

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROLE OF THE MIDWESTERN LUTHERANS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Lutheranism in America is strongest in the upper Midwest states today. In 1861, at the outset of the Civil War, the Midwest was simply known as "the West," and its citizens as "Westerners."

The Lutherans in the Midwest were largely German and Scandinavian immigrants. Many of the lay members and pastors were not nearly as established or ~~as~~ acclimated as the Lutherans in the East. But when war came to the nation in 1861, Midwest Lutherans by the thousands volunteered for the Federal service. This chapter will examine the role that the Midwestern Lutherans played in the American Civil War, especially the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was founded in Chicago on April 26, 1847. From its very beginning, the Missouri Synod had a deep concern and emphasis for doctrinal orthodoxy and staunch confessionalism. When the Civil War broke out, the then German Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, developed a

sort of a multiple personality in regard to its view of Southern succession, state's rights, and the preservation of the Union. Unquestionably many of the Missouri Synod's laymen, being German immigrants, were staunch Republicans. But it has already been noted that Missouri's preeminent theologian, C. F. W. Walther had

X Confederate sympathies. Walther wrote in Lehre und Wehre that the abolitionist movement was a by-product of liberalism. One of the reasons why Dr. Walther had no use for the Republican Party was that he was convinced that atheistic liberalism completely dominated it.¹ In a letter which he wrote to a Rev. Lindemann in Cleveland, Ohio, Walther noted that his state of Missouri would soon be a battleground. This fact he largely blamed on the "Abolitionist-Republican Party." According to Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer, Walther and his fellow ministers were staunch Democrats.²

Despite Walther's Confederate sympathies, he ^{neither} nor any other Missouri Synod pastor ever preached, taught, or wrote against Missouri Synod members serving

¹ Paul M. Kavasch, "The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod During the Early Years of the Civil War," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, 31 (January 1959): 104.

²Kavasch, pp. 104-105.

in the Federal army or navy. The minutes of the 1861 Western District convention include³ a study on the general subject of a Christian and government. After a thorough study of Scripture and Luther's works, the articles⁴ comes to the conclusion that:

since temporal government is ordained by God, to serve as His representative in temporal affairs, it was the duty and the responsibility of every Christian to obey the government in all things, irrespective of what it demanded, as long as nothing was ordered which was contrary to the Word of God.³

When Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion of the South, to Walther's credit, he wrote an editorial in Der Lutheraner urging obedience to civil authorities and respect for the government. Paul Kavasch, in his article "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod During the Early Years of the Civil War," writes:

Walther set forth the principle that the Christian must obey the government call to arms since it is the constituted authority of the land. He must not seek to evade this responsibility in any way, even though he may believe that the war is an unjust one. . . . Later Walther amplified his position. He reminded his readers that according to Romans 13, government receives its authority from God. Those, therefore, who withstand government, withstand the ordinance of God, which requires obedience unless demands are made contrary to God. Since the government protects all that an individual has in this world, every citizen should be ready and willing to serve his country when called upon to do so, even to fight for it if necessary.⁴

³Proceedings, Western District, Missouri Synod, Seventh Convention, 1861, p. 18., cited in Kavasch, p. 76.

⁴Der Lutheraner, XVII (May 14, 1861), 156., XIX (September 3, 1862), 2; Lehre und Wehre, X (February, 1864), 51., cited in Kavasch, p. 78.

Dr. John Drickamer, in his doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther," records that while Walther taught that Christians were subject to the draft, at the same time, Walther taught it was wrong for the state to draft preachers into military service, not because of their persons, but because of their office, "which had benefits for the state as well as for the individual citizens."⁵ Among C. F. W. Walther's legal papers in the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, is a copy of his draft document, dated September 15, 1862. The reason for his exemption is listed "by reason of being president of Concordia College."⁶

While Walther and at least a few of the other early Missouri Synod leaders sympathized at least to some degree with the Lost Cause, it would be a mistake to conclude that their Confederate inclinations permeated ² throughout the Missouri Synod. As Chancellor Bismarck has remarked, there are two things that you cannot change, geography and history. As it turned out, geography and history both helped the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

⁵Walther, Gnadenjahr, p. 568.; Walther to "Geliebter Bruder in dem Herrn!" November 1863, Gutachten, CHI; Walther to "Geliebter Bruder in dem Herrn!" December 17, 1863, Gutachten, CHI, cited in John Martin Drickamer, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther," (Th. D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1978), pp. 178-179.

