

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
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Church Simple: the Church Broken

The following article, written by District President Randall Golter, is from the Rocky Mountain District's *Peaks and Valleys* newsletter for November 2010.

"Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you'" (Jonah 3:1; emphasis added).

A second time! Would you not think one word from the Lord would be sufficient? "Jonah, did you have your hearing aid turned down? Did you not hear; did you not listen?" Yes, Jonah heard, but he went another direction. I used to believe that Jonah ran away in fear, but I no longer believe that to be the case. The first call came to Jonah while he was serving a call with a six figure income in the court of King Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-28).

Jonah was comfortable in his position in the king's court. To add to this belief, Dr. Reed Lessing in his commentary on Jonah believes the Hebrew indicates that Jonah did not just pay the fare for the ship that would take him away from the Lord; he actually **financed the entire ship!**

Jonah was very American, very comfortable with all the things he had, believing that the Lord was merciful to him but not to the Assyrians. What was God's biggest obstacle to His mission to the Assyrians? One could argue it was God's own prophet!

Luther writes in his commentary on The Sermon on the Mount (*Luther's Works* AE 21:201-202):

As I said before, the Lord saw very well that among the outward and coarse vices there is none that opposes the Gospel and holds back the kingdom of God as terribly as does greed. As soon as a preacher makes it his aim to get rich, he stops performing his office the way he should. ... He cannot teach and denounce in the right places or in the right manner. He is concerned about popularity and friendship among those from whom he can get it. ... Whoever wants to do his duty as a preacher and perform his office faithfully must retain the freedom to tell the truth fearlessly, regardless of

"...Whoever wants to do his duty as a preacher and perform his office faithfully must retain the freedom to tell the truth fearlessly, regardless of other people..."

Martin Luther
Luther's Works AE

other people. ... Greed refuses to do this, for it is afraid that if it offends the bigwigs or its good friends, it will be unable to find bread. So greed puts its whistle into its pocket and keeps quiet.

What is said of preachers applies to the whole church, both the local church and the church at-large. The church that is comfortable in its nice building or in meeting its budget and does not see the harvest as ready (John 4:35) is one that cares only for itself. The church then, as God's tool for speaking His Word, becomes His biggest headache. And this church loses its prophetic voice to its community and country. Both the Old and New Testaments reveal that God continually is breaking His church, seeking to cause it to be broken in repentance. He did this with Jonah, having him swallowed by a big fish, in order that he might repent, seeing that nothing worthy dwelled in him.

This is the truth: each of us is as sin-filled as the other one. Only Christ is our "righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30)

The churches and ministries of the Rocky Mountain District ask the Lord that during these last days He will cause each of us to be broken in repentance, hating sin, loving His mercy deeply and loving each other deeply, especially those who do not own His mercy by faith.

Rev. Randall Golter

President, Rocky Mountain District

[Editor's Note: *The Lutheran Clarion* thanks Rocky Mountain District President Golter for permission to reprint a superlative article and would suggest each congregant in the Synod ask of the Lord the petition appearing in the last paragraph.]

The Walther Video

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

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Walther on "Church and State"

The terms "separation of church and state" and "religious liberty" have been the subjects of debate in America even before its founding, and are now in the forefront of debate more than ever. Since the current year 2011 is the bicentennial of the birth of Dr. C. F. W. Walther (1811-87), it is this writer's view that it would be propitious to consider what Walther had to say on the subject of church and state.¹ The purpose of this article thus is to give encouragement for others to read and study Walther's *Essays for the Church*² and particularly his leading essay on church and state, which was untitled by Walther and delivered to the Western District Convention in 1862.³ But first, some essential background on the constitutional meaning of religious liberty in America should be considered.

Religious liberty in America is recited in the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution as follows:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.....
(Amendment I)

Although the First Amendment provides for the "free exercise" of religion, the term "separation of church and state" is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution.⁴ In a well-reasoned dissenting opinion in 1985, Justice William Rehnquist (a Lutheran) of the U. S. Supreme Court argued that the original meaning of the "establishment of religion" clause in the First Amendment only "forbade preference among religious sects or denominations."⁵ James Madison, who is recognized by historians as the "Father of the Constitution," also was the architect of religious freedom in America.⁶ Madison's prescription has been characterized by former U. S. Senator Lowell Weicker to be "for a free yet *moral* secular society."⁷

The main problem today is not church encroachment in the State but, rather, the State encroachment upon the church. Several current examples which constitute an affront to orthodox Christianity are:

- the normalizing of homosexual behavior in the military;⁸
- the order not to defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA);⁹ and,
- the legalization of so-called "same-sex marriages" or "civil unions."¹⁰

These recent actions by the State, even though still in flux, are recipes for moral anarchy and social disintegration. They require constant vigilance and determination by Christians to uphold Christ's teaching of the two kingdoms to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17, KJV). Christians cannot remain silent and accept moral degradation as in the time of the Judges when "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25, KJV).

