

# Concordia Theological Quarterly



Volume 78:3-4

July/October 2014

## *Table of Contents*

---

---

<b>The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever: Jesus as Timekeeper</b> William C. Weinrich .....	3
<b>Then Let Us Keep the Festival: That Christ Be Manifest in His Saints</b> D. Richard Stuckwisch .....	17
<b>The Missouri Synod and the Historical Question of Unionism and Syncretism</b> Gerhard H. Bode Jr. ....	39
<b>Doctrinal Unity and Church Fellowship</b> Roland F. Ziegler .....	59
<b>A Light Shining in a Dark Place: Can a Confessional Lutheran Voice Still Be Heard in the Church of Sweden?</b> Rune Imberg .....	81
<b>Cultural Differences and Church Fellowship: The Japan Lutheran Church as Case Study</b> Naomichi Masaki .....	93

<b>The Christian Voice in the Civil Realm</b>	
Gifford A. Grobien .....	115
<b>Lutheran Clichés as Theological Substitutes</b>	
David P. Scaer .....	131
<b>Theological Observer</b> .....	144
Go On	
Inaugural Speech for the Robert D. Preus Chair	
The Restoration of Creation in Christ:	
Essays in Honor of Dean O. Wenthe	
Incarnation as the Perfection of Creation	
<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	167
<b>Books Received</b> .....	186
<b>Indices for Volume 78 (2014)</b> .....	189

## Cultural Differences and Church Fellowship: The Japan Lutheran Church as Case Study

Naomichi Masaki

Cultural differences. One could argue that such things make life more interesting. While such differences are frequently noticeable within Western culture, they pale in comparison to the differences between Western and Eastern cultures. Professor Masao Takenaka (1925–2006), a disciple of H. Richard Niebuhr and one of the best-known ecumenical theologians from Doshisha University in Kyoto, compared, for example, the different approaches that Westerners and the typical Japanese take when looking at the moon. The expression, “the man in the moon,” Takenaka explained, would indicate for those from the West “the state of a man who is living in isolation and has no relational existence.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, with the advent of the space age, the moon became the object of inquiry and calculation, prompting such questions as “When can I go there?” and “How much will it cost?” The Japanese, on the other hand, Takenaka continued, would think of the moon “not as a cold object without an intimate relationship, nor as an object to exploit or conquer, but as a personal companion.”<sup>2</sup> Such a peculiar Japanese sensitivity may also be illustrated by a poem of the well-known Zen priest Dogen of the thirteenth century (1200–1253), which Yasunari Kawabata (1899–1972) quoted in his speech at the award ceremony of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968:

In spring the cherry, in summer the cuckoo,  
In autumn the moon, in winter the snow, clear cold.

The beauty of the four seasons that is evoked in this poem with manifold forms of nature is so very different from an observation of an Indian friend, who once said: “We have four seasons, too. We have a warm season, a hot season, a hotter season, and the hottest season.” If one were to inquire about the weather in a place like Tanzania, asking what clothing

---

<sup>1</sup> Masao Takenaka, *God Is Rice: Asian Culture and Christian Faith* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Takenaka, *God Is Rice*, 9.

would be appropriate for a visit, the response would likely be one of astonishment: “That’s hard to say, since we never give any consideration to the temperature.” Indeed, given that the temperature in Tanzania hovers between 70 and 90 degrees every day of the year, Tanzanians simply have no concept of four seasons and thus no need for any weather forecast.

As interesting as the topic of cultural differences might be, the goal of this study is to consider what relationship, if any, exists between cultural differences and church fellowship. To accomplish this task, the concrete example of the move toward the ordination of women in the Japan Lutheran Church will be examined, asking whether the current state of affairs is the result solely of theological disagreement or whether cultural issues in the age of “ecumenicity, globalization, and secularization” are also, to some degree, a catalyst for this position.<sup>3</sup>

### I. The Current State of the Question

More than a decade ago, the Japan Lutheran Church (NRK) began to explore the possibility of ordaining women into the pastoral office.<sup>4</sup> After years of discussion and debate, a resolution implementing this change will likely be presented at the NRK’s next general convention in May 2014.<sup>5</sup> Should this proposal be adopted, more than forty years of pulpit and altar fellowship between the NRK and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

---

<sup>3</sup> The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH, 2013), 11.

<sup>4</sup> “Nafzger: Talks on women’s service ‘off to good start,’” *Reporter*, March 4, 2009, <http://blogs.lcms.org/2009/nafzger-talks-on-womens-service-off-to-good-start>; accessed December 16, 2014; “JLC, LCMS reps to continue talks on ordination of women,” *Reporter*, December 23, 2009, <http://blogs.lcms.org/2009/jlc-lcms-reps-to-continue-talks-on-ordination-of-women>; accessed December 16, 2014; “JLC, LCMS reps plan fourth round of talks,” *Reporter*, March 10, 2010, <http://blogs.lcms.org/2010/jlc-lcms-reps-plan-fourth-round-of-talks>; accessed December 16, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> This essay is based on a paper that was delivered at the 37th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in January 2014. At the NRK’s subsequent convention in May 2014 President Kumei explained to convention that in view of the ongoing discussions between leaders of the NRK and LCMS that the executive committee of the NRK had determined not to place the matter of women’s ordination on the convention agenda for action or even for discussion. The same convention elected Rev. Shin Shimizu as new President after President Kumei had served the maximum number of terms. *Kyokai Dayori* [Japan Lutheran Church Monthly Newsletter] no. 586 (June 2014): 3.

(LCMS) will come to an end. This is a sensitive and pressing issue, not least because of the fact that numerous joint mission and evangelism projects will most likely be adversely affected.

