
HISTORICAL ESSAY
delivered to the
Fifty-second Annual Convention
of the
CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

by

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*“Schism in the Orthodox Lutheran Conference
and its Reorganization as the Concordia Lutheran Conference, 1956”*

(Essay continued from the 51st Annual Convention to its conclusion)

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Toward the end of last year’s portion of this essay we noted that, although the Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, August 20-22, 1955 at Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, indicate that **not one word** concerning this raging controversy was uttered **on the record**, nor was any **official action** taken against Dr. Kretzmann by the Conference—even though he had, in effect, already severed fellowship with a good many of his erstwhile brethren and longtime associates in the fight for orthodoxy in outward Lutheranism—the matter was far from being settled. Concerted efforts continued in less public forums to facilitate a peaceful and yet proper resolution. However, despite appearances to the contrary, including the notable silence on the matter at the convention, the fracture in the fellowship had not been healed and had not been dealt with to the complete satisfaction of all concerned, as subsequent events clearly revealed.

On October 15, 1955, the Board of Directors met in Tinley Park, Illinois, and tried again to arrive at some definitive action. The following resolution was passed:

WHEREAS, after a long and brotherly discussion of the latest developments in the controversy between Pastor E. C. Hallstein and Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, it was clear that the Board and the Committee on Theological Education could find no solution; and

WHEREAS we found through our discussion that the settlement of the difficulty at which we arrived at the Pastoral Conference in Detroit Lakes was not satisfactory to all concerned since the agreement reached was plainly understood in two opposing ways;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the President and the Vice-President arrange a discussion meeting of themselves and the disputants for the purpose of bringing the current controversy to a God pleasing conclusion, and that this meeting may include as many others as the President and Vice President deem necessary after consultation with the two parties, even the entire Pastoral Conference, before it is finally brought before the delegate

convention.

It was of course hoped that the entire matter would have been resolved by the time of the Board's next meeting in Tinley Park on January 14, 1956.

In two letters of reply to the Board's suggestion, dated October 22 and October 26, Dr. Kretzmann stated that he **refused to meet** with the *praesidium* or with anyone else who disagreed with his position **UNTIL the charges made against him had been withdrawn**. This made utterly impossible any reconciliation inasmuch as correspondence had yielded nothing, and now even face to face discussion has been ruled out. Moreover, Kretzmann stated in the same letters that, in the case of doctrinal discipline, he was **subject only to the congregation of which he was a member** and not to any "outside body." He stated that he did not acknowledge the officers of the O. L. C. nor its Board of Directors, and referred to them as a "superior court." The *praesidium* therefore wrote to the Committee on Theological Education concerning this obstructionistic conduct and urged it to plead with Dr. Kretzmann to correct his unscriptural position so that urgent disciplinary action regarding his professorship might be avoided.

"HERE, ONCE MORE AND FOR THE LAST TIME, ARE THE FACTS, presented once more, for the consideration of friend or of foe, in the interest of truth and fair play." With these words Dr. Kretzmann issued a final, undated release in which he attempted to summarize the controversy thus far. In it he expressed outrage over the charge of unionism still hanging over his head, and in his fourth point, he laid down the final gauntlet as it were concerning his continued fellowship with those who sought to admonish him:

Hence the undersigned feels under compulsion to make this declaration, and this is my last effort to restore proper theological balance in the Orthodox Lutheran Conference: **Unless the men (and others*)** [*referring to Pastor Hallstein's daughters in Minneapolis] **who share Pastor ECH's position will withdraw their sinful charges against me by December 31, 1955, I SHALL NO LONGER CONSIDER THEM, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, as BRETHREN IN THE FAITH.** I cannot consider myself in step with, nor do I care to identify myself with, men who regard themselves more orthodox than Luther or Walther.

III. Why Reorganization Became Necessary

Had this unfortunate and completely unnecessary controversy remained during the course of 1955 a matter existing only between Pastor Hallstein and Dr. Kretzmann; had the controversy concerned itself merely with an adiaphoristic matter, or with a difference in interpretation not involving Christian doctrine; or had the friction between the men resulted from a so-called "personality clash," it would still have been a serious matter. For **the refusal to be reconciled**, particularly for a whole year, even over such a relatively "minor" matter, is **wickedness**. It would have caused offense to other brethren, certainly to weak sheep and lambs of the Savior, and it had the potential of destroying the entire Conference. But this controversy involved MUCH MORE! It involved "doctrinal discipline," that is, the sincere and earnest effort of brethren to correct another brother who had slipped into error and had been for an entire year defending his error, refusing the admonition of God's Word, and setting himself over his brethren as one who is (and must remain) above reproach, with an "indelible character" unassailable by anyone except perhaps his intellectual and theological peers.

But this controversy suddenly grew to gigantic proportions! Throughout the year, various agencies of the Conference had endeavored to settle the matter, to arrive at a consensus, to get

Dr. Kretzmann to see that he had, at the very least, overstated himself. There was the Pastoral Conference back in January, the Board Meeting in April, the Plenary Pastoral Conference in August, the Board of Directors in October, and the *praesidium* which, at the behest of the Board, tried to set up a meeting with Dr. Kretzmann—all to no avail.

Now, as the year was drawing to a close, the resolve of the Conference to settle this gnawing problem began to fade, and individual pastors and laymen began to set themselves up as championing one or the other of the men involved. The President and Vice President, who had been solemnly charged with the responsibility of guarding the confessional position of the Conference, found themselves standing practically alone among the officers of the Conference, who began to rally 'round Dr. Kretzmann and who even reversed themselves on previous decisions for what they perceived as his benefit. The Conference became quite literally “paralyzed.”

In their urgent letter to all the pastors of the Conference, dated December 15, 1955, President Mehlberg and Vice President Mensing explained that, since the Board of Directors meeting on October 22nd, **1)** the Conference Secretary withdrew his yes-vote to the recommendation that the *praesidium* try to set up a meeting with Dr. Kretzmann to discuss the controversy; **2)** Holy Trinity congregation in Minneapolis and its pastor (O. G. Schupmann) now also rejected the resolution and set **itself** up as the chief arbiter to handle the matter its own way. The congregation wanted those who charged Dr. Kretzmann to meet with **it** instead of with the Conference officers. **3)** The chairman of the Committee on Theological Education refused to meet with Dr. Kretzmann because he said he already knew what Kretzmann’s reply would be. And now, the deadline of December 31st has been fixed by Dr. Kretzmann, after which time he would regard no opponent in this controversy as a brother.