⁶Drickamer, p. 179. Walther's draft exemption is in a Concordia Historical Institute file labeled "Walther, C. F. W., Legal Papers." (Note by Dr. John Drickamer).

support the cause of the Federal government. Heathcote cites the 1861 Lutheran Almanac as the Missouri Synod having at the outset of the Civil War, 170 ministers, 135 congregations, and 25,000 members.⁹ According to a footnote in Paul Kavasch's article, pertaining to synod proceedings of 1860, the Missouri Synod had 161 congregations in 16 states, obviously a later figure than what appeared in the Lutheran Almanac. Kavasch reports that five of these congregations were situated in the South, exclusive of the congregations in Missouri. He also adds in his footnote, that none of the 28 congregations in Missouri joined the Southern cause.⁸

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Dr. William Arndt, long time professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, writes a heart wrenching account of the experiences of Missouri Synod pastor F. J. Biltz in the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly. Pastor Biltz was called to be the pastor of a Lutheran congregation near what is now Concordia, Missouri. Back then it was described as "near Cook's Store" in Lafayette Country, Missouri.⁹

⁷Lutheran Almanac, 1861, cited in Heathcote, p. 69.

⁸Kavasch, p. 78, footnote #57.

⁹William Arndt, "Several Episodes from the Life of the Sainted Pastor F. J. Biltz," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, 6 (January 1933): 41.

Any student of the Civil War readily knows that "Sherman's March to the Sea" was tame compared to the absolutely indescribable brutality that characterized the partisan warfare between Northern and Southern sympathizers in the border states of Missouri and Kansas before and during the Civil War. Dr. Arndt's article is composed of three letters in German ^{all at} the Biltz's wrote to relatives in other parts of the state of Missouri. Professor Arndt provides lengthy introductions to these letters. In these letters, the contents ^{of} which can only be summarized in this thesis, Pastor Biltz writes about the turmoil that characterized conditions in Missouri after a provisional governor was chosen, in the summer of 1861. Two other letters describe the bloody guerrilla warfare that broke out in Missouri after organized Confederate existence ended in 1862, and how Pastor Biltz, his family, and his church members were terrorized by murdering bands of border ruffians.¹⁰ Professor Arndt also relates in his article that four members of Pastor Biltz's congregation were murdered by Southern guer^rillas in July of 1863, and

¹⁰Arndt, pp. 41-52.

that eleven more men from the Concordia congregation were killed in an engagement with a large band of bushwackers near Emma, Missouri, on October 10, 1864. Pastor Biltz in this engagement took up a gun and rode off on his pony with the rest of the area's homeguard to confront the marauders. Even though eleven men from his congregation were killed alone, Pastor Biltz was not harmed.¹¹ Dr. Arndt concludes his article about this courageous LCMS pastor and congregation with these words:

It was in times like these that the faith of the founders and first members of our Synod was tested. Pastor Biltz, in spite of an alluring call into safe territory, remained with his little flock in the war-torn area, conceiving it to be his duty not to forsake it in these days of temptation and sorrow. His heroic devotion to duty constitutes one of the fine pages in the early history of our church body. It was but natural that soon the Western District looked upon him as one of its leaders and after the lapse of several years elected him as its President, a position which he occupied with honor for seventeen years.¹²

In the state of Michigan, the Franconians of the Missouri Synod were not endangered by roving bands of Southern guerillas. But they also had to suffer the cruel, cold facts of war, of sons, fathers, husbands, and

¹¹Arndt, pp. 50-51.

¹²Arndt, pp. 51-52.

brothers who never returned to their Frankenmuth. Rev. Herman Zehnder writes that Pastor Ottomar Fuerbringer demonstrated true spiritual leadership by calling upon young, unmarried men of the community to volunteer for Federal service, to prevent the creation of widows and fatherless children:

It was also during Ottomar Fuerbringer's pastorate that the Civil War took place, 1860-65. Each township was assigned a quota of men, and it was up to the officials of the township to decide who should serve. At the outset the Frankenmuthers hired Yankees to serve in their place. It is not recorded how much money they paid the mercenary, but as the war continued, it became impossible to engage mercenaries. Fuerbringer was instrumental in keeping married men at home by asking single men to volunteer.¹³

Moreover, before this thesis concludes its examination of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod during the Civil War years, mention must be made of its first army chaplain, Friedrich Wilhelm Richmann. Pastor Richmann was born in Hartum, near Preussisch-Minden in Westphalia, in 1820.¹⁴ When he came to this country, he first studied at Capital University, and was a member of the Ohio Synod.¹⁵ Later he became a member of Missouri

¹³Herman F. Zehnder, Teach My People the Truth - The Story of Frankenmuth, Michigan, (Bay City, Michigan: By the Author, 1970), p. 136.