During its current triennium, the NRK is walking together as the body of Christ under the theme: “If one member suffers [πάσχει], all suffer together [συμπάσχει]; if one member is honored (glorified) [δοξάζεται], all rejoice together [συγχαίρει]” (1 Cor 12:26). How fitting this theme is for us also. Obviously, a resolution to ordain women into the office of the holy ministry is not perceived by our beloved colleagues in the NRK as suffering; yet for us in the LCMS it is. We are deeply concerned about how they are proceeding down the current path, and we plead to the Lord that our brethren in the NRK would reconsider their direction, to the end that we may “rejoice together” in true unity of doctrine and confession.

Despite these current tensions, the relationship between the LCMS and the NRK is, at the present time, excellent. In the aftermath of the devastating tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011, our church bodies experienced a tremendous opportunity to work together to bring relief to the countless people who lost their homes, their livelihoods, and, in many cases, beloved family members.<sup>6</sup> This joint relief effort prompted our synodical leadership to resume their careful work in addressing the issue of fellowship with the NRK. Even as we lend our prayerful support to that endeavor, it is incumbent upon us to consider what exactly is taking place in the Japanese context.

What, in particular, has led to the proposal of women's ordination in the NRK? Do cultural differences factor into this development, or is it a matter of theology? Is it because in a mission field evangelism and mission receive higher priority than doctrine, or is it because our witness has been

---

<sup>6</sup> In June 2011, I accompanied LCMS President Matthew Harrison on a tour of the devastated areas, serving as both his assistant and translator. In April 2013, I provided the same services for Dr. Albert Collver, LCMS director of church relations, and the Rev. Randall Golter, who at that time was director of international mission. During both trips, I witnessed the cordial relations that were experienced between the two church bodies. In September 2013, President Yutaka Kumei of the NRK presented a valuable biblical print by the artist Sadao Watanabe as a gift from the NRK to President Harrison upon the occasion of his reelection as president of the LCMS. For a description of this high point in relations between the two church bodies, together with a photo, see <http://blogs.lcms.org/2013/harrison-receives-print-from-japan> (accessed December 8, 2014). Since this time, President Kumei has been succeeded by President Shimizu.

too weak over the course of many decades?<sup>7</sup> Are we to adjust our way of thinking to conform to the so-called “post-Constantinian” or “post-Christendom” age, modifying our approach to church fellowship?<sup>8</sup> Should we advance from “traditional ecclesiology” to so-called “contextual ecclesiologies”?<sup>9</sup> Are we supposed to consider Christianity first and Lutheranism second in those places where the Lutheran church is young and small? Should we construct an Asian theology, or even a Japanese theology, and adopt, for example, Masao Takenaka’s way of contextualization, which changes “the bread of life” into “the rice of life”? Or is now, perhaps, an appropriate time to review our past practice of church fellowship by bringing it into the light of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions?

Hermann Sasse once wrote that church fellowship is broken either by the sin of lovelessness or by the intrusion of heresy into the church.<sup>10</sup> In the situation at hand, it is clear that lovelessness is not the issue. This leaves the intrusion of heresy as the only other option, according to Sasse’s line of thought. Is this really the case? If so, have cultural differences played any role in this development? In the end, what vital lessons are to be learned?

---

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Sasse, *Luther and the Ecumenical Creeds* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1965). Sasse lamented when he reflected on the inability of the World Council of Churches to confess the ecumenical creeds.

<sup>8</sup> See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 420–432; Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1991), 8–29; Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006); Yasuo Furuya, *Nihon no Kirisuto kyo* [Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 2003), 268–277.

<sup>9</sup> See a proposal as such in Robert Kolb and Theodore J. Hopkins, ed., *Inviting Community* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2013). Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen’s *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2002) places under the section of “Contextual Ecclesiologies” such chapters as “The Non-Church Movement in Asia,” “Base Ecclesial Communities in Latin America,” “The Feminist Church,” “African Independent Churches’ Ecclesiology,” “The Shepherding Movement’s Renewal Ecclesiology,” “‘A World Church,’” and “The Post-Christian Church as ‘Another City.’”

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Sasse, “Theses on the Question of Church and Altar Fellowship,” in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letter by Hermann Sasse, vol. 1 (1927–1939)*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 333.

## II. Church Fellowship Is Altar Fellowship

Church fellowship is always altar fellowship.<sup>11</sup> This is the Lutheran confession, drawn from Scripture and the Book of Concord. Church fellowship as altar fellowship is not something the church creates or establishes, but it is a joyful recognition that the same gift of the Lord that has been given to one church body has also been given to another church body. We simply become aware of this fact with thanksgiving, acknowledging that the Lord has done wonderful things among the people of God in other places. Furthermore, church fellowship is always connected with what the Lord does at the Table; it never strays from his gift-bestowing service in the Holy Communion. At the Lord's Altar, those to whom our Lord gives his body and blood are "*koinoniat*" by that body and blood.<sup>12</sup> To be together at the Lord's Table is to be in church fellowship. There is one Christ, one Spirit, one gospel, one Baptism, one Table of the Lord, and one church. Ever since the time of the daily services of Israel with the *Shema Israel*, the people of God have confessed the oneness of the Lord in the sense of his fullness and aloneness. God's oneness is not an expression of his ontological and static existence, after the manner of Greek philosophies, but it is a confession of the dynamic and gift-giving Lord who wishes to deal with us by speaking to us, forgiving us, blessing us, dwelling among us, keeping and preserving us all the way (FC SD VIII 77–79). We are given no other God but Jesus, fully God and fully human. He alone is our Savior; he alone is the Lord. Jesus alone went to Calvary to achieve our salvation. He alone distributes that salvation to us now through the means of grace that are served by the *Gnadenmittelamt* ("the office of the means of grace") that he instituted precisely for the delivery of his gifts.

If all theology is Christology and all Christology is ecclesiology,<sup>13</sup> then all Lutheran theology is centered around the doctrine of the means of grace. The maxim *ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia* ["where Christ is, there is the church"] of Ignatius of Antioch (Smyr. 8:2) captures the fact that where Christ is delivering his gifts, where the distribution of the means of grace is

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

<sup>12</sup> Norman E. Nagel, "Confessional Communion: Altar and Church," in *Inter-Christian Relationships* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1994), 39–40.