As we well know, the refusal of Kretzmann to recognize the Conference officers even as brethren in the faith had dire consequences for everyone else in the Conference as well; for by January 1, everyone would be either Kretzmann’s brother or his enemy. With such a split in the fellowship, how could the members work together as a Conference any longer; how could they walk together, except they be agreed (Amos 3:3)?

The *praesidium* had their backs to the wall and wrote to the pastors of the Conference:

Because of this deplorable, disorderly, and unmanageable situation in the O. L. C., there are already a number of congregations and pastors contemplating their withdrawal from it. ... We ourselves can do nothing further because we are blocked in each attempt.

As a final effort to restore a God-pleasing unity, which must prevail if we are to continue to work and to worship together (1 Cor. 1,10; Romans 16,17) we urgently request all of our pastors who wish to remain in fellowship with us—and possibly also still maintain the O. L. C. as a God-pleasing church-body—to meet with us in pastoral conference on Wednesday, January 18, 1956, beginning at 9:30 a.m. This date has been chosen to enable all the pastors to attend without having to, leave their congregations on a Sunday. If it is still possible, the Board of Directors’ meeting first scheduled [by the October 15th meeting] for January 14 will be held in connection with the Pastoral Conference. If not possible due to the acute situation before us, the Pastoral Conference will be held in lieu of the Board Meeting,

It was our original intention when we first planned this letter to request Holy Trinity Congregation of Minneapolis to offer our Conference facilities for meeting, so that Doctor Kretzmann could more easily be present. But since he has now informed us that he will no longer consider us

his brethren after December 31st of this present year, we are calling for the Pastoral Conference to be held at Tinley Park, in Peace Lutheran Church.

Please inform me (that is, the President) soon whether or not you will be present, and whether or not you desire accommodations in Tinley Park. In case you cannot arrange to be present, please state your position very clearly, so that we can give consideration to it at our meeting.

Yours in the service of Christ,

E. L. Mehlberg

H. David Mensing

P. S. —It is to be understood that those who share Doctor Kretzmann's position set forth in his undated release, point four, received by the President and Vice President on December 5 & 6, in which he says that he will not consider us brethren in the faith after December 31, 1955, are not welcome at the above-mentioned meeting, since this meeting is for brethren in the Faith

E. L. M. & H. D. M.

The final die cast by Dr. Kretzmann early in December, causing a wedge to be driven into the fellowship of the O. L. C. by his act of sinful separatism and by his active cultivation of adherents, now had the potential of dividing also the body politic. It remained to be seen how many of the pastors would align themselves with Kretzmann and esteem *his* refusal to meet with his brethren as just cause for terminating also *their* fellowship with his accusers. The strength of the O. L. C. had, for four blessed years, lain in "*the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3). But that precious bond was now coming unglued. Satan and all those who had predicted the early demise of the Conference were engaged in gleeful celebration. Nevertheless the *praesidium* mounted yet one desperate attempt to rescue the fractured fellowship by engaging all those who still recognized one another as "brethren in the faith" at a special January Pastoral Conference in a thorough discussion of the controversy on the basis of Scripture, to the end that *God-pleasing fellowship* could be restored as the basis of proper continuation as a church body.

While this effort was completely in agreement with both the wording and the spirit of the October 15th resolution of the Board of Directors [See above], which authorized them to arrange a meeting with the "disputants" [named in the first "whereas" as "Pastor E. C. Hallstein and Dr. P. E. Kretzmann"], and to include "even the entire Pastoral Conference" if they deemed it necessary, the President and Vice President inadvertently set themselves up for a charge of abusing their *political* power when they unilaterally **postponed by four days the date** of the scheduled *Board Meeting* in favor of that *pastoral* meeting and its SPIRITUAL AGENDA. They trusted that the pastors (and even the laymen) with whom they had stood side-by-side in the cause of the truth would have understood and valued this order of priorities and would have appreciated the opportunity to discuss the entire controversy on the basis of God's Word face to face. Surely such a *study* meeting was more important (and should have taken precedence over) a mere *business* meeting! Moreover, as they stated in their letter, "this date" —January 18th instead of January 14th— [had] been chosen to enable all the pastors to attend without having to leave their congregations on a Sunday," a fine choice indeed from the point of view of a Christian pastor whose **FIRST** priority is to be the feeding of his own flock (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2). Would not the pastors and their congregations appreciate that consideration??

But had the *praesidium* made the *right* decision? The answer will, of course, vary with the

factional loyalty of the respondent; but polling numbers do not determine what is *right*. Just as the rules of parliamentary procedure are not an end unto themselves, even for the cause of decency and good order (I Corinthians 14:40), but must bend to the law of love in Christian assemblies (Galatians 5:14), so also purely *political* decisions (such as the calendar date of a meeting) must yield to the greater importance of *spiritual* unity and onemindedness demanded by Scripture in such passages as Amos 3:3 and I Corinthians 1:10. This is the principle to which the *praesidium* adhered and which the constituent membership of what was to become the *Concordia Lutheran Conference* sustained in its “Declaration” of June, 1956. To have held a Board Meeting (and later on a delegate convention) of a conference rent in two by a chain reaction of *severances of fellowship* (beginning with that of Dr. Kretzmann), so that assembled board members and seated convention delegates could not even have engaged in a joint opening devotion, would have made a **mockery** of the Conference’s claim to “Christian unity” and would have made its spiritual agenda an empty sham. The *praesidium* could not in good conscience become party to such a charade (I Timothy 5:22), regardless of the indignation and censure they might have to face for their action.