In delivering his Essay on Church and State, Walther had the personal background of his experience in Germany, where the government persecuted the orthodox faith of

certain Christians as a severe encroachment of the State upon the church. He also knew from history the other extreme in which the Lutheran church enjoyed the "wonderful blessings and benefits" of "the princely confessors of the Reformation era."¹¹ Although Walther did not *specifically* refer to the *constitutional* protection of religious liberty in America, he was cognizant of its principles and provided sound teaching on the issue of "church and state" consistent with the Constitution and Scripture. He said:

Every alliance between the two [church and state] is unnatural and can only result in damage to the church.¹²

Princes should indeed be guardians of the church and their queens its wet nurses - but by no means by taking the governance of the church into their hands, transplanting secular force into the church and bringing it to bear in the same.¹³

No matter how much one esteems the piety of a prince who proves himself to be guardian and patron of the church by sincere and loving care, the danger is always near that he will exceed the proper limit established by God and introduce secular power into the church - to the unspeakable harm of souls.¹⁴

Walther thus not only followed Christ's teaching on the two kingdoms, but also was consistent with the principles of religious liberty, free from State encroachment as expressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Much can be learned by Lutherans of today by studying the teachings of Walther in his Essay on Church and State, which are as valid now as in Walther's time.

Scott J. Meyer, B.S., M.B.A., J.D., Retired
Patent Attorney, Monsanto Company
Board President, Concordia Historical Institute

1 I am indebted to Mr. Walter Dissen for suggesting this topic and providing reasons for the article.

2 C. F. W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, annotated by Aug. R. Suelflow, Vol 1, 1857-79, Vol II, 1877-86 (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

3 C. F. W. Walther, "Address, Eighth Western District Convention, Trinity Church, Crete, Will County, Illinois, Beginning May 15, 1862, translated by Robert Ernest Smith, annotated by August R. Suelflow, in *Essays for the Church*, Vol. 1, 1857-1879 (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), pp. 64-68.

4 See discussion on that point by John Baker in *The Heritage Guide to the Constitution*, Edwin Meese III, Chairman of the Editorial Advisory Board, The Heritage Foundation (Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2005), pp. 302-07. Edwin Meese III is a member of an LCMS congregation and a former U.S. Attorney General.

5 *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985).

6 Robert S. Alley, *James Madison on Religious Liberty* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1985), p. 19.

"Every alliance between the two [church and state] is unnatural and can only result in damage to the church."

CFW Walther
Essay on Church and State

- 7 Comment by Lowell P. Weicker, Jr., in *James Madison on Religious Liberty*, p. 296, emphasis added by this writer.
- 8 See the letter to the President and the Secretary of Defense, April 28, 2010, in protest of lifting of the ban on open homosexual behavior in the military, signed by 40 retired Chaplains, including Missouri Synod Lutherans, Capt John C. Wohlrabe, Jr., CHC, USN (Ret), and Capt Mark J. Schreiber, CHC, USN (Ret.), rept. in *Christian News*, May 17, 2010. See also the article by Erik Eckholm, "Navy Rescinds Guidelines For Same-Sex Marriages," *New York Times*, May 12, 2010; but the suspension of guidelines is only temporary.
- 9 See the article by Jeffrey T. Kuhner, "Obama's Homosexual America," *The Washington Times*, Feb. 24, 2011.
- 10 Although the same-sex bill was defeated in New York State in 2009, the push for legalization continues. See the articles by Michael Barbara, "With Cuomo's Help, Groups Mobilize for Gay Marriage Bill," *New York Times*, April 20, 2011; and Nicholas Confessore and Michael Barbara, "Wealthy G.O.P. Donors Providing Bulk of Money in Push for Gay Marriage," *New York Times*, May 21, 2011.
- 11 Walther, Address, supra note 3, at p. 65.
- 12 *Ibid*, at p. 66.
- 13 *Ibid*, at p. 66.
- 14 *Ibid*, at p. 67.

For a comprehensive documented review on the principal threat to religious liberty today by State encroachment upon the church, see Alan Sears & Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2003).