<sup>13</sup> These two theological statements can be considered to be self-evident. From among my colleagues, an example of someone who stresses "all theology is Christology" is David Scaer. An example of someone who emphasizes that "all Christology is ecclesiology" is William Weinrich.

going on, there the church is (AC VII). As in any article of the faith, what Jesus says is of primary importance and the point of departure. The *satis est* ["it is enough"] of Augsburg Confession VII "defends us against the demand for something more than the dominicals, what our Lord has mandated and instituted, what he says, does, and gives."<sup>14</sup> Only what our Lord says and does is sure and certain. Of this faith speaks with completeness and aloneness of the Lord's dealing with us. *Satis est* may not be interpreted as Gospel minimalism, as if to pit the gospel and the sacraments against any other doctrine or practice in the church. Rather, *satis est* places the dominicals against whatever the church has added in the course of her history. Luther was right when he observed that "doctrine must be one eternal and round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect."<sup>15</sup> The doctrine of church fellowship is a means-of-grace doctrine. Likewise, the doctrine of the office of the holy ministry is a means-of-grace doctrine. Since both are mandated by the Lord Jesus, we are not given to confess them in a qualified or fractioned way. What our Lord has achieved on the cross, the means through which he delivers his gifts, the instruments he uses for the distribution, and the *κοινωνία* that results among those who have received the common gifts; we are not given to confess all of them in terms short of what our Lord would have us confess. "As always problems arise when there is a refusal of the gift the Lord is giving."<sup>16</sup>

### III. The Genesis of the Question of Women's Ordination in the NRK

The discussion concerning the ordination of women in the NRK began in 1970 when one of her congregations (Bibai St. John Lutheran Church) petitioned the NRK's Executive Committee to issue an official protest against the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) for ordaining a woman.<sup>17</sup> The JELC's decision was deemed offensive because the NRK had

---

<sup>14</sup> Nagel, "Confessional Communion," 43.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians" (1535), *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), 27:38.

<sup>16</sup> Nagel, "Confessional Communion," 41.

<sup>17</sup> See the Common Statement of the NRK and the LCMS concerning women's ordination in *Kyokai Dayori* [Japan Lutheran Church Monthly Newsletter] 547 (December 2010): 11. The JELC's decision to ordain women into the pastoral office coincides with the American Lutheran Church's (ALC) formal approval of the same at its national convention in 1970. That same convention also adopted a policy on "Sex, Marriage, and Family," which stated that homosexuality was not considered a sin and



entered into pulpit and altar fellowship with the JELC in 1966. The two church bodies had reached an agreement that same year to train their pastors jointly at the seminary in Tokyo.

The JELC comprises two-thirds of the Lutheran population in Japan. It is the oldest Lutheran church body in Japan (1898), which began in 1892 as a mission of the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South (USELC), a predecessor body of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) and later the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). The LCMS had a plan to send its first missionary to Japan in 1895, but for reasons unknown to this author, Shigetaro Mizuno, a Japanese-American graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, then in Springfield, was never called and sent.<sup>18</sup> It was only after World War II that the LCMS, along with other Lutheran churches, began to send missionaries to Japan (the LCMS in 1948), resulting in the formation of the NRK in 1968.

#### **IV. The NRK and the JELC in the History of Christianity in Japan**

In order to understand better the context of church fellowship between the NRK and the JELC, it is important to review briefly the history of Christianity in Japan, a history that can be divided into three periods: 1) the arrival of Jesuit missionaries who worked in Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; 2) the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to the end of World War II; and 3) post-World War II. Within these divisions, the origin of the JELC falls in the second period, when a large number of Protestant missionaries came to Japan from the United States. The history of the NRK belongs in the third period, when another large wave of missionaries arrived immediately after the war.

During the first phase, Francisco de Xavier (1506–1552) and his followers gained more than 750,000 members within a half century, taking advantage of the political and economic relationship between Portugal and Japan. However, once the new Shogun government reunited the country

---

also allowed for “a woman or a couple” to “decide responsibly to seek an abortion.” See Board of Social Ministry, Lutheran Church in America, *Social Statements of the LCA* (1970), as cited by Robert Preus in “Fellowship Reconsidered: An Assessment of Fellowship between the LCMS and the ALC in the Light of Past, Present and Future,” in *Doctrine Is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Klemet I. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 324–325.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur H. Strege, *The Japan Mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1948–1953*, trans. The Committee on Historical Compilation of The Japan Lutheran Church (Tokyo: The Japan Lutheran Church, 1992), 9.

after a long period of civil war, Christians suffered severe persecution, similar to that of the early church. Many were martyred; others were burned at the stake and even crucified. Buddhism and Shintoism joined hands for the purpose of expelling Christianity from the land. The Shogun government issued a series of new laws to make certain that no one in Japan would remain Christian. As a result, during the period of a national isolation policy from 1633 to 1854, Japan was not only non-Christian but an unwaveringly anti-Christian nation. While the anti-Christian laws were banned in 1873, the culture and worldview of most Japanese people have, nevertheless, remained hostile to the Christian faith to this day. Thus, Christianity suffers from a combination of the results of this historical background and from the secularism, materialism, and post-modernism common to all developed countries.<sup>19</sup>

During the second phase, which followed the Meiji Restoration, three characteristic groups emerged in Japan. In 1872, Masahiro Uemura (1857–1925) formed Nippon Kirisuto Kokai (The Ecumenical Church of Christ in Japan) in Yokohama as the first Protestant congregation in Japan. As the name of the congregation indicates, this group downplayed doctrinal differences in favor of a broad-minded ecumenism, reflecting theological attitudes of the missionaries from New England Congregational Puritanism, Presbyterian Calvinism, and Methodism. In 1886, Danjo Ebina (1857–1937) established Nippon Kumiai Kyokai (the Congregational Church in Japan) in Kumamoto and Kyoto, teaching the biblical criticism of the Tübingen school that was introduced by missionaries of the *Allgemeiner evangelisch-protestantischer Missionsverein*. Finally, in the early 1900s, Kanzo Uchimura (1861–1930) founded the Non-Church Movement in Sapporo, placing greater emphasis on the Bible in a neo-orthodox manner.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the second and the third phases, the churches in Japan continued to absorb the theological currents of the day. On the one hand, the rise of nationalism during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 and