¹⁴Karl Kretzmann, "A Lutheran Army Chaplain in the Civil War," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, 17 (January 1945): 97.

¹⁵Milton S. Ernstmeier, They Shall Not March Alone, Glimpses into the Life and History of the Chaplaincy of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), p. 15.

by passing a colloquium on April 30, 1847 at the founding convention of Missouri in Chicago that year. When the Civil War broke out, Pastor Richmann received a call to serve as chaplain of the 58th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteers of the United States Army. The records do not indicate who or what was the calling body.¹⁶ Many of the volunteer regiments during the Civil War were permitted to choose their own officers and chaplains.

Pastor Richmann was serving a congregation in Schaumburg, Illinois when he was called to be a Union army chaplain. The congregation gave him an indefinite leave of absence.¹⁷ It is interesting to note that although at the outset of the war, C. F. W. Walther exhibited some Confederate sympathies, there is no evidence of such sympathy in his words commending Pastor Richmann for serving in the Union army:

Our dear brother F. W. Richmann of Schaumburg, Cook Co., IL. has accepted a call as chaplain of the Ohio Regiment, and since there was a complaint throughout the country that chaplains were neglecting their duty in a terrible manner, our dear Richmann might belong to the few who recognize their responsibility and prove faithful.¹⁸

¹⁶Kretzmann, p. 98. ¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Der Lutheraner, May 1862, pp. 192, 199; cited Ernstmeyer, p. 16.

Subsequent issues of Der Lutheraner contained Richmann's personal accounts of army life at the front while serving as chaplain in a regiment that was part of General John McCernand's division of the Western Mississippi Army. The Missouri Synod St. Louis Pastoral Conference soon took it upon themselves to assist Richmann and other Lutheran chaplains in their work by publishing in 1862, a Soldaten Gebetbüchlein. It was printed in both English and German by Wiebusch and Son, St. Louis.¹⁹

The rigors of Civil War camp and army life proved too much however for Chaplain Richmann. After serving faithfully three months in the Western theatre, he was evacuated back to Illinois as a medical casualty. He resumed his duties in the Schaumburg congregation and eventually regained his health. Rev. Friedrich Wilhelm Richmann continued to serve in various capacities and places within the Missouri Synod until his death in 1885. In a Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly article,

¹⁹Der Lutheraner, 1862, p. 199; 1863, p. 112., cited Ernstmeyer, p. 16.

Karl Kretzmann relates some of Richmann's experiences, when he was stationed in Corinth, Mississippi, after the bloody Union victory at Shiloh, Tennessee. He writes of preaching in both English and German, of the responsibility of taking care of the regiment's mail, of soldier after soldier becoming sick in camp from diarrhea/dysentery, typhoid fever, violent vomiting, and sunstrokes. What happened to Pastor Richmann's regiment was typical for army regiments on both sides of the conflict. A standard infantry regiment often would leave home with a full complement of a thousand men, but within a year's time, it was reduced to less than half that size due to sickness and battle losses. For Chaplain Richmann's regiment, the casualty rate from sickness and battle was 60%.²⁰ The days before sulfur drugs, penicillin, antibiotics, and antiseptics were indeed terrible. According to the LCMS source material book, Moving Frontiers, Pastor Richmann was the only LCMS chaplain during the Civil War.²¹

In summarizing the Lutheran Church-Missouri

²⁰Ernstmeyer, pp. 16-17; Kretzmann, pp. 100-101.

²¹Carl S. Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 236.

Synod's role in the Civil War, it can be said that Walther and the Saxon Lutherans in St. Louis were rightly apprehensive about supporting the Union cause too enthusiastically. The Republican Party had indeed attracted many atheistic liberals, whom of course the staunch Saxon Lutherans detested. Being located in a hotly and bloodily contested border state certainly produced enough anxieties of their own. But by and large, like most German Lutherans, the lay members and pastors of the LCMS during the war years were all for the Union and the Lincoln Administration. Walther's words in Der Lutheraner are a good reflection of what really was in the heart of the American Luther as he looked at his adopted country now brutally torn apart by civil war:

A time of severe divine visitation has come over our land. A bloody civil war has broken out among us, which quickly and suddenly has already plucked thousands out of time into eternity. And still our future continues to lie dismal and dark before us. God at long last began to punish our people for its sins with a hard rod and it seems this rod is still lifted for always new and ever more severe blows. O dear Christian, Lutheran readers, let us humble ourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God! . . . But if we examine ourselves, then we, too, everywhere notice sin and unfaithfulness--satiety of God's

Word; deficiencies in love, humility, mildness and patience; greed and secular spirit, conformity with the world; indolence in prayer and watching; ingratitude and discontent; and the like
 O dear Christians, let us not then idly wait perhaps for a general repentance of our whole American Nineveh but rather remember our own great part in the general guilt and ourselves heartily repent.²²

Let this editorial from Der Lutheraner be remembered as C. F. W. Walther's real view of his nation at the outset of the Civil War, instead of an overblown emphasis on his documented, but somewhat temporary support for the Confederate cause.