Concordia Theological Seminary Honors Mr. Walter C. Dissen with Miles Christi Award

At the May 20, 2011, graduation exercises of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Dr. Lawrence Rast introduced Mr. Walter Dissen to the assembly:

"President Wenthe, may I present Mr. Walter Dissen of Chesapeake, Virginia. Born in North Dakota, Mr. Dissen describes himself as "a preacher's kid." For many years he served as a corporate attorney, first with the New York, Chicago, and Saint Louis Railroad—better known as the Nickel Plate Road—and later with the Norfolk and Western and the Norfolk and Southern railroads. Mr. Dissen's keen legal mind and his careful reading of synodical resolutions, seminary handbooks, and board minutes is nothing short of legendary.

There is never a question about where you stand with Walter Dissen. He is a man who personifies the biblical adage of both Matthew 5:37 and James 5:12: "Let your yes be yes and your no be no." Walter Dissen speaks his mind clearly and with a conviction born of a deep familiarity with the Lutheran Confessions—and refined and steeled in the stormy crucible of synodical conflict.

Mr. Dissen was elected to the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, at LCMS' Milwaukee convention in 1971, just as our sister institution was moving into a particularly difficult period in its history. Mr. Dissen served with distinction for twelve years on that Board. In 1983 he was elected to the LCMS Commission on Appeals, where he served through 1995, providing key leadership during difficult times. In 1995 he was

elected to the Board of Regents of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, where he served the Board as secretary and was an important participant in calling President Wenthe in 1996. In all of these capacities he has served faithfully and with distinction.

But there is more to Walter Dissen than this. There is no one who knows more about the recent history of LCMS than he. When I have a detailed question on a matter of synod history, I check with Walter. I jokingly refer to his home as Concordia Historical Institute "East," given the documentation that he has gathered. Just yesterday, upon his arrival here at the seminary, he left a photocopy of the Cleveland, Ohio, *Plain Dealer* at my office, with reports from the synod convention in 1973. Needless to say, I was delighted as always to read what he had to share.

Here I must share a personal story. Mr. Dissen was serving on our Board at the time of my being interviewed for the faculty of this seminary in 1996. He asked, as one would expect, a typically direct question. I, as a young theologian, began to offer a rather marvelously nuanced answer—at least in my opinion. 3 minutes...5 minutes...7 minutes—finally Mr. Dissen could not contain himself. "No!" he stated, "you're not answering the question!" "Could you restate it?" was my timid reply. "Okay. Are we saved by grace or by works?" "By grace," I said. "Good!" And that was that.

A long-time friend of this seminary, Walt Dissen is a wonderful example of a *Miles Christi*, a soldier of Christ. He has honored the Christian commitment to vocation through a lifetime of service. For his leadership in synod and seminary, his support of numerous ecclesiastical institutions, and his commitment to Concordia

...continued...

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 June. 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.

Theological Seminary, it is my privilege and honor, Dr. Wenthe, to recommend Walter C. Dissen for the *Miles Christi* award.”

Walter Dissen has been a member of LCA since its inception and has served on many committees. Mr. Dissen is in his second term as LCA President, also in his third year of *The Lutheran Clarion* editorial committee. **Thank you, Mr. Dissen**, for such a fine example of Christian leadership and commitment!

Synod-Wide Study on Relation of Synod to Its Members, Res. 8-32B

At the 2010 convention in Houston, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted Resolution 8-32B “Congregations Walking Together in Mission with Covenants of Love: To Study Article VII [Relation of the Synod to Its Members] of Synod’s Constitution.”¹ The resolution cited concerns “about the proper understanding and application of Article VII with respect to the relationship between and among Synod and its members” and stated that the “proposed amendment to Article VII of Synod’s Constitution reflects the historically recognized responsibility of the members of Synod to the Synod.”

The resolution called for a synod-wide study of the 2004 document titled “Congregations and Synod: Background Materials on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS”²; that study of this document will “involve the Council of Presidents (hereafter COP), the districts, circuits, colleges, universities, and seminaries”; and finally that “the congregations of the Synod and their pastors be encouraged to be engaged in the study to promote unity, harmony, and understanding.”

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

I find this an odd resolution. On the one hand, it commends for study the document “Congregations and Synod,” which I have found to be very good and informative. On the other hand, the resolution states that the “proposed amendment to Article VII of Synod’s Constitution reflects the historically recognized responsibility of the members of Synod,” which is **not** true. The proposed amendment was authored by the former President’s Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance (hereafter Task Force) and the convention had this proposal in the form of Overture 8-32.³ The problem with the proposed amendment in Overture 8-32 is that it completely undermines Article VII, as I will explain in a little bit.