The reaction was swift and immediate, specifically from Pastor Albert M. Schupmann, Conference Secretary, who made no secret of the fact that he was a supporter of Dr. Kretzmann. On December 31st he directed sixteen pointed questions to the President for his immediate answer and copied these to the rest of the pastors in a letter dated January 4, 1956. The questions and the commentary following them are devoid of any Scriptural admonition whatsoever, deny even the existence of the long-standing, unsettled controversy, and express no concern whatsoever over the breakdown of Christian fellowship and love within the Conference. Schupmann’s challenge of the *praesidium* centered almost exclusively on their procedure, on their exercise of political authority, and on their motives, which he describes as being hypocritical. Considering all that had been written over the course of the year by Dr. Kretzmann and Pastor Hallstein, as well as by other pastors, and the opinions and resolutions of two pastoral conferences and the Board, Schupmann spoke as though no historical and evidentiary paper-trail existed; and he apparently saw no conflict in Conference membership without fellowship. The following examples from Schupmann’s own words bear out this characterization. [The stress is *ours* for the purpose of directed comment.]

- “We have the unusual situation that the elected praesidium insists upon the right of an **outsider** to **open** a controversy inside the OLC.” —The so-called “outsider,” Pastor Hallstein, had been a member of the Conference in good standing (an “insider”) from January to September (during which time the controversy, initiated by Dr. Kretzmann in his statement to the seminary class, raged unchecked and remained unsettled). Pastor Hallstein did not “open” the controversy, either before or after his resignation.

- “They insist that the **accused** is duty-bound to meet with them and the **foreigner**.” —Dr. Kretzmann’s steadfast refusal to meet with “anyone” who accused him of anything was the reason that the controversy raged for as long as it did. He refused admonition in any and every venue and form. Compare his attitude with that enjoined by the Savior and the apostles concerning a brother’s duty to hear and to heed reproof and correction. Note also the resolution of the Board of Directors (October 15, 1955) authorizing and directing the *praesidium* to seek such a meeting.

- “I believe that the OLC is for **OLC** business...that officers should be the first line of defense against attacks from the **outside**...” —He again speaks as though nothing had taken place until

after Hallstein’s resignation in the middle of September; and he fails to recognize that the Board itself took up the controversy in October as an **OLC matter**, recognizing the need for a meeting between “the disputants” and the *praesidium*.

- “They go beyond their authority and set up **their own conditions** for attendance at **their** meeting.” —The *praesidium*’s assumption that an OLC pastoral conference “is for brethren in the faith” and that membership requires fellowship is not only germane but is *Scriptural* in principle (Amos 3:3; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 1:10; etc.) and *constitutional* in concept. Fellowship is a *sine qua non* for membership, not vice versa.

- “They issue a frantic call for what is, at present yet, an **illegitimate** controversy.” —The Pastoral Conference of August 19 did not consider the controversy “illegitimate,” neither did the Board in its meeting of October 15. **Both** bodies recognized the controversy as existing then already, but without an imminent solution. Neither dismissed the controversy, but both attempted to settle it.

- “Two men among us are using their office to **promote** a controversy that was **settled** at Detroit Lakes.” —The *praesidium* never “promoted” the controversy but decried it and tried to get it settled in accordance with God’s Word. The Board specifically **stated** (October 15) “that the Board and the Committee on Theological Education **could find NO final solution**; and... we found through our discussion that the settlement of the difficulty at which we arrived at the Pastoral Conference in Detroit Lakes **was NOT satisfactory to all concerned.**”

- “They should **unmask**, show themselves in their role as accusers, and **state what their own charges are** in their own words.” —Schupmann’s veiled accusation of hypocrisy has no basis in fact. It is an evil surmising contrary to Zechariah 8:17 and James 4:11. Pastor Mensing’s mimeographed **letter of July 18** (cited earlier in this essay) speaks for itself with clarity and specificity as to Dr. Kretzmann’s “*fault*” that occasioned the controversy and his *obstinacy* that perpetuated it; and both the President and Vice President specifically addressed the latter point in particular in their **letter of December 15**.

IV. How the Final Separation Took Place

The new year dawned on January 1, 1956 and found that, the charges against Dr. Kretzmann NOT having been withdrawn in accordance with his ultimatum, the **fellowship** of one-mindedness that once characterized the Orthodox Lutheran Conference had been fractured by Kretzmann’s own threatened action: “**Unless the men (and others) who share Pastor ECH’s position will withdraw their sinful charges against me by December 31, 1955, I SHALL NO LONGER CONSIDER THEM, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, AS BRETHREN IN THE FAITH.**”

Pastor Albert M. Schupmann in his letter to the pastors dated January 4th (concerning which enough has been said above) characterized the *praesidium*’s call for a special pastoral conference on January 18th as “a partisan call” and their role as “leaders of some faction.” He also impugned their stated purpose for that meeting, namely, “as a final effort to restore a God-pleasing unity, which must prevail if we are to continue to work and to worship together (1 Cor. 1,10; Romans 16,17),” as having been “disguised” to cover their nefarious political agenda. Moreover, in a hand-penned note on the bottom of the copy addressed to Pastor M. L. Natterer, Schupmann wrote: “PEK received no invitation to the conference. The praesidium thus refuses

to recognize one man's membership granted to him by the OLC. How long will they recognize your membership?" Remember that Dr. Kretzmann had during the first days of December issued his threat to sever fellowship (quoted again above) by the end of the month. When the *praesidium* on December 15 sent out its call for a special pastoral conference "for brethren in the faith," knowing that they would not and could not for conscience' sake withdraw their charges against Kretzmann before the end of December, they only recognized Kretzmann's OWN termination of fellowship. They did not terminate his "membership" in the O. L. C., nor the "membership" of any of his adherents. "Membership" *per se* was not their concern at the time — "membership" in a corporate, man-made organization concerning which Scripture says nothing. Their entire purpose sought a *Godpleasing spiritual outcome*, after which any and all "political" questions and problems could and should be able to be settled "*in the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3), as all could then work together again, "*by love serv[ing] one another*" (Galatians 5:13) as dear brethren.

On the other hand, the agenda of what soon came to be called "the Minneapolis faction" was entirely different. In its regular voters' meeting on January 8, 1956 — less than a week before the originally-scheduled date of the Board of Directors meeting in Tinley Park and only ten days before the date of the special pastoral conference — Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, the Rev. O. G. Schupmann, Pastor, unanimously resolved that **impeachment proceedings** be brought by *their congregation* against President Mehlberg and Vice President Mensing; that these charges be lodged immediately in the hands of the Conference secretary to be brought by him before the Board of Directors at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 14; and that a special convention of the OLC be called for the express purpose of considering these charges.

