of all clergymen in the Synod were sons of clergymen or parochial school teachers, as compared with about 20 per cent of clerical sons in most other Protestant denominations. The percentage differences between this study and Scherer's most probably are due to the deletion of all missionaries from the present sample, although this is not to rule out the possible and gradual change in recruitment pattern for Missouri Synod clergy.

It is also instructive to note that Scherer's study suggested that these sons of church personnel formed an elite group within the Missouri Synod, as they were most likely to attend the Synod's most prestigious school, St. Louis Concordia Seminary, and hold administrative positions. He found that they held almost two-thirds of the positions on the Central Praesidium and Board of Directors, 71 per cent of the Synod's college presidencies, and 62 per cent of the chairmanships on national boards and committees.

As a group, the clergy appear to have a high educational level, with 70 per cent having at least one college or university degree, as indicated in Table 3.

TABLE 3

## Highest Academic Degree of Missouri Synod Clergy

Less than B.A.	30%	( 83)
B.A./B.S., B.Ed.	22	( 60)
B.D.	30	( 83)
M.A., M.Ed.	10	( 26)
M.S.T.	6	( 14)
PhD., ThD., DEd.	2	( 09)
	100%	(275)

The majority of the clergy sampled received their training at the St. Louis seminary, as indicated in Table 4.

TABLE 4

## Seminary Training of Missouri Synod Clergy

St. Louis Concordia	75%	(207)
Springfield Concordia	25	( 68)
	100%	(275)

Slightly over half of the respondents have been involved in Synodical administration at some level, as indicated in Table 5; most of these, at the district level.

TABLE 5

## Synodical Offices Held by Missouri Synod Clergy

None	45%	(123)
District	46	(127)
Synod	9	( 25)
	100%	(275)

And finally, 65 per cent of the respondents were ministers in congregations of 600 and less persons, with the largest concentration in the East and North-Central states.

#### Ecumenical Attitudes and Background Factors

Several questions dealt specifically with attitudes towards the pulpit and altar fellowship declaration with TALC. Seventy-six per cent (209) of the respondents stated they supported fellowship with TALC. However, there were several significant differences, as calculated by chi square, between the supporters and opponents of fellowship in terms of their backgrounds and attitudes towards ecumenical relations.

TABLE 6

#### Educational Background by Fellowship Support

	Less than B.A.	B.A. B.D.	M.A. Plus	Totals
Support Fellowship	23% (48)	56% (117)	21% (44)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	53% (35)	38% ( 25)	9% ( 6)	100% ( 66)
sig. = .001				

Those who opposed the fellowship declaration tended to be significantly less educated than were the supporters (Table 6). Additionally, a higher percentage of those who opposed fellowship were graduates of the Springfield seminary; that is 55% of the Springfield graduates as compared with 26% of the St. Louis graduates were opposed to fellow-

ship. Although this was significant at the .02 level, there is a very weak association of .23 as measured on Cramer's V.

Finally, the fellowship supporters tend to be younger (Table 7), with 74 per cent under fifty years old, while those who oppose fellowship were more evenly distributed in terms of age, although they tended to be most concentrated (74%) in the 36 - 65 age groups.

TABLE 7  
Age by Fellowship Support

	25 - 50 years old	51 - 66+ years old	Total
Support Fellowship	74% (156)	26% (53)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	51% (34)	49% (32)	100% (66)

sig. = .01

Supporters and opponents also, expectedly, differed in their implementation, perception, and appraisal of fellowship with TALC.

TABLE 8  
Clerical Implementation of Fellowship by Their  
Support of Fellowship

	None	Acquaint Discuss	Commune Transfer	Pulpit Exchange	Other	Total
Support Fellowship	29% (60)	22% (46)	11% (22)	22% (44)	16% (34)	100% (206)
Oppose Fellowship	77% (51)	11% (07)	8% (05)	2% (01)	1% (01)	100% (65)

sig. = .001    V = .44

Thus, as Table 8 shows, the majority appear to be consistent in their convictions. Further, many of those who supported but had not implemented fellowship wrote on the questionnaire that they had had no opportunity to do so because they were located in an isolated community far from any TALC churches.

TABLE 9

Missouri Synod Clergymen's Perception of Agreement  
with TALC by Their Support of Fellowship

	Not doctrine not practice	In doctrine not practice	Not doctrine in practice	Both	Total
Support Fellowship	5% (10)	21% (44)	4% (8)	70% (146)	100% (208)
Oppose Fellowship	88% (58)	8% (05)	3% (2)	1% (1)	100% (66)
sig. = .001    V = .83					

It appears from Table 9 that the supporters of fellowship believe that there is agreement in doctrine and practice with TALC, while those who oppose fellowship deny any agreement in doctrine or practice exist. Further, as Table 10 indicates, the supporters of fellowship believe that fellowship with TALC will be beneficial to the Missouri Synod, while those who oppose fellowship have contrary opinions.

TABLE 10

Clerical Perception of Fellowship with TALC as  
Beneficial by Support of Fellowship

	Fellowship as Beneficial				Total
	no	not know	yes	absolutely	
Support Fellowship	4% (8)	12% (26)	32% (66)	52% (109)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	86% (57)	11% (07)	3% (2)	-	100% (66)

sig. = .001    V = .84

Several questions were intended to elicit clerical attitudes towards ecumenicity in general.