Before we get into the details, it might help to see the big picture of how synod is related to its congregations and church-workers. The synod was not designed to be a national organization whereby the majority of its members coerce the minority of its members through the passing of laws or resolutions. Such an organization would be “democratic” but not Christian. Nor was it designed to be an organization whereby a few elite members coerce all the rest in the same way. Such an organization would be “aristocratic” or “episcopal,” but not Christian. Coercion, and the making of laws to bind people, was the farthest things from our founding fathers’ minds.

The synod’s founders understood that a pastor and a congregation together form a divinely instituted unit that is, in most respects, self-sufficient. The Saxon congregations in Missouri found out that they could do just fine without a bishop or connections to Germany. The Loehe missionaries in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan found out that, practically speaking, they were on their own in the wilderness. This practical experience was the context for C.F.W. Walther’s statement, in Thesis Seven of **Church and Ministry**, that all congregations “possess the authority that Christ has given to his whole church, on account of the true invisible church hidden in them, even if there were only two or three believers.”⁴ This statement is part of the Missouri Synod’s official doctrine, having been accepted in 1851 and affirmed ever since. So the Missouri Synod is essentially “congregationalist” in its structure and governance.

Lutheran congregations and their pastors join together in larger groups, called “synods,” in order to do **necessary** things together they can’t do separately, or can’t do **well** on their own. This includes such things like the training of pastors (colleges and seminaries); the training of Lutheran school teachers, Lutheran church musicians, and Lutheran deaconesses (colleges); the financial support of missionaries at home and abroad (mission agencies); and the publishing of books for use in church, school, and home (publishing houses). Lutheran congregations and their pastors also join together in smaller groups, called “circuits,” in order to do things locally more effectively and give each other counsel and aid.

If these are the reasons that Missouri Synod Lutherans join together, why would any congregation **want** to lay down a law telling another congregation what it has to do? If there is plenty of definition of what it means to be a Lu-

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theran in the Scripture and the Lutheran confessions—and there is!—then why would you **want** to add any more rules or laws? Just stick to the statements of Scripture and confessions and that should be enough.

Why then does the synod pass resolutions? First, it passes most resolutions so that those who work for the synod, i.e., officers, boards, commissions, agencies, know what they are supposed to do. There is definite coercion there, and has to be, or the synod's work will not get done. Second, it passes a few resolutions in order to settle disagreements between members. If these are matters of doctrine, then they are "doctrinal resolutions" or "doctrinal statements."⁵ The whole purpose of "doctrinal resolutions" and "doctrinal statements" is to **settle arguments**, so that we can better spend our energies elsewhere. Procedures for dissent to doctrinal resolutions and statements, such as bylaw 1.8,⁶ help keep things settled, but also provide for revision in the event the Synod is wrong. Now let's look at how the LCMS Constitution explains this.

Article VII of the Synod's Constitution presently states the following:

- "1. In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.
2. Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation."⁷

You might say that LCMS Constitution Article VII, as presently worded, contains the constitutional "Bill of Rights" for LCMS congregations and church-workers. It is the constitutional guarantee of your evangelical freedom as a member of Christ's church. Like the US Bill of Rights, it also originated as the first amendment to the LCMS constitution.⁸

Overture 8-32 proposed to change the word "inexpedient" to "unsuitable." I think that is a fair change, and might add clarity, since not everyone understands the word "inexpedient." But I could go with either term.

Overture 8-32 also proposed to add this lengthy list of membership responsibilities:

In their relation to the synod, all members of the Synod, by voluntarily subscribing to the Confession (Article II) and the Constitution of the Synod, make a confession of faith, a joint commitment to God's mission, and a mutual covenant of love. In so doing, they:

1. Bind themselves to the confessional basis of the Synod (Article II);
2. Agree to abide by, honor, and uphold the collective will of the Synod as expressed in its Constitution, Bylaws, and convention resolutions;

3. Pledge their active involvement and support of the Synod's efforts to carry out its mission and purpose; and
4. Promise that, if they find themselves to be in disagreement with Synod's actions or positions, they will so advise the Synod in a loving and evangelical manner, and if necessary follow the Synod's authorized procedures for expressing dissent.⁹

This proposed amendment has both formal and material problems. In a formal way, the amendment states behaviors that would properly be considered under LCMS Constitution Article VI "Conditions of Membership." Also, "Bind themselves to the confessional basis of the Synod" is already part of Article VI.1. Why restate it here?