What is known today as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod was not even eleven years old when the Civil War began in 1861. In delineating the role of the Wisconsin Synod in the Civil War, it must be understood none of the synod machinery which exists today was in existence at the time of the Civil War. There was no Wisconsin Synod publishing house, no church periodicals, no worker training schools of any kind, no synod headquarters, and no foreign mission endeavors of any kind. The "Evangelical Lutheran Wisconsin Synod" was founded in the town of Granville, Wisconsin, now part of northwest Milwaukee, on May 26, 1850. The miniscule Lutheran synod

²²C. F. W. Walther, "Vorwort . . ." Der Lutheraner, XVIII (August 20, 1861), p. 1., cited in Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 235.

numbered five pastors, serving nine preaching places in 1850, but by 1860, that number had grown to 20 pastors serving 59 congregations and preaching stations.²³ The Minnesota Synod was founded less than a year before the Civil War began, in July 1860, with six founding pastors. The second Michigan Synod was founded in December of 1860, in a Detroit parsonage, with eight pastors and delegates.²⁴ Dr. Heathcote reported in his monograph that at the very start of the American Civil War, the Wisconsin Synod had 18 pastors, 59 churches, and 5000 communicant members, the Minnesota Synod had seven pastors, ten churches, and 1500 communicants, and the Michigan Synod had 16 pastors, 27 churches, and 2500 communicants.²⁵ Small indeed, but from these state synods grew the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod, the third largest Lutheran synod in the United States today.

It would be a mistake to say that the Wisconsin Synod played a major role in the Union victory in the American Civil War. The synod by any standard or measure was still an infant during the war years of 1861-1865. It however would be a major mistake to conclude that the

²³ Edward C. Fredrich, The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), p. 13.

²⁴ Fredrich, pp. 19, 22.

²⁵ Lutheran Almanac, 1861, cited in Heathcote, p. 69.

Wisconsin Synod played no role in the American Civil War.

Like all other wars since the Civil War, the sons of the Wisconsin Synod marched off to war with their countrymen when duty called. An examination of several anniversary booklets of WELS congregations which were in existence at the time of the Civil War reveal that in these churches, the members were certainly involved in the war effort.

The anniversary booklet of St. John-St. James Ev.

Lutheran Church, Reedsville, Wisconsin, reports that

during the war years, almost every able bodied young man was serving in the Union army.²⁶

In the old "Northwestern Conference," Zum Kripplein Christi Ev. Lutheran Church of

Iron Ridge, Wisconsin erected a new church building in

1864. The church council and voters of the congregation

assessed every family of the congregation a certain

amount of money to pay for the new edifice. But to their

credit, the council and voters gave an exemption to every

congregational family that had paid the \$300 bounty to

exempt their son or father from serving in the Union

army.²⁷ In the north woods of Wisconsin, a young German

immigrant named Frederick Krenz enlisted in the Union

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Centennial booklet, St. John's-St. James Ev. Lutheran Church, Reedsville, Wisconsin, 1957, p. 5.

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Interview with Professor Martin Westerhaus, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, January 27, 1993.

army and served in a medical unit in Sherman's army. He was a member of St. Paul, Naugart, and later donated the land where the congregation's parsonage is located.²⁸ The Naugart congregation was founded in 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War.

One of the most interesting stories about the Wisconsin Synod's role in the Civil War centers around the person of Rev. Julian Kilian. Like the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod had but one chaplain in the service during the Civil War, and this was Pastor Julian Kilian. He was drafted into military service at the beginning of the war, and was able to persuade army authorities of his qualifications for being a Lutheran chaplain, and spent the entire Civil War serving a German regiment from Wisconsin with Word and Sacrament.²⁹ Professor J. P. Koehler tells more about Kilian's story in his History of the Wisconsin Synod:

He hailed from a Moravian congregation at Bremen, had spent some time with the merchant friends at New York who had been hosts to Muehlhaeuser and the other early Langenberg missionaries. Thru their good offices and his relationship to a musician at Watertown, his brother-in-law Gaebler, Kilian landed in Wisconsin. He became acquainted with Bading, passed a colloquium, and was assigned the Greenfield parish near Milwaukee (later Root Creek). His membership in Synod was protested by Dammann on the grounds

²⁸ Interview with Mrs. Alma Burmeister, Town of Stettin, Wisconsin, February 2, 1993, granddaughter of Frederick Krenz. His tombstone in Big Hill Cemetery, Town of Maine, Wisconsin, gives Krenz's dates as October 10, 1830-June 18, 1905.

