the Concordia Lutheran

"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path." Ps. 119:105

Vol. XXXXIV **July-August, 1999** **Nos. 7 - 8**

"Speaking the TRUTH in love."

— Eph. 4:15

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a monthly or bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of $5.00 per year.

***The Concordia Lutheran* EDITOR:**
Rev. E. R. Stallings, Jr.
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218
Tracts and Booklets EDITOR:
Rev. M. L. Natterer
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355
LAY MEMBER:
Dr. John M. Steinke
5959 Wurzbach F-7
San Antonio, TX 78238-1733

Address all subscriptions, renewals, and remittances to: **Scriptural Publications, 17151 S. Central Ave., Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913.** A special notice of expiration will be inserted in the issue which terminates your subscription.

Officers of the Concordia Lutheran Conference
PRESIDENT:
Rev. M. L. Natterer
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355
VICE-PRESIDENT:
Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452
SECRETARY:
Rev. Mark W. Dierking
420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279
TREASURER:
Mr. Victor K. Bloedel
10200 - 62nd Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98178

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

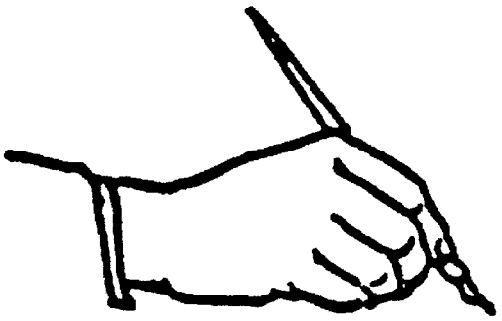
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



The President's Column

"Pastor, why do you have to preach the Law?" This was a question that a visitor attending one of our services asked me. He told me that he did not think that the Law was necessary for us in the New Testament since Jesus had abolished the Law and did not preach the Law. Undoubtedly the pastors in our Conference have heard similar objections at some time or other.

That Jesus preached nothing but the Gospel is simply not true. Think of His statement to the Jews, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him"* (John 8:44). What about the Savior's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, and His Sermon on the Mount, much of which is nothing else than Law, plus many other passages in the Gospels! In His first publicly recorded sermon He urged the people, *"**Repent** ye and believe the Gospel"* (Mark 1:15). Now how can a person be sorry for his sins unless he first of all knows what sin is and that he is a sinner? This is brought about by the Law of God. *"For by the Law is the knowledge of sin"* (Rom. 3:20). And why shouldn't the Lord Jesus preach the Law? The Law of God is holy, just and good; it is the perfect Will of God.

The Lord Jesus did not come to abolish the Law. He declared, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, **but to fulfil**"* (Matt. 5:17-19). He was made under the Law and He perfectly fulfilled the Law as our Substitute. For

"when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4,5). And *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us"* (Gal. 3:13). The Moral Law remains and is binding upon every human being. Very clearly the Lord Jesus warns us, *"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven"* ... (Matt. 5:19). Hence we find The Ten Commandments listed as #1 in Luther's Small Catechism under the question, "Which are the chief parts of Christian doctrine?" (page 39). Then on pages 85 and 86 we are given the threefold purpose of the Law.

But so many people have a warped idea of the Law. The scribes and Pharisees did at the time of Christ. They had a righteousness which consisted in an outward observance of the Law. Consequently we hear the Savior declare, *"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5:20). They considered themselves not to be open lawbreakers. No Jewish court, for example, could accuse them of having killed their neighbor. The fear of punishment and disgrace, the thought of not receiving the praise of men, etc. — curbed their hands from the actual shedding of blood.

What the Law of God did then it still does today. **It checks and curbs the coarse outbursts of sin and helps to maintain outward discipline and decency in the world.** For that purpose it has been written in the heart of man, as the Apostle Paul writes in chapter 2 of Romans, *"When the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another"* (14,15). And in I Tim. 1:9, the Apostle tells us that *"the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient"*. ... In order that the Law may serve as a curb, the Lord has given the sword into the hands of the government (Rom. 13). How many a person has been held back from committing murder because he feared imprisonment or execution. Remember what the devil told God when he wanted to afflict Job personally in order to

make him curse God? *"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life"* (Job 2:4). How thankful we should be that the Law also serves this purpose, for otherwise it would be virtually impossible for people to live together in this world!

But when a person thinks that the mere outward observance of the Law is the complete fulfillment, he has either not seen himself in the mirror of the Law, or he has forgotten what manner of man he was when the mirror of the Law was held before him (Rom. 3:20; James 1:22-24). This was the case with the scribes and Pharisees. Abstaining from the forbidden outward deed, they imagined that they had met all the requirements of the Law. But in Matthew chapter five, for example, we observe the Lord Jesus pointing out to them that the Law forbids sinful thoughts and words and not only sinful deeds. *"Whosoever is angry with his brother"* ... (v. 22); *"whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart"* (v. 28). And the Apostle John writes, *"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him"* (I John 3:15). And not one of us can truthfully say that he/she has never had an evil thought! *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"* (Jer. 17:9). And *"out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"* (Matt. 15:19). *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (I John 1:8). And let us not forget that one evil thought against any one of the Commandments makes us guilty of all of them. *"For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"* (James 2:10). God's righteous wrath rests upon all transgressors of His Law in thought, desire, word and deed. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23).