---

<sup>19</sup> Concerning the history of Christianity in Japan, see Arimichi Ebihara and Saburo Ohuchi, *Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi* [The History of Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1980); Akio Doi, *Nihon Purotesutanto Kirisutokyoshi* [The History of Protestant Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisutokyodan Shuppansha, 1970); Kazuo Shono, *Nihon Kirisutokyoshiwo Yomu* [Reading the History of Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1997); and Hiroko Unuma, *Shiryō ni yoru Nihon Kirisutokyoshio* [The History of Christianity in Japan through Historical Documents], 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Seigakuin University Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> When the so-called Uemura-Ebina debate on Christology emerged in 1901–1902, it was basically a battle between higher criticism and neo-orthodoxy.

the ecumenism of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 reinforced the direction of theological accommodation and the social gospel. On the other hand, leading theologians of the West left such a strong impact in Japan that an intrinsic Japanese way of doing theology never developed. During the post-war era, the main theological figure in Japan shifted from Ernst Troeltsch to Karl Barth. And from the 1960s to the 1980s, the theologies of Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr became popular.<sup>21</sup> It is notable that in the third period the Lutheran theologian Kazoh Kitamori (1915–1998) was able to criticize the dualism of liberalism and Barthianism alike through his study of Luther.

When the first Lutheran missionaries arrived in Japan in 1892 from the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South, nationalism was rising and liberal theology had just been introduced. In the midst of such an environment, missionaries of the United Synod in the South remained fairly conservative. James Augustin Brown Scherer was one of these missionaries. Having been influenced by Edward Traill Horn, his legacy is a translation into Japanese of Luther's Small Catechism as well as the first twenty-one articles of the Augsburg Confession. Rufus Benton Peery was another brilliant young pastor. Having graduated from the General Synod's Gettysburg seminary, he translated the Common Service into Japanese. Yet another missionary, Charles Lafayette Brown, received his theological training from Mt. Airy, the General Council's seminary in Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> An interesting figure is Jens Mikael Thøgersen Winther (1874–1970), who came to Japan from the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (UDELC).<sup>23</sup> Having received a pietistic

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Makito Masaki, "The Use of Luther's Theological Anthropology in Addressing Current Japanese Thought," STM thesis, (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, 1992), 36–62; *A History of Japanese Theology*, ed. and trans. Yasuo Furuya (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Scherer, Peery, and Brown all graduated from Roanoke College.

<sup>23</sup> Jens Mikael Thøgersen Winther (1874–1970) devoted his long life to the missionary work in Japan, serving during the periods of 1898–1921, 1927–1941, and 1950–1970. The Christian influence of his home, and especially of his mother, made a deep impression on him. He said:

It belongs to my childhood's most pleasant memories that my mother took me on her lap and told me about the Savior in words which were intelligible and had power to warm the child-heart. At this time, too, she caused a desire to rise in my heart which has grown since then. When speaking about the Savior she always sought to make it plain to me that it is a great privilege to be born in a Christian land, where the Gospel is preached and heeded; while so many millions of men still know nothing of the "name whereby we must be saved."

training at Trinity Seminary in Blair, Nebraska, Winther was welcomed by Peery and Brown because they saw “no essential difference” in his theological position.<sup>24</sup>

The JELC seems to have inherited her mother church’s practice of church fellowship. The embracement of Winther may be a good illustration. Another example is the merger in 1963 with the Tokai Lutheran Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC, Norwegian), one of the predecessors of the ALC. As Andrew George Voigt has demonstrated, the USELC, which had strived to remain Lutheran, though with a pietistic bent, practiced for the most part the Akron-Galesburg Rule.<sup>25</sup> When the USELC was reunited with the General Synod and the General Council to

Still resound in my ears the oft-repeated words, “When you have grown up you must go out to the heathen and tell them about your Jesus.” (Rufus Benton Peery, *Lutherans in Japan* [Newberry, S.C.: Lutheran Publication Board of the United Synod, 1900], 86–87)

He had in his mind to become a missionary in the future when he served as a school teacher. Then a request came to him from the Lutheran Missionary Society in West Slesvig, Germany, to go as a missionary to China with one of their men, Frederik Nielsen, who had come home because of ill health and was then returning. Winther accepted it at once and started for China with Nielsen by way of the United States. They stopped to visit Danish missionary friends in the US where the older missionary became sick again. When it became evident that he could not return to China, the mission society then decided to send Winther to Japan. Winther then studied theology at Trinity Seminary in Blair, Nebraska, and under its founder and professor, Peter Sørensen Vig, and was ordained. In Japan, Winther was involved in the foundation of the JELC’s theological seminary in Kumamoto (now in Mitaka, Tokyo), while also serving as a parish pastor. Except for a few years when he was back in Denmark, probably for his children’s education, Winther continued to serve in Japan until the Second World War when all the missionaries were expelled. Even after his wife died in 1949, he returned to Japan on his own at the age of 76 and taught at Kobe Lutheran Bible Institute and Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary until his death in 1970. He is buried in Kobe. This author has a childhood memory of meeting with him in his 90s. He was a man of character and was exceptionally respected among his students in Kobe. A biography was written about him in Japanese, and a documentary was filmed and broadcast nationwide.

<sup>24</sup> Peery, *Lutherans in Japan*, 89. The accounts of Scherer, Peery, Brown, and Winther are found in this book, 73–90; Christian M. Hermansen, “Danish Mission in Japan—the Beginnings,” 79–105; *Ruterugakuin Hyakunen no Rekishi*, ed. Naozumi Etoh and Yoshikazu Tokuzen [One-Hundred-Year History of Lutheran College] (Tokyo: Lutheran College, 2009), 18–32.