²⁹ Interview with Professor Westerhaus, January 27, 1993.

that it was premature. From Root Creek he was drafted for military service and served thru the Civil War as chaplain of a Wisconsin regiment. In 1867 he was called to Lomira, where he labored in his quiet way, faithful to the Lutheran confession, until he died.³⁰

Chapter Five details the struggle of the early Wisconsin Synod, as it strove to "dig a well" where it had been planted by the Lord, to produce church workers. This seminary endeavor unquestionably preoccupied a good deal of the young synod's time during the Civil War, with a seminary finally being established in Watertown in 1863.

Another problem that caused great consternation among the early leaders and pastors of the Wisconsin Synod during the Civil War years was the increasing bitterness and conflict that occurred between the blossoming Wisconsin Synod and the larger, more established Missouri Synod. As Wisconsin grew larger in its namesake state, WELS congregations and pastors often sparred with Missouri men and congregations, the Missourians often seeing the Wisconsin Synod as the opposition synod. The year 1862 was especially a bitter one between Missouri and Wisconsin, with Der Lutheraner

³⁰ John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod, edited and with an introduction by Leigh D. Jordahl, (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Printing Company for the Protestant Conference, 1981), p. 79.

mounting vehement attacks on the pastoral praxis of the budding Wisconsin Synod. But during the Civil War years, Wisconsin's confessionalism improved remarkably. When the church periodical, Gemeinde-Blatt, began to be published in 1865, Editor Moldehnke could offer rebuttal to some of the overblown charges.³¹ Professor Edward Fredrich comments succinctly that it took time for the Missouri Synod to accept the little Wisconsin Synod as a trustworthy, orthodox "little brother":

Although the Wisconsin Synod was well on the way to improving its position by the mid 1860's, Missouri took little notice. Right up to 1868 it continued its charges that by that time were anachronistic, to say the least.³²

Fellowship between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods was later established in 1868, the Wisconsin Synod spending the war years improving its confessional position as well as establishing a seminary of its very own.³³

When the Civil War began, Pastor John Bading was the president of the Wisconsin Synod, who left in 1863 for Germany and Russia on a fund raising mission for the for the new worker training school in Watertown.³⁴ Pastor Gottlieb Reim was acting president from 1863-1864, and won the presidency on his own in 1864, serving until

³¹Fredrich, p. 50. ³²Ibid. ³³Fredrich, p. 52.

³⁴Fredrich, p. 16.

1866. During Reim's twenty month tenure as president, the tide turned in favor of the Union in the Civil War, the seminary was opened in Watertown, and the new college in Watertown underwent construction, its actual dedication taking place during Rev. William Streissguth's brief time as synod president.³⁵

From the words of President Muehlhaeuser in his annual report in June of 1860, it is evident that even in little Helenville, Wisconsin, the gloom of impending civil war loomed large on the horizon:

When we view the political conditions, we see how the mass of people and water waves rage, and how a secret apprehension rules before the coming things . . . One speaks in the old homeland of peace, and still nobody will trust the peace negotiations, because overall, new, immense preparations are made for bloody war.³⁶

When the Wisconsin Synod met in Watertown for the 1863 convention, the Civil War had been raging for two full years. President John Bading spoke of the political and military conditions in his annual report to the convention. In his address, he noted that throughout the Wisconsin Synod, members have answered the call to arms and were now in the Federal service:

³⁵ Fredrich, p. 65.

³⁶ Proceedings of the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, May 31-June 7, 1860, Helenville, Wisconsin, p. 3.

The experiences in political and civil life at issue weigh us down and make us groan Our divided, greatly afflicted country has become troubled and mournful Already the bloody civil war had raged two full years. The last year had again cast thousands of our men and boys into the army of death, and has brought their immortal souls into eternity. There is hardly a congregation in our synodical union which does not have some of its members in the military service.³⁷

By the synod convention of 1865, also in Watertown, the Civil War had ended, and the Wisconsin Synod now was setting its sights on the opening of their new college in Watertown that fall. Acting synodical president William Streissguth's words reflect the jubilation that the four long years of bloody conflict was finally behind the country:

It was in a heavy, gloomy time, the previous year in Manitowoc, when we departed from each other. The spirit of terrible, bloody civil war laid heavy over our people and on the congregations of our synod. Many faithful congregational members serve in the ranks of the fighters, fathers have left their families, sons have left their parents, and many death notices were the latest reports from these separations We did not have as a synod a call to participate in the political questions of the time. Our single comfort, our single hope itself in our troubling hours was the right hand of the LORD, which can do everything, and we did not become disgraced.³⁸

³⁷ Proceedings of the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Watertown, Wisconsin, 1863, p. 3.