It is significant to note here that no provisions for the impeachment of its officers were ever a part of the constitution of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, nor was such action ever envisioned by its founders. Holy Trinity congregation, however, took it upon itself to resolve impeachment of the Conference's officers, to resolve that the Conference secretary (Rev. A. M. Schupmann) act as president of the OLC while these charges were pending, and to resolve that the Board call a special convention. Indeed, while a congregation is autonomous with regard to its own internal matters, it was a decidedly "new wrinkle" for only one congregation to resolve what the entire Conference's Board of Directors was to do — at its pleasure. Not surprisingly, it was this same congregation to which **alone** Dr. Kretzmann held himself to be responsible as president of the Conference's seminary and as its theological professor; and it was this same congregation which determined itself to be the arbiter in any dispute with Dr. Kretzmann.

What were "the charges" against the *praesidium*? In its letter to Conference Secretary Albert M. Schupmann, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, over the signature of its own secretary, Donald E. Pavey, specified them as "nonfeasance, misfeasance, and malfeasance" in the conduct of their office.

Specified as "nonfeasance" (neglect of official duties) were four allegations of failure to perform certain official functions to the satisfaction of the congregation, none of which were confirmed with objective evidence. In several cases, the subjective character of the charges was betrayed by expressions of personal judgment to quantify the degree of "failure" alleged, e.g., "Failing to use their good offices to..." do what the Board of Directors had asked be held in abeyance; "failing to cooperate vigorously with the treasurer of the O. L. C..." in locating certain missing funds; "failing properly to announce..." Pastor Hallstein's severance of fellowship with the

Conference and his resignation from it – which severance was dealt with by the *entire Board* back in October; and “failing to carry out the instructions of the convention regarding arrangement of meetings with representatives of the Norwegian Synod” – a charge that even the Board of Directors on October 15 did not make, nor did the Board (including Secretary Schupmann and board members present from the Minneapolis congregation) even suggest urgency on the President’s part in making such a contact.

Specified as “misfeasance” (impropriety in the conduct of their office) were three charges:

- a. Calling a pastoral conference of the O. L. C. from which those clerical members of the O. L. C., who recognize the maintenance (after due admonition) of false charges against a brother as a breaking of fellowship relations, are expressly excluded.
- b. After accepting nomination and election with the understanding that such false charges were dropped, using their office and the Board of Directors meeting over which they presided to urge investigation of these charges in meetings presided over by themselves (who had admittedly taken a position in the premises, not expressly withdrawn, and hence justifiably presumed to be functioning *ex parte*), and at which a schismatic who has repudiated the fellowship of the O. L. C. was to be present.
- c. Insisting on officially dealing with a case not rightly before the O. L. C. as such, and to that end obstructing, resp., being unresponsive to, the proposals of an O. L. C. congregation that the matter at issue be dealt with according to Acts 15 between sister congregations.

Specified as “malfeasance” (wrongdoing in the conduct of their office) were three charges:

- a. Formally and publicly, with the support of their congregations, advocating false charges against a brother, which have not been withdrawn in like manner.
- b. Encouraging and strengthening others in the same sin.
- c. Disturbing the peace of the O. L. C. without basis in Scripture or fact, and thus working incalculable injury to the church body which their office obligates them to promote, protect, and support.

The *praesidium*’s urgent, brotherly letter of December 15 and its stated purpose notwithstanding, the majority of the **Board of Directors** traveled to Tinley Park on January 14, 1956, to convene its meeting as originally scheduled. Finding no one at home at Peace in Tinley Park, the four men decided to meet at an apartment in Chicago. Contacted by telephone at his home in Milwaukee, President Mehlberg declined to attend the meeting, stating that he would, however, attend the Special Pastoral Conference called for four days hence. The board then proceeded with its meeting, at which it **a**) revised the Board Minutes of October 15 in such a way as to deny that the so-called Kretzmann-Hallstein controversy was still an open matter in the Conference, **b**) acknowledged that both Secretary Schupmann (on November 26, 1955) and now Mr. E. MacDonald at the present meeting had withdrawn their assent to the resolution of the Board authorizing the *praesidium* to arrange a meeting between themselves, Pastor Hallstein, and Dr. Kretzmann to settle the controversy, thus destroying the unanimity with which the Board had dealt with the matter in October, **c**) changed the word “disputants” to “Pastor E. C. Hallstein and

Dr. P. E. Kretzmann” in the above-referenced resolution “because the Secretary’s notes of that meeting use the names of those two men instead of the word ‘disputants.’” [NOTE that Holy Trinity (11/28/55) originally charged the *praesidium* with surreptitiously stating the names of the disputants; NOW the Minneapolis faction itself states the names in the record.] **d)** The Board also received and approved the impeachment charges preferred by Holy Trinity congregation and resolved that a **special convention** of the Conference be called for **February 4, 1956** at Holy Trinity **in Minneapolis** to try the *praesidium* on the charges preferred against them. Expected to be present were the pastor and two lay delegates from each congregation, as well as all pastoral and individual members of the Conference.

By the time this notification was received [Schupmann’s letter was dated January 17], together with the Board Minutes of January 14th, the pastors and congregations of the Conference had approximately **two weeks** to secure time off from work for their lay delegates, to make travel arrangements for their pastoral and lay delegates, and to travel to Minneapolis, Minnesota. No time at all was provided for the *praesidium* to prepare ITS CASE and to mount ITS DEFENSE. Candidly, the racing locomotive had been fueled and fired up to “railroad” the *praesidium* —**with all deliberate speed!** What indeed was the hurry to secure a *political* ouster, when, with over a *month’s* notice, the Minneapolis faction had been unwilling to meet as brethren with the rest of the pastors in a special pastoral conference at Tinley Park for the purpose of preserving the *fellowship* of the Conference?? No Scriptural Christian admonition had been brought to the President and Vice President; no concern for their souls had been expressed; no brotherly cooperation had been solicited in the spirit of meekness. There was, on the contrary, a running series of demands and legalistic deadlines coming out of Minneapolis, accompanied by accusations and sarcastic quips, also from the Conference secretary. All of this culminated in a litany of charges such as would be brought by a bevy of attorneys in a civil lawsuit concerning technical, political and procedural failures and errors. The die had been cast on the basis of a purely **political agenda**; and, even before the special convention convened in Minneapolis and completed its purge, the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* had been effectively destroyed as a Godpleasing Christian and Lutheran church body.