In a material way, the amendment from Overtures 8-32 adds two significant requirements to members of synod that have not been present historically:

1. agreement to **obey** synodical resolutions;
2. agreement to follow authorized procedures for dissent to **any action or position** of the synod—which would include its convention, its agencies, or its officers. Since these have never been required in the past, the claim of Overture 8-32 that they were required is simply wrong.

Let's look at these two changes in detail.

Overture 8-32 proposed that synod's members: "Agree to abide by, honor, and uphold the collective will of the Synod as expressed in its Constitution, Bylaws, and convention resolutions." I agree that members need to abide by the Constitution. Why would you have a constitution if you don't follow it? I also agree that synod's members need to **respect and honor** the actions of the synod in convention. "Honor" here does not mean "obey," but rather to recognize and affirm that the synod in convention is a churchly authority.

...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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As the highest human authority in our church, the convention should be respected, just as you, a US citizen, would give respect to the King of England, but not necessarily

“...here is where people get confused. Convention superiority over synodical officers and agencies does not mean that the convention has superiority over congregations...”

obey his orders. We should not dishonor the convention merely because it is not an individual person. Most important is that members of the synod should not misrepresent the position of the synod or confuse their personal opinion with it.

By respecting the synod in convention in these ways, we let all officers and agencies of the synod know that the convention is their superior and we expect them to submit accordingly. But here is where people get confused. Convention superiority over synodical officers and agencies does **not** mean that the convention has superiority over congregations, or over church-workers who are not employees of the synod.

The verb “uphold” is vague in the proposed constitutional amendment, but the verb “abide by” is not. It means that all congregations and church-workers absolutely **must obey** the Constitution, bylaws, and synodical resolutions of the LCMS. This directly contradicts present Article VII.1 “In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body.” So what was the Task Force trying to do with the requirement to “**abide . . . by synodical resolutions**”? Ram synodical resolutions down our throats?

The Missouri Synod has never required its members to “abide . . . by synodical resolutions.” The classic work by Carl S. Mundinger titled “Government in the Missouri Synod” is sub-titled “The Genesis of **Decentralized** Government in the Missouri Synod.” This book explains the whole history of why the LCMS has a different polity from other Lutherans, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (hereafter ELCA). If congregations would have to obey the synodical convention, which is what “abide . . . by synodical resolutions” means, then we would have **centralized and hierarchical government**.

I don’t think people realize how close the Missouri Synod came in the summer of 2010 to becoming just another dying Lutheran denomination run by autocratic officers. Adoption of Overture 8-32 would have sealed our fate, right there! Congregations and church-workers would all have to **obey** whatever the floor committees got through the convention. Those floor committees, as you know, are exclusively appointed by the synodical president, who also appointed the Task Force. If Overture 8-32 passed, you could not dissent to any synodical actions or decrees,

unless you first passed your disagreements through the authorized procedures.

In contrast to the proposed amendment in Overture 8-32, I find the recommended document “Congregations and Synod: Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS” to be a breath of fresh air. I recommend that you obtain it and study it. It has all the materials you need, in text and appendices, to judge these things for yourself. I find most refreshing the inclusion, as an appendix, of C. F. W. Walther’s first presidential address.¹⁰

Overture 8-32 proposed for synod’s members that “if they find themselves to be in disagreement with Synod’s actions or positions, they will so advise the Synod in a loving and evangelical manner, and if necessary follow the

***Congratulations:* Dr. Lawrence Rast, Jr.**

Congratulations Dr. Rast on your election as President of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS). We have observed you ever since you accepted the call to CTS as a professor in 1996 and believe the Synod and Confessional Lutheranism will be very well served with you filling the position of president. There certainly are both opportunities and challenges for CTS to face and we are confident you will meet them. (The nominee list, we note, was representative of Confessional Lutheranism and we thank all of the distinguished men who indicated they would serve if elected.)

***Thank You:* President Dean O. Wenthe**

Sincere thanks are due President Wenthe who came into office as president having to address a troubled seminary. Some in Synod, so it seemed, would have preferred to see CTS wither and close. President Wenthe, with a sterling faculty that he had much to do with and others, by the grace of God, saw CTS become the premier Confessional Seminary in the world! And...let us not forget the truly superlative faculty statement under the leadership of President Wenthe on the Yankee Stadium syncretistic worship service of September 23, 2001. This was a profile of courage in a period of time when confessing the true WORD was out of fashion. Thank you Dr. Wenthe.