We need the preaching of the Law in order that we may see ourselves not only as others see us, but as **God** sees us. **We use the Law of God as a mirror**. And that Law points the finger at every single one of us, saying, *"Thou art the man!"* (II Sam. 12:7). It punctures all our inflated opinions in regard to our speech and conduct, until we realize that our righteousnesses are but filthy rags and that we deserve nothing but God's righteous wrath and condemnation. The more and the deeper we look into the Law, the more we shall appreciate the Gospel which tells us all that Jesus our dear Savior has done for us. *"Christ is the*

end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). For *"He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (II Cor. 5:21).

The thirdfold purpose of the Law is to teach us Christians which works we must do to lead a God-pleasing life. And what is a good work in the sight of God? Note the answer given in Luther's Small Catechism: "in the sight of God a good work is everything that a child of God does, speaks, or thinks in faith according to the Ten Commandments, for the glory of God, for the benefit of his neighbor" (p. 129). The Law of God is holy, and it teaches us how to live a holy life. It tells us to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37,39). In writing about the use of God's Law, our Lutheran Confessions rightly declare concerning this thirdfold purpose of the Law, "also that when they have been born anew by the Spirit of God, converted to the Lord, and thus the veil of Moses has been lifted from them, they live and walk in the Law" (Formula of Concord, Conc. Trig. VI, page 963). Being made free from the curse and condemnation of the Law through the sacrifice of the Savior we Christians are now constrained out of love to Jesus to walk in the way of God's Commandments.

We realize, of course, that the Law sets such a high standard that, no matter how we Christians try, we cannot and never will attain perfection in this life because we still have the Old Adam clinging to us. The Apostle Paul could not (Rom. 7:15ff.), nor can we. However, those who use this as an excuse for not striving to please God are not Christians. *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"* (II Cor. 5:17). But as often as we find that we have departed from the rule of God's Law, we go to Jesus who kept the Law for us and, confessing our sin, *"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9). In the strength of that forgiveness we walk in the way of His commandments, saying with the Psalmist, *"With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments"*. ... Yea, *"blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord"* (Psalm 119:1,10).

— M.L.N.

CONVENTION DIGEST

48th Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference

Last year's Convention Digest began with the observation that Oregon's splendid weather provided a "lovely six days" for our series of meetings. The Digest this year begins with much the same thought: The Chicago area climate lived up to its reputation during all but the last day of the Convention; it was hot and humid and typically southwest Chicago weather each and every day. Nevertheless, Peace congregation provided all the amenities which made those days together not just profitable spiritually, but also delightful unto our creature comforts. Each and every delegate was welcomed and made to feel at home as the members of Peace opened their homes to our Conference's pastors and delegates. Also, the ladies of the congregation provided not just delicious meals, but meals designed to make us go back for seconds! Many of us have to spend weeks after conventions cutting back on our eating because of the amount we eat during convention. We expressed in our official resolutions our thanks to Peace Lutheran Church, her Pastor, Rev. David T. Mensing, and his lovely wife, Alison, but once again we want to say "thank you" to them for their Christian hospitality and manifest Christian love.

As always, the Convention itself was preceded by a two-day (Tues. and Wed.) Pastoral Conference which included a Seminary Faculty Meeting. Then on Thursday we had our Conference Board of Directors Meeting.

Our 48th Annual Convention actually began on Friday morning with a worship Service of Convocation. The *pastor loci,* the Rev. David T. Mensing, served as the liturgist while the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, the President of our Conference, preached the opening sermon based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4:14,15, with the theme, **"Speaking the Truth in Love."** The first part of this edifying sermon focused on the truth that it is only God's truth which we must speak, teach, confess and practice, while the second part clearly showed that Christian love should always be the motivating factor when the Word of God is spoken either publicly, that is, in the name of and for a local congregation, or at home or even in one-on-one discourse with one another.

Immediately following the service, the opening session of the Convention was called to order with a brief devotion by Pastor Bloedel. The first item of business after the opening was one of the most joyous events of the entire Convention. Faith Ev. Lutheran Church of Jackson, Michigan, which had applied for membership in our Conference earlier in the spring and whose constitution and doctrinal position had been examined and declared to be in accordance with our doctrinal position and the Word of God, was formally received as a member congregation. Pastor Mensing, who had been intimately involved in the discussions with Faith congregation and her Pastor, the Rev. Ross Mahan, was the pastoral delegate who made the motion that Faith congregation be accepted into fellowship with our Conference, with thanksgiving to God for His grace in bringing us together. Pastor Mahan will undergo a colloquy at our Fall Pastoral Conference to be held at Peace, Oak Forest in October. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. In thanksgiving, we joined together in singing the common Doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