³⁸ Proceeding of the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Watertown, Wisconsin, 1865, p. 2.

The year 1865 would prove to be a banner year for⁶⁴ the blossoming Wisconsin Synod. Not only was confessional Lutheranism on the rise, but Northwestern College, then known as "Wisconsin University" was founded, and the first church periodical in the Wisconsin Synod, the Gemeinde-Blatt, the forerunner to the Northwestern Lutheran, began publication. The Wisconsin Synod spent the Civil War years, not only supporting the Union war effort, (although the synod never publicly declared itself to be for the Union), and improving its confessional position. At the end of the Civil War, the WELS no longer had an identity crisis, it wanted to be confessional Lutheran and it finally was confessional Lutheran.³⁹

In concluding a study on the role of the Wisconsin Synod and the Civil War, it is interesting to hear the words of an anonymous founding father of St. John's-St. James Ev. Lutheran Church in Reedsville, Wisconsin. This church was founded by "Old Lutherans" who came to this country to escape the Prussian Union. The centennial booklet of this congregation in northeastern Wisconsin provides an excellent description of what life was like on the homefront in the Midwest during the Civil War:

³⁹ Arthur Hoermann, Our Northwestern College, trans. Hans Koller Moussa, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1915), p. 15.

The years 1860-1864 were especially difficult due to the raging Civil War. For one dollar you received at best \$0.25 of merchandise. The majority of our men were serving in the army. This left the women with all the work of splitting the wood, grubbing out the stumps, and plowing the land with oxen. They are accustomed to work in heavy overalls and wooden shoes. In the evening by the light of the open fire, they whittle shingles which they turn to cash. However, even those times were under full control of our heavenly Father. He used them as always, for the good of His Church. 40

The Joint Synod of Ohio was centered in a state which contributed much to the Union cause in terms of men and material resources. Professor Willard Allbeck, in his monograph, A Century of Lutherans in Ohio, writes that the Joint Synod made no formal declaration concerning the war.⁴¹ Its Eastern District, however, summed up well the sentiment in the entire Ohio Synod with this statement in the Lutheran Standard:

God's Word teaches plainly that it is the duty of every Christian to obey the lawful government of the country in everything which is not against the word of God. We must therefore heartily regret that so great a number of our Southern brethren have been far misguided as to not only resist the constitutional government of our country, but even to attack it by force of arms. 42

⁴⁰Centennial booklet, St. John's-St. James Ev.Lutheran Lutheran Church, 1957, p. 5.

⁴¹Willard Allbeck, A Century of Lutherans in Ohio, (Yellow Spring, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1966), p. 249.

⁴²Lutheran Standard, April 26, 1861, cited in Allbeck, p. 249.

Professor Allbeck also reported that several Lutheran pastors from Ohio served as chaplains in Ohio infantry regiments, but these pastors were all from synods of the General Synod.⁴³ The Miami Synod, one of the few synods which approved the "Definite Platform," took a very pro-Union stance immediately after the firing upon of Fort Sumter. After a long preamble, the synod at convention, decided it was:

1. Resolved, That we declare it to be a Christian as well as a civil duty to support the Government in its constitutional efforts to punish treason, and put down rebellion by all the means within our power.
2. Resolved, That we call upon our people to lift up holy hands in prayer to the God of battles
3. Resolved, That we deeply sympathize with all loyal citizens and Christian patriots in the rebellious portion of our country.⁴⁴

The Wisconsin Synod was not the first Lutheran synod to be founded in Milwaukee. That honor belongs to the old Buffalo Synod, a hard luck confessional Lutheran synod which never became very large and for which very little ever went right. The Buffalo Synod was founded under the leadership of Rev. J. A. A. Grabau in Milwaukee in 1845.⁴⁵

⁴³Allbeck, pp. 249-250.

⁴⁴Minutes of the Miami Synod, 1861, p. 14., cited in Allbeck, p. 247.

⁴⁵Theodore Engelder, Ludwig Fuerbringer, Paul E. Kretzmann, editors in chief, The Concordia Cyclopedia, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 101.