At the Special Pastoral Conference called by the *praesidium* for January 18, 1956, only those convened to repair and preserve the **fellowship** of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* who had fallen under the condemnation of Dr. Kretzmann and his adherents. Since that meeting had been called and intended for “brethren in the faith” [Letter of 12/15/55], since Dr. Kretzmann by his own ultimatum had broken fellowship with them as of December 31st, and since Kretzmann’s adherents could hardly be *his* brother and the brother of *those* whose fellowship he had *disavowed*, no one from the “Minneapolis faction” attended the Special Pastoral Conference. This fact, together with the letter from Secretary Albert M. Schupmann informing everyone about the action of the Board and the purpose of the Special Convention in Minneapolis, caused the assembled pastors to draft the following declaration, summarizing the controversy and reacting to the action taken by the “Minneapolis Faction” at its special convention:

Our Declaration

(Principles adopted at our Special Pastoral Conference, Tinley Park, January 18-19, 1956)

I.

We acknowledge and declare that Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, by his declaration in his undated release received by our President and Vice-president on December 5 and 6, 1955, has terminated his fellowship with us as of December 31, 1955. Those who share this declaration of his, namely,

“Unless the men (and others) who share Pastor E. C. Hallstein’s position will withdraw their sinful charges against me by December 31, 1955, I SHALL NO LONGER CONSIDER THEM, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, AS BRETHREN IN THE FAITH,” have also terminated their fellowship with us. They have compelled us, therefore, in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, I Cor. 1:10, I John 2:19; Rom. 16:17,18, no longer to regard them as brethren in the faith.

We have been charged with the causing of this break. This cannot be the case since our fellowship was cut off at the very time when we were striving to meet together as brethren to discuss differences which had arisen between us. The fact that we charged Dr. Kretzmann with error gave him no Scriptural reason for refusing to meet with us as his acknowledged brethren to discuss the charges, Eph. 4:2, 3. Neither does the fact that we charged Dr. Kretzmann with error give him any Scriptural reason to refuse to consider us “either individually or collectively as brethren in the faith.” Even though Dr. Kretzmann should hold *us* to be in error, yet Romans 16:17 (to which he appeals against us) does not call for such hasty action, but the Lord requires much patience and long-suffering among acknowledged brethren, John 13:34; I Cor. 13:4; Tim. 2:24-26. This action is sinful separatism forbidden by the Word of God, Heb. 10:25; I John 2:19.

The *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* is an organization for *brethren united in the faith* (Constitution, Art. V, 1, 2.). The membership is therefore disrupted when the fellowship is disrupted, otherwise the organization itself would be of a unionistic nature. Those members who support Dr. Kretzmann’s hasty *action* have wrongfully disrupted the fellowship and can, therefore, no longer be recognized by us as bona fide members of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*. For this reason our brethren could not Scripturally meet with them in the so-called Board Meeting of January 14, 1956, and in our Orthodox Lutheran Conference Special Pastoral Conference of January 18, 1956. For the same reason we cannot regard the convention which is proposed to be held by them on February 4, 1956, or any other meeting proposed or conducted by them as a bona fide, constitutional meeting of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*. We shall continue, God willing, to hold our own constitutional *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* meetings.

II.

We declare that the congregations of our Conference, because they confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution, comprise the *true visible church on earth*, Matt. 28:20; John 8-31,32. We do not deny that there *MAY BE* others, unknown to us, who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice. We hold those to be in error who apply to this doctrine of the true visible church Scripture passages which pertain only to the invisible Church, such as John 4:22; Luke 17:16; 10:33 —thus confusing the two.

We recognize those only as true brethren in the faith who *openly* and *publicly* acknowledge our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, I Cor. 1:10. This we designate by the human term: *confessional fellowship*. It is the Scriptural duty of such heartily to *support* our work and endeavors and thus to practice *church fellowship* with us, otherwise they are separatistic, 2 Tim. 1:8; 3 John 9.

Such true confessional fellowship does not necessarily require the immediate severance of *membership* from a heterodox body, nor the joining in *membership* with an orthodox organization; but it does require a cessation of every kind of church fellowship with the corporate body in which outward *membership* is still held, 2 Thess. 3:14,15. This Scriptural principle we designate by the human term: *a true state of confession*.

III.

According to the Constitution of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, we, the undersigned congregations and their pastors, denounce the threatened unscriptural impeachment proceedings of the faction. We still acknowledge the President and Vice-president elected by our last convention at Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, August 20-22, 1955, as *bona fide* and *faithful* officers of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*.

Any who found it difficult to attend, or to send a statement of their position to, the Special Pastoral

Conference, Tinley Park, January 18-19, 1956, as well as others, are herewith cordially invited still to join us in our *Declaration* and thus continue in their original status with the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” Eph. 4:3. Their subscription to our *Declaration* is to be sent to our President, and an announcement of their subscription will then be made promptly in the *Orthodox Lutheran*.

All practical matters pertaining to proper order and procedure in the work of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, which are necessitated by the present unusual situation, will be presented to our next OLC convention as recommendations of the Board of Directors (the vacancies on the Board and on various committees to be filled by the President according to the By-Laws of our Constitution—see 1954 Proceedings).

Inasmuch as the faculty of the Seminary in Minneapolis disavows us as brethren in the faith, it is impossible for us any longer to regard and support them as our professors. It also follows that we do not recognize the treasury or any incumbents in office of the faction group.

If our former brethren communicate with us regarding our position in these matters, we stand ready to discuss these matters again with them *as brethren* as soon as they have retracted and repented of this unscriptural *break in fellowship* with us, Gal. 6:1.