<sup>25</sup> A. G. Voigt, “The United Synod in the South,” in *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1923), 175–204.

form the ULCA in 1918, it chose to abide by the Savannah Resolution of 1934, namely, that as long as Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions are upheld, doctrinal consultations and other preliminaries are not necessary for full mutual recognition among Lutherans.

It is striking that the NRK and the JELC declared pulpit and altar fellowship in 1966, three years before the LCMS came into church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church (ALC, 1969–1981). Since the JELC embraces traditions of both the LCA (ULCA and USELC) and the ALC (UDELC and ELC), it comes as no surprise that its church fellowship was practiced either in the spirit of the Savannah Resolution or the policies of the American Lutheran Council (full church fellowship on the basis of “sufficient” unity of doctrine and practice),<sup>26</sup> or both. The question is why the NRK did not carry out its mother church’s (i.e., the LCMS) doctrine and practice of church fellowship, which calls for complete agreement in doctrine and practice before establishing church fellowship. One of the reasons must lie in the fact that from the outset the LCMS missionary effort had maintained a working relationship with the JELC. Another important factor is that the NRK had cooperated with the JELC in training its pastors, including sending their students to each other’s congregations for field work and vicarage.

It is no wonder that the NRK’s confessional fellowship with the LCMS has gradually weakened, especially since 1966, given that their future pastors have been educated at the feet of the JELC faculty, whose higher degrees have been earned at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, Luther Seminary in St. Paul, and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, now all institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).<sup>27</sup> According to the current academic catalog, exegetical courses are taught on the basis of the higher critical method, and instruction in liturgical courses follows the agenda of the modern liturgical movement from Rome and Canterbury. In addition, there is a marked absence of courses on the Lutheran Confessions, except for one on the Augsburg Confession, which is taught in the historical department. In the ordination liturgy of the NRK, there is no place where the candidate pledges himself to the Old and the New Testaments as the word of God or to all ten

---

<sup>26</sup> Fred W. Meuser, “Pulpit and Altar Fellowship among Lutherans in America,” in *Church in Fellowship: Pulpit and Altar Fellowship Among Lutherans*, ed. Vilmos Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 6–9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ruterugakuin Hyakunen*, ed. Etoh and Tokuzen, 109. An exchange of faculty has also been taking place between Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary and these seminaries in Chicago, St. Paul, and Philadelphia.

documents contained in the Book of Concord. The expression that is used in the pledge is the vague language of “the confession of the church.”<sup>28</sup>

### V. The Decision at the Third General Convention of the NRK

At the Third General Convention in 1974, the NRK resolved not to protest publicly against the JELC by accepting the theological opinion of then president Kosaku Nao (1906–96).<sup>29</sup> Nao’s argument included the following four points.<sup>30</sup> First, after declaring that the preaching of the gospel is the foremost task of the office of the ministry, he gave an exegetical study of 1 Timothy 2:11–14 and 1 Corinthians 14:33–38. Concerning the first text, Nao explained that Paul was teaching about husband-wife relations within the society of that time. Concerning the second text, he understood that “wives” (which he did not take as “women”) should not gossip in the church and that people should wait their turn to prophesy in the meetings for the sake of good order. With these interpretations, Nao concluded that preaching by women is not forbidden. Second, Nao made a judgment that the question of the ordination of women belongs to the “dogmatic category” of *adiaphora* since Scripture does not forbid women to preach. Third, Nao concluded from these two

---

<sup>28</sup> The Joint Committee on Liturgy and Agenda of The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and The Japan Lutheran Church, *The Lutheran Church Agenda* (Tokyo: The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1996), 204. The ordination vow in this common liturgy of ordination in the JELC and NRK does not include a pledge to believe and confess the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments to be the inspired word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the three Ecumenical Creeds as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, rejecting all the errors which they condemn, and the confessional documents that are contained in the Book of Concord to be a correct exposition of Holy Scripture and correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church *because* they are in accord with the word of God. All the above confessional statements are absent in this ordination liturgy, which simply asks the candidate, “Will you preach the word of God according to the confession of the church and administer the sacraments according to the ordinance of Christ?”

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Nao appears in the history of the LCMS’s mission in Japan almost from the very beginning. According to the account of Arthur Strege, it was a trip to Japan taken by Dr. O.H. Schmidt, the executive director of the board of missions of the LCMS, that prepared the way for the first missionary, William Danker, to be sent to Japan. Nao accompanied Schmidt on his trip to various parts of Japan, serving as a translator. See Arthur H. Strege, *The Japan Mission of The LCMS 1948–1953*, 14. Nao, who was ordained in 1942, was a pastor in the JELC until his transfer to the NRK at the end of the decade.

<sup>30</sup> Kosaku Nao, “‘Demand for Protest Regarding Ordination of Women’ by Bibai St. John Church,” JLC 3rd General Convention, Appendix J, Women’s Ordination, April 27–29, 1974.

points that there was no reason for the NRK to protest against the JELC because they had ordained a woman into the ministry for the purpose of maintaining good order in their church. And finally, Nao maintained that even though the JELC had approved the ordination of women, pulpit and altar fellowship could continue because church fellowship is retained on the basis of agreement on basic doctrine and not on “absolute uniformity in all matters.”

A number of theological issues are involved in Nao’s presentation. First, his point of departure was not the mandating words of Jesus on the office of the holy ministry. Lacking in his consideration is how our Lord achieved forgiveness on the cross and how he continues to deliver it through the means of grace and the office that serves them. By starting with the apostle Paul and not our Lord Jesus, the most vital point of the gospel ministry was missing, since Paul was the recipient of the office while Jesus alone is the author, giver, and doer of it.