Grabau's hierarchical view of the doctrine of the church and ministry soon made him at odds with Walther and the Saxons in Missouri. During the Civil War, Grabau's suspicions about giving too much freedom and power to the common people made him critical of supporting the Union war effort, which ultimately resulted in him losing prestige and damaged his reputation. Dr. Roy Suelflow writes:

First of all, Grabau began to lose prestige, especially during the Civil War. Grabau, critical of aspects of American democracy, had asserted that the war indicated that the American system was not working out well. Northerners took this as indicating sympathy for the South. Another factor was the fast growth of the Missouri Synod. During the years the Buffalo Synod had lost a considerable number of congregations to the Missouri Synod. The tenets of Missouri, which fostered the rights of the congregation much more than did those of Buffalo, had appealed to these congregations.⁴⁶

An entire book could yet be written on the positions and participation of the Scandinavian Lutherans during the American Civil War. The point has already been made that the Norwegians and the Swedes were very much opposed to slavery. This ultimately resulted in strained relations between Walther and the Missouri Synod.

⁴⁶Roy A. Suelflow, A Plan for Survival, (New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, 1965), p. 115.

The Missourians had invited the Norwegians to send their young men to the St. Louis seminary for their pastoral training. The arrangement worked well until the start of the Civil War, when Norwegian students attending St. Louis came home to report that Walther and the St. Louis faculty had decidedly pro-Southern sympathies.⁴⁷ Professor Lauritz Larsen, who served as the Norwegian professor at St. Louis from 1859 to 1861 even was apparently influenced by Walther's position on slavery. This prompted the Norwegian Synod to recall its students and to open up a seminary of their own in Halfway Creek, Wisconsin, which opened in October of 1862. This was the beginning of Luther College. Later after the war, Norwegian students gradually returned to St. Louis, until the Norwegian Synod opened up an actual seminary of their own in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1876.⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that the Norwegian laity were categorically opposed to slavery with all its social, political, and historical implications. The majority of the Norwegian Synod clergymen took a

⁴⁷ Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 32.

⁴⁸ Nelson, pp. 239-240.

similar position to the Missouri Synod, holding that in and of itself, slavery could not be labeled as sin. Long after the Civil War ended, and long after slavery was abolished, the synod debated the slavery issue. Ultimately, according to E. Clifford Nelson, the issue became "a hermeneutical conflict regarding the definition of the Word of God and the authority of the Bible."⁴⁹

Norwegian Lutherans, by the thousands, staunch supporters of the Republican Party, volunteered by the thousands to fight for the Union. Few if any Norwegians lived in the South. Norwegian immigrants purposely avoided the South because of the region's slavery. The most famous Lutheran to wear Federal blue during the Civil War was Colonel Hans Christian Heg. He was from Muskego, Wisconsin, where a large Norwegian community was located. Before the war, Hans Christian Heg opened up his barn so his friend and pastor, Claus L. Clausen, could hold Lutheran church services and Sunday School. Later, he donated the tract of land on which the first Norwegian Lutheran Church in America was erected.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Nelson, p. 240.

⁵⁰ Theodore Belgen, ed., The Civil War Letters of Colonel Hans Christian Heg (1829-1863), (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1936), pp. 6-7.

When the Civil War came, Hans Christian Heg recruited a regiment in Wisconsin, composed largely of Norwegian Lutherans, which became known as the 15th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. For two years, 1860-1861, Claus Clausen served as a Lutheran chaplain for this regiment.⁵¹ Some of the soldiers in the 15th Wisconsin had been in America only a few months, having just immigrated from Norway. The 15th Wisconsin and Colonel Heg fought at the bloody battle of Stone's River, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on the last day of 1862.⁵² The regiment also fought at the huge and bloody battle at Chickamauga, in northern Georgia, on September 19-20, 1863. Here Colonel Heg, commanding a brigade in the Union Army of the Cumberland, which included his 15th Wisconsin, was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter, and the regiment routed. Colonel Hans Christian Heg was buried in the church yard of the Norwegian Lutheran church, he helped found. Sometime later, the state of Wisconsin erected a statue of Colonel Heg on the grounds of the state capital in Madison.⁵³

⁵¹Nelson, p. 240.

⁵²Robert W. Well, Wisconsin in the Civil War, (Milwaukee: The Journal Company, 1962), p. 50.

⁵³Well, pp. 60-61.