This *Declaration* is unanimously subscribed to by the following congregations and their pastors:

Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
E. L. Mehlberg, Pastor

Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tinley Park, Ill.
H. David Mensing, Pastor

Holy Trinity Orthodox Lutheran Church, Oskaloosa, Ia.
J. Ernest Shufelt, Pastor

St. Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wilmot, S. D.
O. W. Schaefer, Pastor

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Clark, S. D.
E. C. Hallstein, Pastor

St. John Orthodox Lutheran Church, Lebanon, Ore.
M. L. Natterer, Pastor

St. Paul Orthodox Lutheran Church, Empire, Ore.
P. R. Bloedel, Pastor

This declaration was published in the February, 1956* issue of the *Orthodox Lutheran* by the duly-elected editor, Pastor Paul R. Bloedel (who, incidentally, had NOT been impeached and removed from office), while a competing “*Orthodox Lutheran*” appeared, not surprisingly, out of Minneapolis the very same month. The latter periodical carried a brief summary of the Special Convention held by the “Minneapolis Faction” and its impeachment action against President Mehlberg and Vice President Mensing, ostensibly removing them from office in the Conference.

**Our Declaration* was then also re-printed in the July, 1956 issue.

What was, however, TRULY SIGNIFICANT about the Minneapolis faction’s February issue was **NOT** its report of the impeachment of its chief executive officers. Rather, it was the EXTREMELY TIMELY appearance of an article by Professor Wallace H. McLaughlin (Dr. Kretzmann’s colleague and adherent at the seminary in Minneapolis) which put the entire Kretzmann-

Hallstein controversy into perspective. The reader is reminded that, during the first part of January, 1955, Dr. P. E. Kretzmann told his seminary class that “under the circumstances” he could preach for Pastor Gervasius W. Fischer of Mankato, Minnesota, a pastor of the Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Hallstein took exception to that statement as being unionistic in character and reminded Dr. Kretzmann that, in the Pastoral Conference held later that same month, “all who spoke **plainly confessed** that we are not, and cannot be, in fellowship with Pastor Fischer because he himself is not in a true state of confession with **the heterodox Wisconsin Synod**, of which he is still a member.” (Our stress). This was, of course, the *status controversiae* all along. Had the Wisconsin Synod been an *orthodox* church body, nothing could have legitimately stood in the way of fellowship with Pastor Fischer, assuming that the declaration of fellowship had been mutual and reciprocal.

In the July-August, 1954 issue of the *Orthodox Lutheran*, in an item entitled, “Our Position over against the Wisconsin Synod,” President McLaughlin has stated unequivocally:

Our position is that the Wisconsin Synod as a corporate body has become heterodox through its unionistic association with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and through its tyrannical action in the case of Pastor Hallstein. For these two reasons we withhold the hand of fellowship formerly extended to the Wisconsin Synod. We hold that the Wisconsin Synod as a corporate body is not in a true state of confession because of its continued fellowship with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

Now, however, in the very issue of the *Orthodox Lutheran* which documented the “melt-down” of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* as a church body—due largely to the Kretzmann-Hallstein controversy—McLaughlin singlehandedly re-wrote and re-cast the confessional history and position of the O. L. C. over against the Wisconsin Synod. In an article entitled, “A Clarification: Wisconsin Synod ‘Heterodox’?” with reference specifically to his statement quoted above, McLaughlin wrote in the February, 1956, issue:

I regard this phraseology of mine as unfortunate, since of course a body does not become “heterodox” through tyrannical action, but only through teaching and confessing false doctrine. But also this statement does not declare the Wisconsin Synod “heterodox” by reason of any false teaching which it as a corporate body has adopted [...**as it has since 1962 with its false teaching on the Church and its Ministry** –Ed.], but only “through its unionistic association.” [“**ONLY ‘through its unionistic association’?? Isn’t that ENOUGH?? Proverbs 29:24.** –Ed.]

The considered opinion of the undersigned is that the Wisconsin Synod cannot at the present time be stigmatized as a heterodox body, and that such a charge is incapable of proof.

McLaughlin then (uncharacteristically) “rode the fence” as to whether Wisconsin was or was not heterodox. Note the following. The emphasis is ours:

It has **cast suspicion** upon its orthodoxy by its **dangerous procrastination** in severing its **bonds with the heterodox Missouri Synod**, and...we can have no fellowship with it **until it has fully established a clear orthodox position** against Missouri’s heterodoxy. We recognize that there have also been utterances in print and on the floor of conventions of the Wisconsin Synod which should be officially disclaimed **in order fully to restore “the orthodox position of the Wisconsin Synod** which we have been so happy to acclaim” [that is, in the earliest days of our Conference. –Ed.].

The Wisconsin Synod, according to McLaughlin’s own characterization, had “cast suspicion” upon its own orthodoxy! If its “orthodoxy” was *suspect*—at its own hand—why would he choose to ignore that? It had not severed its “bonds” with the heterodox Missouri Synod. Its “bonds”? Bonds of *what*?? Bonds of *fellowship*? Fellowship with the *heterodox*? What did that make Wisconsin? *Orthodox*?? The Wisconsin Synod had, in McLaughlin’s words, not “*fully*

established a clear orthodox position;” and it needed “*fully to restore*” its orthodox position. Was it or was it NOT orthodox?? Was it or was it NOT heterodox?? Professor McLaughlin had backtracked on his original statement, now unwilling to call the Wisconsin Synod “heterodox.” Yet, in that same article, he never once characterized the Wisconsin Synod as “orthodox.” Did he hold that there was a *middle ground* between the two poles?? (Cf. Jesus’ statement in Matthew 12:30.) By God’s grace, WE **recognized** the Wisconsin Synod for what it was on the basis of I Corinthians 1:10; and, since its official adoption of a false position on the doctrines of the Church and Ministry in 1962, its heterodoxy eventually became clear (apparently) also to McLaughlin.

Significantly, and perhaps due in no small way to McLaughlin’s duplicitous published declaration, Dr. Kretzmann’s statement that he could preach for Pastor G. W. Fischer of Mankato *now* seemed to many observers to have been completely *appropriate*—now that the Wisconsin Synod was, according to McLaughlin, no longer heterodox— and the entire controversy appeared to be moot. It also explains why, when the “Minneapolis faction” of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference dissolved some six years later, approximately half of its pastoral constituency [to the best of our information] went into the **Wisconsin Synod**—the body which McLaughlin had “clarified” in February, 1956, as having been no longer heterodox. These included from the original O. L. C., according to published reports, three of the Pastors Schupmann and Teacher Carl Bloedel. Strangely (his declaration notwithstanding), McLaughlin himself, as well as Dr. Kretzmann, Pastors E. E. Erickson** and L. N. Wilenius, and Teacher Herbert Gade chose *not* to join the Wisconsin Synod but remained “independent” for a short time and then subsequently, in 1964, participated in the formation of the **Lutheran Churches of the Reformation** together with pastors who, more than a decade after the formation of the O. L. C., finally heeded the Word of God in Romans 16:17 and left the heterodox Missouri Synod.