TABLE 11

Clerical Perception of Progress Towards Lutheran  
Union by Their Support of Fellowship

	Progress Towards Fellowship				Total
	none	superficial	some	much	
Support Fellowship	-	8% (17)	45% (94)	47% (98)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	9% (6)	49% (32)	34% (22)	8% (5)	100% (65)

sig. = .001    V = .50

Of those who supported fellowship, 92 per cent (Table 11) believed that there had been some or much progress towards Lutheran union, as compared to only 42 per cent of the opponents of fellowship. By contrast, 58 per cent of the opponents of fellowship felt that either no progress or superficial progress had been made towards Lutheran union as

against less than 10 per cent of those supporting fellowship.

Projection of future fellowship (Table 12) follows along the same line as the issue of fellowship with TALC as far as the opponents of fellowship were concerned; that is, they are opposed to fellowship with *any* other group.

TABLE 12

Clergymen's Perception of Future Fellowship by  
Their Current Support of Fellowship with TALC

	Future Fellowship			Total
	None	LCA	Other denominations	
Support Fellowship	51% (107)	41% (85)	8% (17)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	100% (66)	-	-	100% (66)

sig. = .001

It is interesting to note that 51 per cent of those supporting fellowship with TALC were still not willing to foresee further fellowship with any other group, even including the other major Lutheran body, the Lutheran Church in America.

One question sought to determine the respondents' attitudes towards progress in ecumenical relations, even under a conservative administration (Table 13).

TABLE 13

Projected Progress in Ecumenical Relations with  
Conservative Administration by Current Support  
of Fellowship

	Projected Progress			
	Not know	None	Some	Total
Support Fellowship	11% (23)	22% (45)	67% (141)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	23% (15)	21% (14)	56% (37)	100% (66)

sig. = .05

It can be seen that twice as many of those who currently oppose fellowship as compared to the supporters were uncertain as to the effect of a conservative administration, perhaps suggesting a distrust of the leadership. Still, a majority in both groups felt that ecumenicity would continue in the Synod regardless of the administration.

A series of questions were intended to obtain the respondent's perception of the support of other groups within the Synod towards the fellowship declaration with TALC.

TABLE 14

Clergymen's Perception of Synodical Official's  
Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship

	Synodical Officials				Total
	Not know	Do not support	Are divided	Do support	
Support Fellowship	12% (24)	3% (7)	5% (11)	80% (167)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	24% (16)	8% (5)	24% (15)	44% (29)	100% (65)

sig. = .001

The respondents who oppose fellowship are less likely to see Synodical Officials in support, but rather view them as divided on support or non-support of fellowship (Table 14); by contrast, those who support fellowship perceived themselves as being in agreement with 80 per cent of the Synodical officials. It is interesting to note that again, as compared to the supporters, twice as many of the respondents who oppose fellowship did not offer an opinion (compare with Table 13 above).

TABLE 15

Clergymen's Perception of District Officials  
Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship

	District Officials				Total
	Not know	Do not support	Are divided	Do support	
Support Fellowship	10% (20)	9% (19)	9% (18)	73% (152)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	14% (09)	26% (17)	23% (15)	38% (25)	100% (66)

sig. = .001

The respondent's perception of the District official's support of fellowship (Table 15) is very similar to their perception of the Synodical officials support (Table 14). However, the respondents who oppose fellowship feel that more District than Synodical officials are against fellowship with TALC.

TABLE 16

Clergymen's Perception of Fellow Conference Clergy's  
Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship

	Fellow Conference Clergy				Total
	Not know	Do not support	Are divided	Do support	
Support Fellowship	10% (22)	10% (21)	16% (33)	64% (133)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	12% (08)	56% (36)	20% (13)	12% (8)	100% (65)

sig. = .001

At the local level where one might expect the most realistic and accurate evaluation of fellowship support, the majority of both those who supported or opposed fellowship perceived themselves as being representative of the opinions of their fellow conference clergy (Table 16). Only 12 per cent of those who opposed fellowship felt that clergy at the local level were in favor of fellowship, while 64 per cent of the supporters felt that clergy in their area were in favor. Both proportions are much lower than the perception of the support of Synodical or District officials (see Tables 14 and 15).

TABLE 17

Clergymen's Perception of Own Congregation's  
Support by Their Own Support of Fellowship

	Congregation				Total
	Not know	Do not support	Are divided	Do support	
Support Fellowship	11% (22)	4% (8)	7% (15)	78% (164)	100% (209)
Oppose Fellowship	24% (16)	64% (41)	6% (4)	6% (4)	100% (65)

sig. = .001

Finally, the respondents perceived themselves as representative of the attitudes current in their own congregations (Table 17). Both those who supported and opposed fellowship perceived little variance within their own congregations on the subject of fellowship. It is of interest to note that almost a quarter of the respondents opposing fellowship stated that they did not know the opinion towards fellowship within their own congregation, indicating that perhaps the congregation had not been exposed to the issue.