Dr. Rast’s Response to his Election:

“Concordia Theological Seminary is one of God’s great gifts to the church, and it is the people—the Board of Regents, faculty, staff, and, especially, our students—whom God has gathered here who make it such a gift. As we begin to step forward into a new time, we know there are challenges before us; we know there are changes that we will experience. But one thing never changes, and that is the grace of God in Jesus Christ for each and every one of us, Who has called us by name in our Baptisms, set us apart to be His own and given us the promise of everlasting life. The Lord Jesus has given us our mission and is at its center: Concordia Theological Seminary exists to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.”

Synod's authorized procedures for expressing dissent." The present authorized procedure for expressing dissent is only for "doctrinal resolutions and statements" of synod in convention.¹¹ The proposed amendment extends this to **all of Synod's actions or position**, which includes non-doctrinal resolutions and statements, and could be construed to mean any action or position of a synodical officer or agency. There are no authorized procedures for this. I believe that the phrase in present bylaw 1.8.1, "retaining the right of brotherly dissent,"¹² says everything that needs to be said. The provision of Overture 8-32 dealing with dissent will cause more problems than it solves.

What about the provision of Overture 8-32 that says members "Agree to abide by, honor, and uphold the collective will of the Synod as expressed in its Constitution, Bylaws," if we delete the part about synodical resolutions? I think that makes some sense, but **only** if we retain the present process for changing Constitutional Articles (old Constitution Article XIV¹³) and always limit the "law" part of the bylaws to provisions applying to synodical and district officers, agencies, and entities, so that bylaws do not constrain congregations. I think the proposed amendment here is hortatory and unnecessary.

What about the provision of Overture 8-32 that says members "Pledge their active involvement and support of the Synod's efforts to carry out its mission and purpose"? I think if the Task Force had properly understood Synod's Preamble, they would not have seen a need for this sentence, which is really about **financial** support. The Preamble states, in a most gracious way, that a reason for forming a synod is that "our Lord's will that the diversities of gifts should be for the common profit (I Cor 12:4-31)."¹⁴ One of those gifts is financial support of synodical projects, institutions, missions, and ministries. Most congregations have that gift of financial resources, many don't. This is not a matter of our "covenant of love," which is a human arrangement. This is a matter of "our Lord's will." What can be stronger than that?

In conclusion, my opinion is that LCMS Constitution Article VII should not be changed at all. My position is summarized by this quote from C. F. W. Walther's celebrated essay "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod":

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the apostle [in 1 Corinthians 3:21-23] makes the congregation the possessor of all the blessings Christ has won for His church. On the other hand, the Savior says of pastors, "One is your Master, but all of you are brothers" (Matt 23:8).¹⁵

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1 See *Convention Proceedings 2010, 64th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* [hereafter 2010 Proceedings] (St. Louis: LCMS, 2010), 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, Bylaws, or Handbook of Synod refer to this edition, unless stated otherwise.

- 2 The document can be found at this web-address: <https://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/Office%20of%20the%20President/CONGREGATIONS%20AND%20SYNOD.pdf>
- 3 See *The Final Report of The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance, 64th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* (St. Louis: LCMS, 2009), 21-22, 1.6-1.7; and *Today's Business (Proposed Resolutions), 2010, 64th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Houston, TX, July 10-17, 2010* [hereafter Today's Business] (St. Louis: LCMS, 2010), 155-156, 162.
- 4 C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, tr. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 87-100.
- 5 For a complete compendium of doctrinal resolutions and statements, see *The Doctrinal Resolutions of the National Conventions of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod 1847-2004* (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute, 2006), CD-ROM.
- 6 Handbook, 34.
- 7 Handbook, 13-14.
- 8 See Carl S. Mundinger, *Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 191-192 and 192 n.55.
- 9 Today's Business, 162.
- 10 See the original in C. F. W. Walther, "Dr. Walther's First Presidential Address," tr. Paul Koehneke, in *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 33 #1 (April 1960): 12-20. The original German text is in the *1848 Synodal-Bericht*, pp. 5-15.
- 11 Handbook, 34 (Bylaw 1.8.2).
- 12 Handbook, 34.
- 13 Handbook, 19-20.
- 14 Handbook, 11.
- 15 C. F. W. Walther, "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod" in *Essays for the Church*, 2 vols., ed. August R. Suelflow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 2:25.



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