**Some twenty years later, after having examined the written evidence, including the extant correspondence, from the Kretzmann-Hallstein controversy, Pastor Erickson acknowledged the Scriptural position of our pastors in the matter and was received into the Concordia Lutheran Conference by colloquy and his congregation in Midland, Michigan, into its membership.

For the first six months after the break in fellowship, the bonafide Orthodox Lutheran Conference continued to function under its original constitution, even though the Minneapolis faction claimed the same identification, published a periodical under the same name, and represented itself as the legitimate O. L. C. In order to obviate the confusion occasioned by this duplication, it was suggested that the future structure and name of the Conference should be submitted to its constituent congregations for their joint determination in a sort of referendum. The 1956 convention, therefore, decided to vest the wording of such a referendum, as well as a revision of the Constitution, in the Conference Board of Directors, which, by January, 1957, had drafted and submitted to the member congregations and congregations in fellowship the following document and had received their unanimous approval of:

The Agreement

Recognizing the break made in our fellowship last January by a faction which espoused unionistic and arbitrary principles (Titus 3:10; Rom. 16:17; I Tim. 5:22; Gal. 5:13); and

Recognizing the problem that has since resulted from the break, namely, that the erring group, or faction, continues to use the name *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*; and

Recognizing further that these and other previous offenses brought upon this name are not serving the glory of Christ our Savior and His Word of Truth to which we have pledged ourselves before God and men (2 Thess. 3:1); and

Being willing rather to suffer earthly loss than to permit such conditions to obstruct the free course of the Gospel of Christ (Phil. 3:7-8);

Therefore, we, the Orthodox Lutherans, who have pledged ourselves to uphold the Savior's full Word of Truth as set forth in our Confessions make the following agreement:

We unanimously continue to abide by our orthodox Lutheran position, having no intention to depart in any respect from the orthodox teaching and practice of God's holy Word, which we have confessed, for the sake of any temporal peace and tranquility. We continue to hold that in the sight of God we are and remain the bonafide orthodox Lutherans. Nevertheless, for the Christian purpose of preventing any striving before the world for temporal advantages, we hereby reorganize ourselves, relinquishing the name of *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, and taking for ourselves the name CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE.

Unanimously approved by the following congregations:

Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
E. L. Mehlberg, Pastor

Trinity Lutheran Church, Oskaloosa, Ia.
J. Ernest Shufelt, Pastor

Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tinley Park, Ill.
H. David Mensing, Pastor

St. Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wilmot, S. D.
O. W. Schaefer, Pastor

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Clark, S. D.
E. C. Hallstein, Pastor

St. John Orthodox Lutheran Church, Lebanon, Ore.
M. L. Natterer, Pastor

St. Paul Orthodox Lutheran Church, Empire, Ore.
P. R. Bloedel, Pastor

This agreement was published in the new *Concordia Lutheran* in its January, 1957, issue.

Moreover, as a summary of the controversy that precipitated the reorganization of the Conference, and as the Conference's official response to the charges and claims of the Minneapolis faction, the Seventh Annual Convention, assembled in Wilmot, South Dakota, August 23-26, 1957, unanimously passed the following resolution and published it in the September issue of the *Concordia Lutheran*:

Resolution Concerning the Minneapolis Faction

WHEREAS a controversy was begun in January, 1955, by Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, when he taught his theological class that "under the circumstances" he "could preach for" a pastor who was at the time a member of the heterodox Wisconsin Synod and who was not in a true state of confession over against his synod*, which statement was challenged by our brother, Pastor E. C. Hallstein as being a unionistic statement; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kretzmann would not acquiesce in Brother Hallstein's earnest request that he retract the statement; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kretzmann persistently refused to discuss the matter, either with the Committee on Theological Education or in a pastoral conference or in the delegate conference, but chose rather to regard the request that he retract the offensive statement as a personal insult and refused to consider Brother Hallstein as a brother in the faith until he would withdraw his request; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kretzmann permitted himself to give expression to several evil and unbrotherly charges which were untrue in fact against both Brother Hallstein and those of his brethren who could not with good conscience approve the Doctor's unbrotherly and arbitrary attitude in the whole matter, such as this that Brother Hallstein was "by way of becoming a pathological case," and this, that he called a conference in which he took part and whose resolutions he had approved a Latrocinium (robbers' den); and

WHEREAS Dr. Kretzmann refused to discuss the matter also with the President and Vice President of the Conference as representatives of the congregations who had called him, contending that, as President and Professor of the Orthodox Lutheran Seminary, he was answerable only to Holy Trinity Orthodox Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, of which he was a member, for his teaching in the Seminary; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kretzmann arbitrarily set a date (December 31, 1955) beyond which he declared that he would regard no one his brother in the faith who did not "withdraw" his "sinful charges" against him;

THEREFORE BE IT KNOWN BY THESE PRESENTS that we, the members of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, assembled in regular convention at Wilmot, S. Dak., AUGUST 23-26, 1957, deeply regret the unhappy circumstances brought about by the faction which led up to and made necessary the drawing up and publishing of "Our Declaration," adopted at Tinley Park, Ill., January 18-19, 1956, and published in the February, 1956, issue of the Orthodox Lutheran;

That we are, by God's grace, happy to reaffirm our devoted loyalty to the principles of the bonafide Orthodox Lutheran Conference as set forth in that declaration;

That we are prepared, with our consciences bound in the truth and in God's pure Word, to stand before Him on that Day in full loyalty to these principles, wherein we uphold the full Truth of His Word in doctrine and practice; and

WHEREAS the printed account of the factional convention of February 4, 1956, added as a supplement to their version of the 1955 Detroit Lakes regular convention, contains libelous charges which require an answer before God and the world; and

WHEREAS these same libelous proceedings contain statements which describe us as schismatics who disrupted the fellowship, which accusations statements in their own correspondence to us plainly disprove;

THEREFORE BE IT KNOWN BY THESE PRESENTS that we repudiate and denounce as untrue and without foundation in fact the various and sundry charges made by Holy Trinity Orthodox Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, Minn., and adopted in the factional convention assembled in Minneapolis, February 4, 1956, against Pastors E. L. Mehlberg and H. D. Mensing, President and Vice President respectively of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, in the so-called impeachment proceedings after they, the members of the faction, had by their renunciation of our fellowship ceased to be a part of the bonafide Orthodox Lutheran Conference; and

That we also repudiate and denounce the charge of causing a schism in the Conference made against Pastors E. C. Hallstein, E. L. Mehlberg, H. D. Mensing, J. E. Shufelt, P. R. Bloedel, M. L. Natterer, and O. W. Schaefer and their adherents.