In sum, these findings comparing fellowship supporters and opponents suggest that there were: *first*, quite different attitudes between them towards ecumenicity in general (Tables 11 and 12) and the declaration of fellowship with TALC in particular (Tables 9 and 10); *second*, systematic differences in their perception of the attitudes of the leadership regarding fellowship and ecumenicity in general (Tables 14 and 15); and therefore, as hypothesized a

possible relationship between their attitudes and perceptions of the leadership/bureaucracy and their attitudes and perceptions on ecumenical relations.

The data have also been re-analyzed in terms of attitudinal and/or perceptual relationships. The second mode of analysis involved a cross-tabulation of selected perceptual and attitudinal items, with the goal of discovering associations between perceptions and attitudes themselves. Items were selected on the basis of their differentiation of attitudes on either ecumenicity or the church.

The analysis focussed on the relationship between (a) "church" factors such as bureaucracy/leadership and (b) "ecumenical" attitudes: specifically (1) on whether those with a favorable orientation towards bureaucratic organization and leadership also favorable perceived ecumenical relations; and conversely (2) whether those with an unfavorable orientation towards bureaucratic organization and leadership also had an unfavorable attitude towards ecumenicity. Based upon the above (Tables 6 to 17) it is hypothesized that a favorable attitude towards ecumenicity will be associated with a favorable attitude towards leadership and bureaucratic organization in the American denominational context.

The questions from the attitudinal items were judged on whether they elicited primarily "church" or

"ecumenical" attitudes and perceptions. "Church" and "ecumenical" were operationally defined as including the following.

#### Church

1. Perception of the role of the church (open versus closed).
2. Perception of effect of bureaucratic organization in the Synod.
3. Perception of the leadership and of differences in perspective between Synodical leaders and local clergy.

#### Ecumenical

1. Perception of the state of the Missouri Synod's confessional character.
2. Attitude towards fellowship with Lutheran groups.
3. Attitude towards procedures in negotiating fellowship, that is, perceived desirability of homogeneity and the necessity of a delineated, authoritarian guide.

Five questions were judged as eliciting primarily "church" perceptions. Of these, two dealt with the perceived role of the church, that is, as being primarily open or closed. (These terms are more fully defined in relation to their historical reference in pages 40-41 below). One "church" question dealt with the perceived effects of bureaucratic organization; and two dealt with the perceived effects of Synodical-administrative leadership and any perceived differences between the perceptions of Synodical leadership and local clergy. The presentation of Tables 19, 21, 23, 25 and 27 follow the above order for easy reference.

Five questions were judged as eliciting primarily "ecumenical" attitudes and perceptions. Two dealt with the perception of the Synod's current Confessional character. One dealt with the perception of benefits or losses from fellowship, and two dealt with attitudes towards procedures in negotiating fellowship, that is, the requirements of internal homogeneity and the necessity of a delineated, authoritarian guide. This is the order of the "ecumenical" items in each cross tabulation table. All the "ecumenical" statements are arranged and presented in such a way that *agreement on all items reflects a non-ecumenical viewpoint.* (See Appendix III for the total sample response to the "ecumenical" items.)

The tables that follow are designed to give an overview of the respondent's perception of the role of the church, the bureaucracy and the leadership and their attitudes towards the Synod's ecumenical relations. To do this, both the "church" and the "ecumenical" items were analyzed together.

*These tables show only the percentage of respondents who either AGREED or DISAGREED with both the church and ecumenical items.* The elimination of mixed responses highlights the demonstration of any strong positive relationship between the two variables.

It should be noted that for the purposes of this tabulation, the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses were

collapsed, and the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses were collapsed, while the "don't know" responses were deleted. Again, this is because of a primary interest in the variance associated with definite or "extreme" attitudes on ecumenicity and the church. Chi square analysis was used as the statistical test of significance, and Gamma ( $\gamma$ ) as the measure of association of the relationship. (See Appendix II for the exact wording of statements).

Two questions dealt with the perception of the role of the church, as being "open" or "closed" to ecumenical relations. Historically, the Missouri Synod has approached ecumenical relations guided by the explicit demand for complete agreement in both doctrine and practice. This no doubt stemmed from its strong leadership: presidents who shared similar backgrounds and enjoyed long tenure in office; this approach was also strengthened by the homogeneous educational experiences, language, ethnicity, along with the similar status location of the membership.

Ecumenical relations were approached with such opinion items as: 1) the need for complete agreement in doctrine and practice and the desirability of explicit position statements; 2) the desirability for internal homogeneity, and the corollary, little tolerance for internal diversity; 3) perception of change as requiring an

accompanying unanimous agreement as to direction and result; and 4) diversity implied a loss of confessional character in the Synod. As stated above, these items are worded to mirror the frame of the "ecumenical" questions, that is agreement with all would reflect an authoritarian stance, one which was closed to ecumenical relations. This attitude is considered "authoritarian" here-in as it implies a *closed* stance towards the diversity and compromise which attends ecumenical endeavors.

Within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod there are also those members with what may be termed an open, non-authoritarian attitude towards ecumenical relations. This is characterized by such opinions as: 1) complete agreement in doctrine and practice is not necessary for fellowship, for example, explicit position statements obscure the consensus which does exist; 2) internal homogeneity is not necessary, indeed internal diversity can be beneficial; 3) there need not be complete agreement on the direction and result of change; and 4) internal diversity does not imply a loss of Confessional character in the Synod. The church is perceived as being *open* to ecumenical relations, and the diversity and compromise associated with such relations.