Second, Nao’s study lacked an exhaustive or comprehensive exegesis. Basically, he dealt briefly with only two Pauline passages. He did not take into consideration such important factors as Paul’s apostolic authority, the order of creation, the cultural contexts of Ephesus and Corinth, and the liturgical settings of the texts. His approach was a legalistic one, attempting to ascertain whether or not the Scriptures had any rule that prescribed preaching by women.

Third, Nao’s presentation did not include any reflection on the enormous contributions women have made in the history of the church in terms of the expansion of the Gospel.<sup>31</sup> He did not interact with the various views of women’s ordination in either old or new secondary literature.

Fourth, the document did not indicate any evidence that Nao had seriously considered the question at hand in light of the Lutheran Confessions. It appears that Nao followed the way of the Iowa Synod in the nineteenth century rather than that of Missouri—namely, that only that which the Lutheran Confessions specifically discuss is binding, rather than whatever is revealed by God in the Scripture. There are two allusions to the Book of Concord in Nao’s study. One is the notion of *adiaphora*, discussed without reference to the Formula of Concord, Article X. The other is the use of a term from Article VII of the Augsburg Confession.

---

<sup>31</sup> Cf. William Weinrich, “Women in the History of the Church: Learned and Holy, But Not Pastors,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1991): 263–79, 512–16.

Concerning Formula of Concord X, the confessors make a distinction between divine and human order, that which was mandated and given by the Lord and that which has been introduced by the church. The latter is to be exercised in Christian freedom in service of the gospel. But good order is not maintained in the church when that which is conceived of as an *adiaphoron* goes against the divine order, such as certain rites and ceremonies that the church had introduced to merit forgiveness of sins. In the case of the ordination of women, then, even if a scholar has come to understand that it is an *adiaphoron*, such a conclusion will not serve the gospel because it undermines both the Lord's mandate of the delivery of the gospel through the apostolic office and the biblical portrait of the relationship between Christ and the church. For the confessors, the maintenance of good order in the church is not the primary reason for the existence of the office of the holy ministry. Rather, as Martin Chemnitz repeatedly taught, the weightiest reason for ordination is that our Lord himself wishes to be there in the office and carries out the ministry himself.<sup>32</sup> To interpret the ordination of women as an *adiaphoron* disrupts the coherent way the Lord has arranged for the delivery of the gospel. To reduce this for the sake of good order confesses the office of the holy ministry to be less than what Christ has instituted it to be for the church.

Concerning the use of Augsburg Confession VII, agreement on *basic* doctrine as the basis for church fellowship is a misuse of this article. Again, such a view is closer to the position of the ALC than that of the LCMS. A similar notion was employed in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999 by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), as well as in the recent document by the same, *From Conflict to Communion* (2013).<sup>33</sup> If ordination is understood as a mere ceremony instituted by men (AC VII 3), then Nao's argument would have support from the *Augustana*.

Fifth, Nao's basic argument looks very similar to the reasoning employed by the ALC in 1970 and the LCA in 1972 in introducing the

---

<sup>32</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 2:699, reprinted in *Chemnitz's Works*, vol. 8 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 1315; Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 29–30; Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols., trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 2:692.

<sup>33</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, 19, 53.



ordination of women, as David Scaer noted already in 1972.<sup>34</sup> While the LCMS, at its conventions in 1969 and 1971, repeatedly opposed the ordination of women as doctrinally contrary to the Scriptures, the ALC's booklet *The Ordination of Women* (1970) concluded that there was nothing in Scripture commanding nor forbidding the ordination of women.<sup>35</sup>

Why the LCMS mission board at that time appears to have raised no concerns about its sister church's conclusion is a good question. Perhaps it had to do with the state of theological education at the LCMS's own seminaries in the 1960s. The establishment of church fellowship with the ALC in 1969 may have affected it also. That the LCMS stayed in church fellowship with the NRK when the NRK launched church fellowship with the JELC in 1966, and even after the LCMS-ALC church fellowship ended in 1981, indicates the LCMS's theological inconsistency.

Why the NRK decided to follow, practically speaking, only one man's theological opinion for such a crucial matter is puzzling. Nao's distinguished stature as one of the founding fathers of the NRK, a nationally recognized Hebrew scholar, and the holder of the presidency at the time likely affected the NRK's decision. It is notable, however, that Nao had received his basic Lutheran education from ALC and LCA seminaries (Pacific, Philadelphia) and that he was an ordained clergyman in the JELC before becoming a pastor in the NRK. He must have been well aware of what was going on in the ALC and LCA, especially of their discussions on the ordination of women around 1970. It is quite possible that he was sympathetic to the communion to which he had once belonged.

## VI. The Repeated Proposal at the NRK's General Convention (2002–2014)

As of 1974, the NRK's all-but-official position was in favor of the ordination of women.<sup>36</sup> Since there were no female seminary students, they

---

<sup>34</sup> David P. Scaer, "May Women Be Ordained as Pastors?" *Springfielder* 36 (September 1972): 92. Cf. Robert D. Preus, "Fellowship Reconsidered," in *Doctrine Is Life*, 324–326.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women: A Report Distributed by Authorization of the Church Body Presidents as Contribution to Further Study, Based on Materials Produced through the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 49. It appears that Nao used this document as the main source of his argument. His interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11–14 and 1 Cor 14:33–38 agrees with John Reumann's interpretation presented in this booklet (11–15).

<sup>36</sup> This means that as of 1974, twenty-six years after the beginning of LCMS missions in Japan (1948), eight years after full pulpit and altar fellowship was

did not immediately attempt to make a change to the bylaws by deleting the word “male” as a qualification for clergy membership. In 2002, however, things changed. A female member of the Sugunami Seishin congregation<sup>37</sup> expressed a desire to become a pastor. Accordingly, the congregation submitted a proposal that year at the Twelfth General Convention to open the door for her future ordination.

At the convention, rather than discussing the theological implications of such a change, the potential damage to the church relations with the LCMS dominated the deliberation. In the end, it was resolved to table the motion until the following convention and, in the meantime, to examine the issue further. Meanwhile, a significant motion submitted by the NRK’s executive committee was adopted by the convention, namely, to establish an office of deaconess. This action is notable because the office of deaconess in the NRK is not a lay office but an ordained one. With this resolution, therefore, the NRK had opened the door further for the full pastoral ministry of women.