*Although stating that his sympathy was with our cause, this pastor nevertheless refused publicly to acknowledge us as his brethren in the faith and refrained from publicly declaring our position in doctrine and practice to be Scripturally correct. (II Tim. 1:8; II John 8, 9.)

The Seventh Annual Convention also approved the draft of a revised constitution and submitted it to the member congregations and congregations in fellowship for ratification. In its preamble, the Concordia Lutheran Conference made its final reference to the controversy whereby Satan took such a toll of the fellowship and corporate body which only five years earlier had emerged out of the heterodox Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, formed by those who, by the grace of God and to His glory, dared to stand shoulder to shoulder as the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*. Section 3 of the Constitution's *Preamble* reads as follows:

3. The formers of the **Concordia Lutheran Conference** were continuously bonafide members and officers of the **Orthodox Lutheran Conference**. Recognizing, however, a break in the fellowship in January, 1956, made by a faction which espoused unionistic and arbitrary principles and then, when corrected, openly declared and/or demonstrated that we were not their brethren in the faith; recognizing also the practical problem that resulted from this break, namely, that the erring group continued to use the name "Orthodox Lutheran Conference;" and recognizing further that these and other offenses brought upon this name were not serving the glory of Christ, our Savior, and His Word of Truth; therefore we, the bonafide orthodox Lutherans, resolved to reorganize ourselves under this present constitution. (Compare: *The Orthodox Lutheran*, February, 1956; *The Concordia Lutheran*, January, 1957.)

In the January, 1957, issue of the *Concordia Lutheran*, its editor, Pastor Paul R. Bloedel, introduced the readers to the new name of our beloved Conference with the following words:

The name CONCORDIA is not a new name but dates back to the time when Jacob Andreae's German edition of the Confessional Writings of the Lutheran Church was published officially in the year 1580 under the name *Book of Concord*, or, *Concordia*. We, therefore, greatly cherish this designation for our Conference because it directs us to the tried and proven confessions of our church, on which, by God's grace, we continue to stand in our endeavors to preserve for us and for our children the teachings and treasures of the True Lutheran Church.

Under this new, yet old and familiar name, may the congregations of our Conference, by God's abundant grace, continue to hold high the banner of God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure for many generations to come in these last and evil days.

As a concluding word to this essay, we note that Dr. P. E. Kretzmann died on July 16, 1965, only three years after the Minneapolis faction officially dissolved its "Orthodox Lutheran Conference" and just a year after the formation of the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation. On behalf of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, and in demonstration of the fact that our men bore no personal ill will toward him because of the controversy he occasioned, the editorial staff of the *Concordia Lutheran* published in its October, 1965, issue an obituary, of which the following is an excerpt:

The Lord has called to his eternal reward another former defender of the faith, in the passing of Dr. P. E. Kretzmann. He died on July 16, 1965. ...

He severed fellowship with the Missouri Synod because it no longer upheld the full truth of God's Word in doctrine and practice, being one of the organizers of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference in 1951 and its first vice president. He served also as professor and president of the Orthodox Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1952-58.

While honoring Dr. Kretzmann as a faithful servant of the Lord for many years, we must express our regret that at the end of 1955, in the very midst of our brotherly dealings with him, particularly our attempts to meet with him in a brotherly manner, he, without showing Scriptural cause therefor, chose no longer to regard us as his brethren in the faith, making this evident in his announcement to us. (Cf. *The Orthodox Lutheran*, February, 1956, printed in *Empire, Oregon*, p. 18ff., *Our Declaration*). We trust that it was not willfully but rather due to some weakness in his wonderful Christian character

that he took this regrettable, separatistic action.

Among some of his best known and beloved works we mention especially his *Popular Commentary of the Old and New Testaments* in four volumes and the *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, 1927, of which he was co-editor.

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” Psalm 107:8.

Unlike the first three installments of this on-going history of our Concordia Lutheran Conference, the present retrospective on this brief, turbulent period required considerably more detail and the citation of primary documentation to demonstrate the nature of the controversy and the proper efforts of our pastors to resolve it in a truly Scriptural manner. The controversy proved to be a test of our orthodoxy in both doctrine and practice; and the way in which our pastors comported themselves in both word and deed bears witness to the fact that they were not “spoiling for a fight,” looking for trouble, touting a subjective agenda, or seeking to establish political power over their brethren. On the contrary, they did, on the basis of Scripture, what ALL the Conference brethren had done with respect to error and errorists in the Missouri Synod—which led to the formation of the O. L. C. in 1951: They exercised *doctrinal discipline* within their fellowship, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) by hewing themselves and their brethren to the Scriptures. And they stayed the course with complete consistency in doctrine and practice, not to their personal credit, but to the glory of God’s grace in Christ Jesus. They comported themselves as Christian gentlemen in the spirit of meekness, refrained from verbal cheap shots, and besought their brethren to put personal issues, political posturing, subjective judgments, and ill-tempered rancor aside in favor of truly brotherly discussions and theological onemindedness on the basis of God’s Word alone. Such *doctrinal discipline* is the hallmark of every truly orthodox church and church-body, and it must continue to be exercised with scrupulous consistency among us if we are to survive the onslaughts of Satan in these last and evil days of sore distress (John 8:31-32). To that end we pray with the hymnwriter:

Oh, keep us in Thy Word, we pray;
the guile and rage of Satan stay.
Oh, may Thy mercy never cease;
give concord, patience, courage, peace.

(TLH 292, 4)

SOLI DEO GLORIA!