#### Analysis of Attitudes and Perceptions

For the purposes herein, the first item asked whether the respondent perceived the church's role as being primarily "answer giving," that is authoritarian (closed to

ecumenicity) or as a "question-raising," that is, non-authoritarian (open to ecumenicity) institution. It stated:

The church's primary role is to give answers, not to raise questions.

The total sample response to this statement was as follows:

TABLE 18

Church's Primary Role to Give Answers

Disagree	64%	(177)
Agree	23%	( 64)
Don't Know	13%	( 34)
	100%	(275)

Of the total responses to this item, 64% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, that is they had an open attitude towards the role of the church; while 23% agreed with the statement, that is, they had a closed attitude towards the role of the church. It is hypothesized that a non-authoritarian (open) attitude towards the church would be associated with favorable ecumenical attitudes. Table 19, which cross-tabulates this item with the "ecumenical" items demonstrates this.

TABLE 19

Perception of the Role of the Church  
as Authoritarian (Closed) by Ecumenical Orientation

	OPEN (Disagree w/both)	CLOSED (Agree w/both)	sig.	Y
Ecumenical relations imply a loss of Confessional character	73%	60%	.001	.60
Is too much liberal teaching in LC-MS	72%	67%	.001	.67
Lose more than gain from fellowship	67%	67%	.001	-.60
Internal homeogeneity required for fellowship	78%	61%	.001	.68
Fellowship requires exact position statements	65%	75%	.001	.69

As the data suggest, those clergy who have an authoritarian (closed) perception of the church have less ecumenical attitudes than those clergy with a non-authoritarian (open) attitude towards the role of the church. The closed church attitudes are associated with a negative opinion of ecumenicism; ecumenicism is viewed as a detriment to the Synod's confessional character, as associated with liberal teaching, and as not beneficial to the Synod. Further, attitudes towards negotiating fellowship revealed the desirability of internal homeogeneity and exact position statements was favored by the authoritarian group, that is those who perceived the role of the church as being closed to ecumenical relations.

The second item concerning the perception of the role of the church was somewhat more discerning. It stated:

No Synodical college or seminary should teach anything that is found to result in its students doubting or questioning the Bible as being the Word of God.

The total sample response to this item was as follows:

TABLE 20

Church to Censor Teaching which Produces  
Doubting or Questioning

Disagree	43%	(117)
Agree	50%	(139)
Not Know	7%	( 19)
	100%	(275)

This item was intended to be a practical illustration of the church role item mentioned above, which was more general. The responses to this item were quite different. 43% per cent of the total respondents disagreed with this statement, while 50 per cent agreed, demonstrating the authoritarianism that is still present in this conservative synod. When cross-tabulated with ecumenical attitudes the responses were as follows.

TABLE 21

Perception of the Role of the Church as  
Authoritarian (Closed) by Ecumenical Orientation

	OPEN (Disagree w/both)	CLOSED (Agree w/both)	sig.	Y.
Ecumenical relations imply loss of Confessional character	81%	53%	.001	.65
Is too much liberal teaching in LC-MS	87%	65%	.001	.86
Lose more than gain from fellowship	76%	61%	.001	-.66
Internal homogeneity required for fellowship	88%	52%	.001	.78
Fellowship requires exact position statements	74%	67%	.001	.71

As will again be noted, those clergy who have a non-authoritarian (open) perception towards the role of the church are more ecumenical in their attitudes than those with authoritarian (closed) perception of the role of the church. The majority of the latter group feels that the ecumenical relations are doing harm to the internal well-being of the Synod and imply a loss, and that ecumenical relations should be negotiated with the aid of a delineated, authoritarian guide.

One item was intended to elicit attitudes towards the effects of bureaucratic organization in the Synod. It stated:

The increasing bureaucracy of the Synod is going to lead to more inefficiency and bungling of church affairs.

The total sample response to this item was as follows:

TABLE 22

Increased Bureaucracy Will Have Negative  
Effect on Church Affairs

Disagree	22%	( 61)
Agree	38%	(104)
Not Know	40%	(109)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(275)</u>

Only 22 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 38 per cent agreed. The large percentage of respondents who had no definite opinion about the effect of bureaucracy would indicate that many perhaps had not considered the influence of organizational structure on church functioning. The 38 per cent who perceived a negative influence of bureaucracy on church functioning again illustrates the basically conservative character of the synod. When cross-tabulated with ecumenical attitudes the responses were as follows:

TABLE 23

Negative Opinion of Church Bureaucracy by  
Ecumenical Orientation

	OPEN (Disagree w/both)	CLOSED (Agree w/both)	sig.	Y
Ecumenical relations imply loss of Confessional character	87%	56%	.001	.78
Is too much liberal teaching in LC-MS	88%	52%	.001	.78
Lose more than gain from fellowship	67%	53%	.05	-.39
Internal homogeneity required for fellowship	88%	47%	.001	.74
Fellowship requires exact position statements	64%	56%	.05	.39

Theoretically and often actually bureaucracy has been associated with increased ecumenical relations. The pattern of the responses above supports this positive association between bureaucracy and ecumenicity. Those who disagreed with the negative statements about an increasing bureaucracy had consistently positive attitudes towards ecumenicity and an openness towards ecumenical negotiating techniques, that is, as not requiring internal homogeneity or exact position statements. Those who perceived bureaucracy negatively were less ecumenical in their attitudes. The direction of this relationship between attitudes towards church and ecumenicity is constant in this table as it was in the above Tables 19 and 21.