At the Thirteenth General Convention in 2005, the proposal on the ordination of women was resubmitted by the same congregation. Again, the motion was declined out of concern for the partnership with the LCMS. However, in the following year the female student completed her theological training program. Subsequently, the NRK called her into the newly-established office of deaconess and ordained her to serve at Ohmiya Zion Lutheran Church.

At the Fourteenth General Convention in 2008, this Ohmiya Zion Lutheran Church now submitted the proposal for the bylaw change on the basis of their deaconess’s achievements in her service at the congregation.<sup>38</sup> The motion was declined yet again because the NRK administration had

---

established between the NRK and the JELC (1966), together with the agreement on cooperation in pastoral education at the joint seminary (1966), and six years after the NRK became a self-governing church body (1968), the NRK was already in favor of the ordination of women. In subsequent years, the NRK became self-supporting (in 1977) and gained associate membership in the Lutheran World Federation (in 1999), in addition to membership in the International Lutheran Council (in 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Rev. Shinri Emoto served as pastor of Sugunami Seishin Lutheran Church from 2000 to 2010. He also served as vice president of the NRK (2008–2011) and currently holds the position of general secretary (since 2011).

<sup>38</sup> The ALC’s *The Ordination of Women* booklet (1970) also suggested that the authority of the pastoral office is not to be judged according to gender but according to the level of dedicated service of the one who holds the office. *The Ordination of Women*, 18.

not yet held discussions with the LCMS administration concerning the issue.

During the years 2009 and 2010, the NRK finally held official conversations with the LCMS, with leaders of both church bodies meeting four times (February 3–6, 2009, in Hakone; September 8–11, 2009, in St. Louis; February 3–4, 2010, in Yokohama, and August 30–31 in Tokyo). The result of these meetings was not promising when viewed from the perspective of the LCMS since the NRK did not alter its view concerning the ordination of women.<sup>39</sup>

Two things from these conversations are notable. The first is the paper delivered at the second round of discussions by Dr. Masao Shimodate, the former director of the NRK's theological training program and instructor in New Testament at the joint seminary (1993–2008). In his essay, titled "Ministry in the New Testament (mainly in Pauline Theology) with some Views of Women's Activities," Shimodate at once dismissed the distinction between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers, making use of such theologians as Eduard Schweizer, Rudolf Sohm, Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Käsemann, and even Krister Stehdahl.<sup>40</sup> His point of departure in understanding the ministry in the New Testament was Paul and not Jesus. Paul's teaching on *diakonia* and *charisma* and the interchangeability of the two are primary for Shimodate. All the baptized are, therefore, "*charisma* bearers" and "*diakonia* performers" at the same time. Both baptized men and women are "office bearers" according to his interpretation of 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Galatians 3:28.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the eschatological order of the new creation (1 Cor 14:40) calls for the presence of a man and a women at the altar, both ordained, and with equal dignity.

The evaluation of Nao's opinion of 1974 may similarly apply here to Shimodate's claims: one may observe a faulty starting point, a lack of the mandating words of Jesus, the use of higher criticism as the method of

---

<sup>39</sup> See the official common statement after the fourth consultation, published in *Kyokai Dayori* (Japan Lutheran Church Monthly Newsletter), no. 547 (December 2010): 12.

<sup>40</sup> Specific references include Ernst Käsemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (Naperville, Ill: Allenson, 1964), 63–94; R. Eduward Schweizer, "Ministry in the Early Church," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 835–42; and Krister Stehdahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women*, cites Krister Stehdahl on page 36.

<sup>41</sup> Again, Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women*, uses the same New Testament passages on pages 22–23.

study, and the absence of dogmatic, historical, and confessional considerations.<sup>42</sup> Much of Shimodate's argument is also found in the aforementioned booklet, *The Ordination of Women*, which Nao also appears to have used in 1974.<sup>43</sup>

Another notable point from these rounds of talks is the NRK's articulation of the two main reasons for ordaining women. The first is the need for female workers in the church in light of the change in society with regard to women's status<sup>44</sup> and the need for reaching out and caring for women. The second concern is the small size of congregations in the NRK, which can afford only one paid worker.

In the November 2010 issue of *Kyokai Dayori*, a report of the special pastoral conference of the NRK held on November 9, 2010, was published.<sup>45</sup> Having informed the pastors of the result of the four rounds of discussions with the LCMS, the executive committee indicated its determination to move forward with the ordination of women for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel, even at the cost of the discontinuation of church fellowship with the LCMS. The administration also reported that both church bodies desired to remain in cooperative relations in mission and ministry notwithstanding. The opinions of the pastors were divided. Some stated that the NRK should ordain women in light of its church fellowship with the JELC, while others promoted a continued study on the issue. Still others were of the opinion that the NRK should not ordain women because the cost of termination of church fellowship with the LCMS would be too high. In addition, some pastors advocated the *status quo* because a woman already served as a pastor, practically speaking, in the office of deaconess.

At the Fifteenth General Convention in 2011, the proposal for women's ordination was submitted by the executive committee. The convention was once again divided because of the implications for the NRK's relationship with the LCMS. The motion was tabled until the NRK could discuss the

---

<sup>42</sup> There are also similarities between the method, sources, and conclusions of those who promote the "everyone a minister" ideal and the proponents of the ordination of women.

<sup>43</sup> See note 35 above.

<sup>44</sup> In Japan, the right of vote was granted to women in 1945, and in 1986 the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was passed in parliament.