The Swedish Lutheran immigrants, like their Norwegian neighbors, also had absolutely no use for the peculiar institution when they came to the United States. The Swedes organized their own synod on the eve of the Civil War, June 5-11, 1860, in Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, the fourth Lutheran synod to be founded in the state of Wisconsin. The Swedish Lutherans soon identified themselves with the Republican Party, and like German and Norwegian immigrants, they volunteered enthusiastically to serve in the Union army.⁵⁴ One estimate is that 2250 Swedes living in four states, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, served in the Federal service, one sixth of the entire Swedish population.⁵⁵ From a Swedish Lutheran congregation in Vasa, Minnesota, which was founded in 1855, no less than 62 men joined the Federal army, until "at last only old men and boys were left to take care of the farms." The founder of the Vasa settlement, Hans Mattson, raised a company of infantry and rose to the rank of colonel.⁵⁶ Two of Lars Esbjorn's sons, William Paul and Joseph,

⁵⁴Oscar N. Olson, The Augustana Lutheran Church in America, 1860-1910, The Formative Period, published by and under the auspices of the Executive Council of the Augustana Lutheran Church, (Davenport, Iowa: Arcade Office and Letter Service, 1956), p. 5.

⁵⁵E. W. Olson, The Swedish Element in Illinois, 1917, cited in Olson, p. 6.

⁵⁶Hans Mattson, The Story of an Emigrant, 1891, cited in Olson, p. 6.

enlisted in the army. Paul served with the 1st Illinois Cavalry, until he was killed in action at Lexington, Missouri on September 18, 1861.⁵⁷ His last recorded words are in a letter he wrote to his family:

Greet all friends who inquire about me and pray for me that I may live right, serve God and my country right, and should I die on the field of battle may I die as a man. If this should be the last letter to you, may we some day be an unbroken family circle in heaven.⁵⁸

Esbjorn's other son, Joseph, served throughout the war with an artillery unit and rose to the rank of captain.⁵⁹ One of the major reasons why the Swedish Lutherans were so eager to enlist and fight for the Union was to abolish slavery, unlike most of their fellow Union soldiers, who were more inspired by a desire to preserve the Union and often, for the sheer adventure of it all.⁶⁰ The nascent Augustana Synod did what it could to minister to its members in the service. Rev. Oscar Olson writes:

The Church ministered the best it could to the men in the service. Pastors visited army camps, ministering to the sick, wounded, and captured soldiers; distributed tracts and testaments. Hemlandet was sent free to men in various camps. Through correspondence pastors kept in touch with their members in the service.⁶¹

⁵⁷Olson, p. 6.

⁵⁸Letter in the Esbjorn collection, Archives of the Augustana Synod, cited in Olson, p. 99.

⁵⁹Olson, p. 6.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

When the cold, cruel war ended in 1865, the president of the Augustana Synod, Rev. T. N. Hasselquist, reported to the synod:

The successful ending of the long and dreadful Civil War must call forth general joy, that we can now hope soon to see our countrymen and church members who risked their lives for the nation's and our peace. But intimately associated with this joy is the sorrow over the murder of our duly elected leader of our country, the universally revered, truly great man, Abraham Lincoln. But even this blow we hope the Lord will turn for the best, reminding us thereby of our duty to pray for our government and for the preservation of the life our rulers.⁶²

The writer of this thesis was unable to find a great deal of information about the role the Iowa Synod played in the Civil War. The Lutheran Almanac of 1861 listed the Iowa Synod's statistics as 14 pastors, 25 churches, and 4000 members.⁶³ Since Iowa sent its fair share of Union regiments to fight in the Civil War, undoubtedly, Iowa's members participated along side their fellow citizens, like Lutherans did from every other state, North and South.

In conclusion, the Midwestern Lutherans, like their Eastern and Southern counterparts, answered their section's call to arms, and fought in the ranks of the army and navy until peace came in 1865. Their fellow

⁶²Synodical minutes, Augustana Synod, 1865, p. 4., cited in Olson, p. 6.

⁶³Lutheran Almanac, 1861, cited in Heathcote, p. 69.

church members and their pastors did what they could to minister to their spiritual needs on far off camps and battlefields. Several Lutheran officers and men distinguished themselves for faithful, courageous, and exemplary service to their country, with Colonel Hans Christian Heg becoming the most famous. One of the state of Wisconsin's early governors, Edward Salomon, was a Prussian Lutheran, who performed meritorious service for the state and for the Federal war effort, during the years 1862-1864. He was not renominated for a second term, and at the end of his term, he resumed his law practice in Milwaukee, later moved to New York, and finally died in retirement in Germany, in 1909.⁶⁴ Edward Salomon's example of a German Lutheran, working and doing his patriotic best for his adopted country, befits the Lutherans of the Midwest who for four long years, worked to preserve the Union of the United States, and to abolish black slavery.

⁶⁴ William Fletcher Thompson, gen. ed., The History of Wisconsin, six vols. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), vol. 2: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873, by Richard N. Current, pp. 310-311, 326-327.