One item dealt with the respondents perception of the power and influence of the Synodical leadership in determining the course of the Synod. It read:

The direction of the Synod usually depends on the type of men in top Synodical positions.

The total sample response to this item was as follows:

TABLE 24

Direction of Synod Depends on Leaders

Disagree	32%	( 88)
Agree	57%	(158)
Not Know	11%	( 29)
	100%	(275)

The majority of the respondents, 57 per cent, agreed with the statement, while only 32 per cent disagreed; again indicating the authoritarian posture of many in the conservative body. When this item was cross-tabulated with the ecumenical attitudinal items, the responses were as follows:

TABLE 25

Perception of Leadership as Determining Synod  
by Ecumenical Orientation

	OPEN (Disagree w/both)	CLOSED (Agree w/both)	sig.	Y
Ecumenical relations imply loss of Confessional character	82%	48%	.001	.61
Is too much liberal teaching in Synod	82%	53%	.001	.68
Lose more than gain from fellowship	71%	52%	.01	-.44
Internal homogeneity required for fellowship	84%	44%	.001	.62
Fellowship requires exact position statements	72%	58%	.001	.58

The data suggests that those who have a non-authoritarian attitude of the church's role, that is, they discount the power and influence of the Synodical leadership in directing the course of the synod tend to be more ecumenical in their attitudes. Ecumenicity is viewed positively and the requirements for negotiating fellowship, such as the permissibility of internal diversity and the absence of exact position statements, are flexible. Those who had an authoritarian or closed view of the church were less ecumenical in their orientation, although the relationship was not as strong. Again, in this table as in the others the direction between the church and ecumenical items is constant, although the magnitude varies.

The final item on attitudes towards the church was designed to measure the perceived disparity between the perspectives of Synodical officials and the local parish clergy. It stated:

The perspectives of Synodical Officials are usually different from those of the average parish pastor.

The total sample response to this item was as follows:

TABLE 26

Difference in Perspective between Leaders  
and Local Pastors

Disagree	39%	(108)
Agree	39%	(108)
Not Know	22%	( 59)
	100%	(275)

Those who agreed and disagreed with the statement were equal, with 39 per cent agreeing and 39 per cent disagreeing. In regard to the leadership's position *vis-a-vis* ecumenicity, one is able to surmise what the perceived ecumenical orientation of the leadership is thought to be by the local clergy, compare Tables 14 and 15. When cross-tabulated with the ecumenical attitudinal items the responses were as follows:

TABLE 27

Perception of Divergence between Synodical Officials  
and Local Clergy by Ecumenical Orientation

	OPEN (Disagree w/both)	CLOSED (Agree w/both)	sig.	Y
Ecumenical relations imply loss of Confessional character	79%	50%	.001	.58
Is too much liberal teaching in LC-MS	73%	49%	.01	.45
Lose more than gain from fellowship	68%	55%	.01	-.44
Internal homogeneity required for fellowship	80%	44%	.001	.51
Fellowship requires exact position statements	56%	51%	NS	.13

Those who had a favorable ecumenical orientation did not perceive any difference between their perspectives and those of the national leadership. It can be speculated that those with an unfavorable ecumenical orientation may feel alienated from the decisions and perspectives of Synodical administrators, especially as they perceive the Synod leadership as strongly influencing its direction, Table 25. This may in part explain the emergence of several smaller synods in protest to the theological and ecumenical orientation of the Missouri Synod in the past several years. However, it is well to note that those who had a less favorable orientation to ecumenicity were fairly well divided, that is, their agreement with both the church item and non-ecumenical items

was about 50 per cent.

Again, the direction of the relationship is constant although the magnitude varies. This was true of all church-ecumenicity cross-tabulated tables, even though the total sample response varied from 22 per cent disagree (Table 22) to 64 per cent disagree (Table 18) on the church items. This supports the premise of the hypothesis that there is a relationship between attitudes and perceptions of the "church" and the attitudes and perceptions of "ecumenicity".

## V. CONCLUSION

As suggested above, the sparse sociological theory on ecumenicity has related it to three general areas. *First*, ecumenicity has been seen as a response to the current pluralistic-secular context of religious denominations, that is, situational factors to which denominations formerly gave expression have diminished with the emergence of a new cultural unity. In other words, ecumenicity expresses the common social base of American culture. This paper has not specifically explored this theory, other than to suggest that the composition of the membership and leadership in the Missouri Synod has become more involved in American culture and ecumenicity in the past fifty years than it had previously.

*Second*, ecumenicity has been theoretically related to the emergence of bureaucratic organization in denominations which have become functionally similar (regardless of theology) and responsive to the demands of rational utilization of denominational resources; thus generating the desirability of ecumenical arrangements. Finally, ecumenicity has also been viewed as a response to the status and power demands made by clerical leadership and bureaucratic administrators. This paper has focussed attention on these last two perspectives.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has recently shown ecumenical tendencies by seeking to establish fellowship with The American Lutheran Church, another major Lutheran denomination; one that has a more open attitude towards diversity and a willingness to settle for less than complete agreement on all matters of doctrine and practice than the historic Missouri Synod position. This openness to ecumenicity has paralleled the Missouri Synod's change to an ethnically diversified membership, increased bureaucratization of its organization, and leadership from its former clerical-administrators. The historical long-term organizational continuity of the Missouri Synod coupled with the above factors was thought to provide an excellent opportunity for a better understanding of the relationship between bureaucracy, leadership, and ecumenicity.