<sup>45</sup> *Kyokai Dayori* 546 (November 2010): 5–6.

matter with the LCMS's new administration, specifically with President-elect Matthew Harrison.<sup>46</sup>

## VII. Cultural Differences in Church Fellowship?

We have observed the issue of cultural differences and church fellowship through the concrete example of the LCMS's relationship with the NRK. On the surface, the question of the ordination of women appears to be one of survival for the small church body. The demand for the continuation of partnership with the LCMS may be seen in this light. But theologically speaking, the matter goes deeper. Without recognizing it, perhaps, the NRK has adopted the modern mission effort that is characterized by both pietism and the Enlightenment.<sup>47</sup> That the NRK still wishes to join hands with the LCMS in evangelism and missions even after church fellowship is discontinued indicates that for them church fellowship has become a matter of *fides qua creditur* ["the faith by which it is believed"] rather than *fides quae creditur* ["the faith which is believed"].<sup>48</sup>

The cultural intrusion first took place when the virus of the higher critical methods of biblical interpretation invaded the NRK's exegetical task. Scriptural authority was undermined and confessional subscription was impoverished, both of which are evidenced in the current seminary curriculum and ordination liturgy. The cultural invasion also became recognizable when the NRK first articulated a position in favor of the ordination of women by copying the argument of the ALC and the LCA in the early 1970s. The agreement on *basic* doctrine is not at all consensus in all its articles. If there is any consensus between the NRK and the JELC, it is a joint commitment to historical criticism,<sup>49</sup> just as a joint commitment to the modern liturgical movement has resulted in greater consensus on the so-called Eucharist than on the doctrine of the ministry between the LWF and the Roman Catholics, as demonstrated in *From Conflict to Communion*.

---

<sup>46</sup> *Kyokai Dayori* 552 (May 2011): 4-5.

<sup>47</sup> Hermann Sasse, "The Question of the Church's Unity on the Mission Field," *Logia* 7 (Holy Trinity 1998): 56-57.

<sup>48</sup> Ronald Feuerhahn, "Church Fellowship," in *Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord: Essays in Honor of Glen Zweck on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Houston: Zweck Festschrift Committee, 2000), 53.

<sup>49</sup> Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. IX, ed. Robert Preus (Fort Wayne: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 89-90.

In the NRK, we have not seen extreme examples of contextualization, such as substituting the phrase “rice of life” in place of “bread of life.” But if the basic idea of contextualization is a shift from the Enlightenment way of *applying* certain theories into practice to the post-Constantinian *supremacy* of practice and pragmatism over doctrine, then the change is merely in what comes ahead of the doctrine: philosophy or the social sciences.<sup>50</sup> For a small church body, anything that would help the church grow is welcomed. But in this, again, practice has priority over doctrine. When doctrine is marginalized, the cultural discussion always helps, as for example, when egalitarian culture and society are cited as reasons for ordaining women. The devil always seeks to twist doctrine to accommodate Jesus to the religious and cultural environment. The effort of detaching church fellowship from altar fellowship is the result of making what Jesus says and gives secondary.

In the second century, the Valentinians, Marcionites, Montanists, and orthodox Christians did not say to each other: “for the sake of the church’s mission, let us bury our differences.” Similarly, in the fourth century, Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites, and Pelagians did not reach an agreement by saying, “so that we can better witness to the world, let us ignore doctrinal differences.” Church fellowship is a doctrinal issue and not a cultural one, just as the ordination of women is a doctrinal question and not a cultural or practical one alone. What is true in America is true also in Japan; if the church really does stand and fall with the article of justification, then it stands and falls with this article in Sweden, in Tanzania, in Russia, in Haiti, in America, and in Japan.<sup>51</sup> There is no German, Spanish, English, French, or Japanese gospel. There is no faith that is peculiar to any race or culture. There is only true or false Christian faith. There are only true or false Lutherans. There is one Christ, one Spirit, one Baptism, one Table of the Lord, and one church.

The NRK’s consideration of women’s ordination has played out in the realm of ethics rather than doctrine. Their foremost concern is the likely break in fellowship with their former mother church, even though the pastors seem to struggle to substantiate their earlier decision on this

---

<sup>50</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 420–432.

<sup>51</sup> Hermann Sasse, “The Lutheran Confessions and the Volk,” in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters*, vol. 1, trans. Matthew C. Harrison and others (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 128–131.

question.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps it may be helpful, if there is still time, to sit down with our beloved brethren and help them to see that the ordination of women is a doctrinal issue. And if it is a doctrinal issue, then the very gospel is at stake, as each article is interrelated in an organic whole. On the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, we can discuss the relationship between the ordination of women and the doctrine of justification, sanctification, Christology, church, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the ministry, and so on.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, we should consider at least two important questions. In the first place, we need to understand better the doctrine of church fellowship so that we do not repeat the mistake we made with the NRK. We failed to help them recognize how church fellowship with the JELC would have detrimental consequences. We did not encourage them to reconsider their belief that the ordination of women is merely an *adiaphoron*. In the second place, we should make every effort to unite our doctrine and practice among ourselves.<sup>54</sup> In church relations, it is harmful when the church's confession is inconsistently presented to others. A clear and unified theological message is always called for.

### VIII. Conclusion

At the beginning of this essay, we observed Hermann Sasse's thought that church fellowship is broken either by the sin of lovelessness or the intrusion of heresy. Our case indicates that what unites the church is not love but doctrine. Cultural factors are diagnosable as running in the way of the law. Church fellowship lives or wanes by the confession of the gospel, that is, the confession of Christ. We do not unite churches by what we do; rather, only what he gives unites us.

"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor 12:26). We repentantly pray that the Lord may rescue us from the separation of brethren. May the fruit of our missionaries' hard labors in Christ over so long a time ever remain and even

---

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Louis A. Smith, "How My Mind Has Changed," in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 512.

<sup>53</sup> An enormous assistance may be given by the readings in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*.

<sup>54</sup> Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Confessional Fellowship as Practiced in Foreign 'Mission' Settings," in *Contemporary Issues in Fellowship: Confessional Principles and Application*, ed. John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2004), 109-11.

flourish again! May the Lord ever sustain us in the same gospel and sacraments that we preach and teach!