The research presented in this paper was intended as a survey of selected clergy attitudes towards ecumenicity and church organization (bureaucracy and leadership) within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. However, within this orientation, it has been possible to suggest a better understanding of ecumenicity, in so far as it supported two theoretical perspectives.

The data suggest that among clergy of the Missouri Synod there is a positive relationship between the perception of, and attitudes towards the denomination's bureaucracy and leadership, and attitudes towards

ecumenicity. Specifically, a less authoritarian perception of the role of the church, or its leadership, a greater acceptance of bureaucracy, and a perceived agreement with the perspectives of Synodical officials is associated with a more ecumenical attitude. This orientation does not see ecumenical relations as a compromise of the Synod, nor does it demand homogeneity within the Synod. An authoritarian attitude towards the role of the church, its leadership, and a negative opinion of its bureaucracy is associated with a less favorable ecumenical orientation. Authoritarianism appears to effect ecumenical orientations in so far as it is associated with an intolerance of ambiguity and a need for commitment of positional stereotypes (policy and polity) in order to resolve ambiguity.

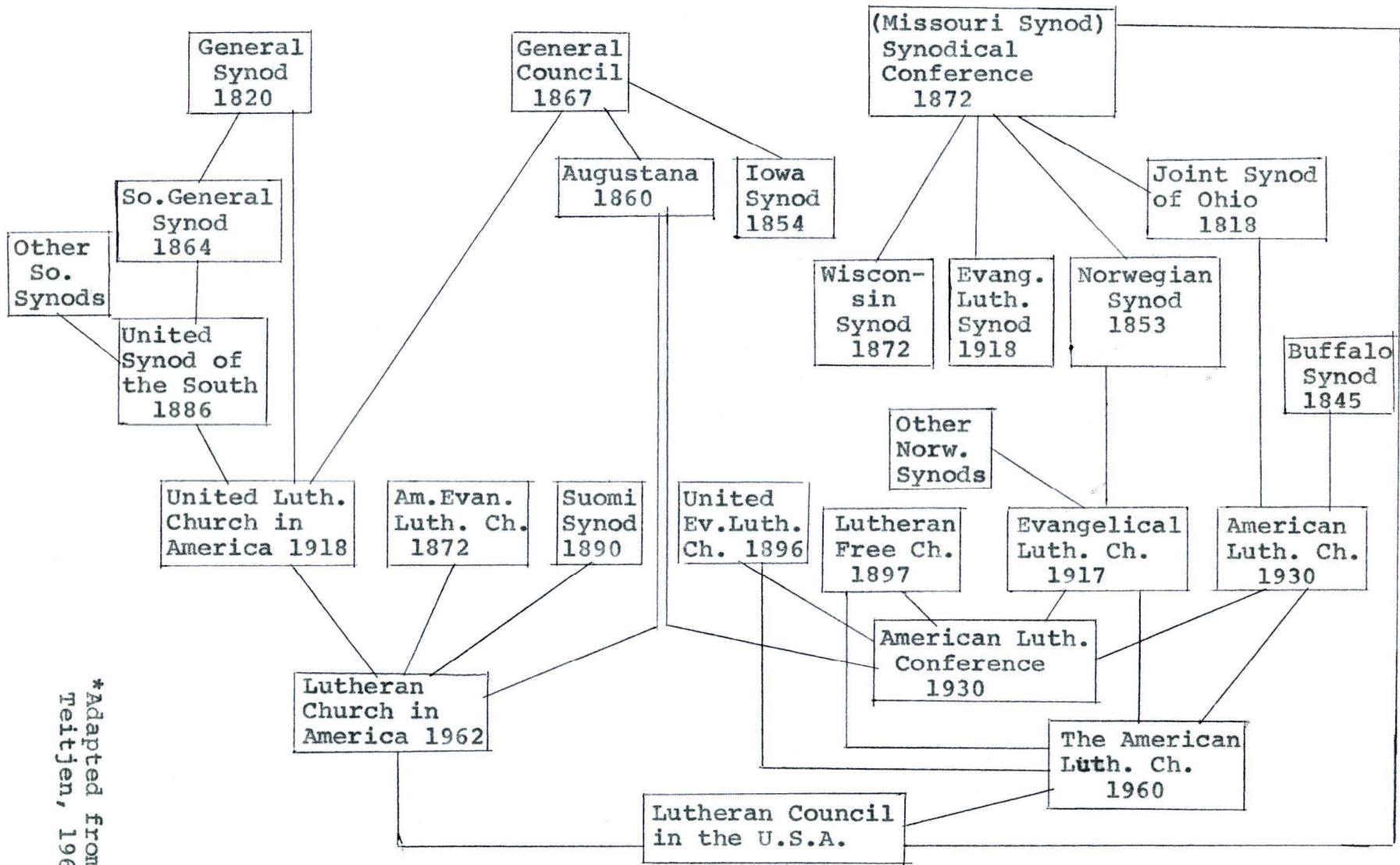
Having suggested the association between orientations towards church organization and leadership and ecumenicity, further research should be helpful in determining background characteristics of each, and the exact nature of the influence of authoritarianism.

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APPENDIX I\*

\*Adapted from  
Reitjen, 1966

APPENDIX II



UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Department of Anthropology and Sociology*

Dear Pastor:

Enclosed is a short questionnaire on your opinions and practice of fellowship, an issue which is of vital concern to all within the Missouri Synod. The data from it will serve as the basis for my Master's thesis in sociology at the University of Victoria. The thesis work is under the direction of Dr. Donald Ball.

I know that your time is extremely valuable, but because an examination of the situation could provide much needed insight into any possible implications, I hope you will please take the time now to answer the questions that follow. An addressed return envelope has been enclosed for your convenience. Non-return of the questionnaire could bias the results and possibly lead to inaccurate conclusions.

Your name is among 500 chosen by chance from an alphabetized list. All replies will be held in complete confidence and your identity will be kept anonymous.

Thank you for your co-operation and the interest you have shown in helping to understand some of the problems currently facing the Synod.

Sincerely,

C.G. Zeh

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_\_  
Married \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Children \_\_\_\_\_  
Widowed \_\_\_\_\_

Education:

Elementary: Public \_\_\_\_\_ Parochial \_\_\_\_\_  
High School: Public \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran \_\_\_\_\_  
College: Public \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran \_\_\_\_\_ Other Private \_\_\_\_\_  
Seminary: St. Louis \_\_\_\_\_ Springfield \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle degrees obtained: B.A. B.Ed. B.D. M.A. M.Ed.  
M.S.T. Ph.D. D.Ed. Th.D. D.D.

Year of ordination \_\_\_\_\_

Please give the city, state, and approximate size of the congregation of the parishes where you have served, beginning with your first assignment.

<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>No. of Souls</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

If you are currently not a parish pastor, what is your present position?

When did you make your first tentative choice that you would definitely like to enter the ministry?

- \_\_\_\_\_ in elementary school
- \_\_\_\_\_ in high school
- \_\_\_\_\_ in college
- \_\_\_\_\_ while working full-time (as a \_\_\_\_\_) or in military service.

Have you held any Synodical Offices? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what were these?

at the district level:

at the Synodical level:

Have you written any published books, articles, pamphlets? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What was your father's occupation when you entered seminary?

What is/are the current occupation(s) of your brother(s)?

Do you support the declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship with the ALC? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you made an effort to implement this fellowship in your own ministry? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(If yes, how?)

Is this a change from your usual practice? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feel that there was sufficient agreement with the ALC to declare fellowship?

- \_\_\_\_\_ doctrinally yes, in practical things no
- \_\_\_\_\_ doctrinally no, in practical things yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ yes, in both doctrine and practice
- \_\_\_\_\_ no, in neither doctrine nor practice

Do you think that there currently exists sufficient reason for fellowship with:

- \_\_\_\_\_ the LCA
- \_\_\_\_\_ other denominations

Should fellowship be decided on the local level only? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the following groups feel about the declaration of pulpit and altar fellowship with the ALC?

	Support	Do Not Support	Do Not Know
Synodical Officials	_____	_____	_____
District Officials	_____	_____	_____
Fellow conference clergy	_____	_____	_____
Majority of professors the seminary from which you graduated	_____	_____	_____
Present congregation	_____	_____	_____

Do you receive the Christian News? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, do you pay for your subscription? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If No, did you have it discontinued? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What is your opinion of the Christian News? (check as many as appropriate)  
It should be CONTINUED as it:

- \_\_\_\_\_ exposes doctrinal deviation within the Synod
- \_\_\_\_\_ provides a forum for conservatives
- \_\_\_\_\_ is essential for communication within the Synod
- \_\_\_\_\_ is a valuable source of news not available elsewhere

It should be DISCONTINUED as it:

- \_\_\_\_\_ is not representative of the feeling of the majority in the Synod
- \_\_\_\_\_ creates divisions
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the work of a radical
- \_\_\_\_\_ violates the principle of Christian charity
- \_\_\_\_\_ is gossipy

Do you feel that the Christian News is an accurate expression of the "conservatives" within the Synod? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about the "Statement of the Council of Presidents" which repudiated the Christian News?

- \_\_\_\_\_ It was out of order, both in procedure and content
- \_\_\_\_\_ while I agree that the Christian News does contribute to tensions within the Synod, it was not the place of the Council to issue an edict against it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ while I do not think that the Christian News is seriously disrupting the Synod, there was nothing wrong with the Council coming out against it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree with both the content and the procedure used by the Council.

Do you feel you have a right to question or dispute the position taken by the Synod? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what means do you think is most effective?

- \_\_\_\_\_ letter to district official
- \_\_\_\_\_ letter to Synodical official
- \_\_\_\_\_ letter to a Synodical publication
- \_\_\_\_\_ saying so in my own ministry and preaching
- \_\_\_\_\_ conventions
- \_\_\_\_\_ using extra-Synodical publications

Do you feel that there has been any real progress toward union within Lutheranism in America?

- \_\_\_\_\_ very much
- \_\_\_\_\_ some
- \_\_\_\_\_ superficially
- \_\_\_\_\_ none

Do you feel that the declaration of fellowship was in the best interests of our Synod?

- \_\_\_\_\_ definitely yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ don't know
- \_\_\_\_\_ no

Do you think that the type of delegate system used for Synodical conventions is truly representative?

- \_\_\_\_\_ yes, definitely
- \_\_\_\_\_ yes, but could be improved
- \_\_\_\_\_ don't know
- \_\_\_\_\_ no, but no alternative

Did you attend the recent Denver Convention? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If "yes", in what capacity did you go? \_\_\_\_\_

In regard to the fellowship question, did you feel that the proceedings were conducted fairly and that all sides and issues were given a fair hearing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ No Opinion \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feel that the Synod will move forward in its inter-church relations under the present administration? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What do you feel are sufficient grounds for fellowship? (please include the kinds "gains" or "losses" for the Missouri Synod).

We are interested in finding out how you feel about certain issues. Below are a number of statements; please mark how you feel about each in the following manner:

		<u>Mark</u>
if you	<u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>	SA
	<u>AGREE</u>	A
	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>	DK
	<u>DISAGREE</u>	D
	<u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u>	SD

The best way to resolve the problems facing the Synod today is to move slowly and to avoid extremes. \_\_\_\_\_

The Missouri Synod is losing its "Confessional" character of its past. \_\_\_\_\_

Most of the protest against declaring fellowship with the ALC has been made by a vocal minority. \_\_\_\_\_

The perspectives of the Synodical officials are usually different from those of the average parish pastor. \_\_\_\_\_

As things stand today, we stand to gain more than we could lose from fellowship with all other Lutheran bodies in America. \_\_\_\_\_

The church's primary role is to give answers, not to raise questions. \_\_\_\_\_

No Synodical college or siminary should teach anything that is found to result in its students doubting or questioning the Bible as being the Word of God. \_\_\_\_\_

The Missouri Synod seems to be pursuing a radically different theological course today, than it was around the turn of the century. \_\_\_\_\_

Complete academic freedom in our colleges and seminaries is essential for a well-rounded, informed Christian education. \_\_\_\_\_

Those who dislike the policies, actions, and/or teachings of the Synod should probably get out. \_\_\_\_\_

There is currently too much "liberal" teaching in our seminaries. \_\_\_\_\_

The direction of the Synod usually depends on the type of men in top Synodical positions. \_\_\_\_\_

We should be able to change our minds and policies progressively and constantly. \_\_\_\_\_

We should have straightened out our own theological and practical problems before we even thought about fellowship with other Lutherans. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible is to be interpreted literally or nearly literally. \_\_\_\_\_

The increasing bureaucracy of the synod is going to lead to more inefficiency and bungling of church affairs. \_\_\_\_\_

The term "inerrant" can be applied to the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_

The Brief Statement is a good doctrinal guide when negotiating fellowship with other church bodies. \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX III

TOTAL SAMPLE RESPONSE TO "ECUMENICAL" ITEMS

The Missouri Synod is losing its "Confessional" character of its past.

Disagree	61%	(169)
Agree	53%	( 94)
Not Know	4%	( 12)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(275)</u>

There is currently too much "liberal" teaching in our seminaries.

Disagree	50%	(138)
Agree	32%	( 88)
Not Know	18%	( 49)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(275)</u>

As things stand today, we stand to gain more than we could lose from fellowship with all other Lutheran bodies in America.

Gain	46%	(127)
Lose	36%	( 98)
Not Know	18%	( 50)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(275)</u>

We should have straightened out our own theological and practical problems before we even thought about fellowship with other Lutherans. (Need for internal homogeneity).

Disagree	62%	(171)
Agree	30%	( 58)
Not Know	8%	( 20)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(275)</u>

The *Brief Statement* is a good doctrinal guide when negotiating fellowship with other church bodies. (The need for an exact position statement).

Disagree	48%	(131)
Agree	42%	(116)
Not Know	10%	( 27)
	<u>100%</u>	<u>(275)</u>

VITA

Surname: PRESCOTT Given Names: CHERYL GAYLE

Place of Birth: BUFFALO, NEW YORK Date of Birth: MAY 4, 1944

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

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CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN COLLEGE, THOUSAND OAKS 1964 to 1968

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.A. (Summa Cum Laude) 1968 California Lutheran College,

\_\_\_\_\_ Thousand Oaks

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Honors and Awards:

California Lutheran College Dean's Scholarship 1966/67 and 1967/68

IFM Honorary Social Science Society

California Lutheran Honorary Society

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Publications:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

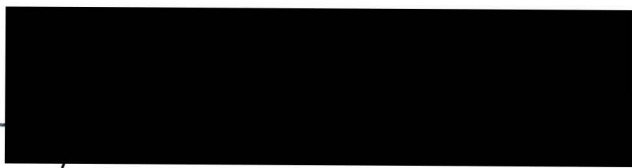
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A SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE CLERGY IN THE LUTHERAN  
CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD TOWARDS ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH  
ORGANIZATION: AN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH AN ASSOCIATION  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Author



CHERYL GAYLE PRESCOTT

*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*