The next item of business was the appointment of the *ad hoc* convention committees followed by the recognition and seating of pastoral and lay delegates from each congregation. Pastor Bloedel then presented his President's Report in which he focused on God's grace to our little Conference over the past fifty years, examining both the good and wonderful things the CLC experienced along with the disappointments and outright defections worked by Satan through the years. He also urged the delegates to take their duties seriously, especially when it came to voting for our Conference officers and committees. He also noted the extraordinary work carried out this past year by both Pastor Mensing and Pastor Stallings. Pastor Mensing was our first seminary professor in our new seminary plan. He was also intimately involved with the work of the Committee on Lutheran Union, working both with the head of the Federation of Lutheran Congregations, the Rev. Robert Lietz, and at the same time carrying on discussions with the Pastor and laymen of Faith congregation. He also served as the Conference Archivist, not only organizing materials, but also with the help of several laymen, transferring these materials to computer disks for future reference. He also worked very hard at his chairmanship of the Scriptural Publications Board of Control, giving a great deal of thought to and drawing up recommendations regarding this very important arm of our Confer-

ence work. Pastor Bloedel also noted that Pastor Stallings was likewise very busy as the Editor of our "Concordia Lutheran." As Editor he draws up the subject and title for each article, assigns the articles to the contributing pastors, and then *gently* urges each pastor to try to submit his article by the designated deadline. Also ably assisting our Editor is Mr. John Steinke who formats each issue of the "C. L." in a polished form to present to the printer. He also maintains an up-to-date mailing list and from this list prepares the mailing stickers to be affixed on each copy. Each issue is mailed not only to our Conference brethren, but also to over 300 other pastors throughout the country. Our thanks to both Pastors and those who assisted them in their faithful work throughout this past year. It is our prayer that God will, according to His grace, allow them to continue to serve for many years to come. The last item of Pastor Bloedel's President's Report focused on some changes he thought should be made to our present Conference constitution. These changes will be discussed later in this Digest.

After a delicious lunch served by the ladies of Peace congregation, the afternoon session began with a devotion and then the presentation of Pastor Mensing's essay entitled "The Downward Slide of the Missouri Synod into Heterodoxy, 1932-1947." This essay gave an excellent overview of the people and events which contributed to the loss of orthodoxy within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Its downward slide began in the early 1930's when Francis Pieper's "Brief Statement of 1932" was adopted by the convention but with parts of it ignored by both pastors and laymen in the synod, and with the synodical officials charged with doctrinal oversight simply ignoring the inroads of false doctrine. Things began to come to a head with the 1945 presentation of "A Statement," a document drawn up by forty-four "prominent" LCMS theologians and pastors. The "A Statement" was thoroughly corrupted with false doctrine, and cleverly hidden in "good words and fair speeches." The "A Statement" was immediately attacked by conservative pastors and theologians in the LCMS and the paper was finally withdrawn — not repented of and repudiated, but only withdrawn. The "A Statement" served as the opening of the door for acceptance of the "Common Confession" in 1950 and became the official death knell of orthodoxy in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. (The entire essay will not only appear in the Proceedings, but will be serialized in our *Concordia Lutheran.*)

Following a brief recess, the Convention reassembled to consider two

suggested amendments to the CLC Constitution. (These amendments have been sent to each congregation and are available for your review.) The first suggested change dealt with Article VIII of the Constitution which establishes the Officers of the Conference. The recommended change set forth certain parameters or prerequisites for both pastors and laymen in order for them to hold office in the Conference. The second suggested change to the Constitution dealt with Articles IX and XII, the first dealing with Standing Committees, specifically the Editorial Committee, while Article XII deals specifically with the Publishing House Board of Control. In brief, the suggested changes streamlined the organization of these committees and their work, especially bringing up to date for our present circumstances the operation and management of our publishing house. The Convention assembled approved both changes for submission to the individual congregations for a Referendum to determine whether or not they would be adopted. As of this writing, all recommended changes to the Constitution have been unanimously adopted by the congregations. (Again, these changes are available in each local congregation and, of course, will be presented in full in the Proceedings of the convention.)

There was a final recommendation from the Board of Directors which suggested that the medical loan made to Pastor Dierking in 1998 be completely forgiven. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed with the heartfelt thanks of Pastor Dierking expressed to the Convention.

Saturday's session began with an opening devotion led by Pastor Redlin of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Tucson, Arizona. Then Pastor Stallings of Holy Scripture Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas, began the first part of his essay entitled, "The Need, Purpose, and Function of Christian Discipline in the Local Congregation." In this first section of his essay, Pastor Stallings focused on "The Need and Purpose of Brotherly Admonition." There was a great deal of profitable discussion which accompanied this excellent essay.

The highlights of the afternoon session were the proposed organizational changes suggested for the Publishing House Board of Control and, of course, the election of officers and committees. Under the report of the Chairman of the Publishing House Board of Control, several

proposals were made and there was a great deal of discussion on each one. The first was that the Conference establish a bookstore under Scriptural Publications with the intent of making available to our congregations a steady supply of orthodox books and materials. This suggestion was adopted. The second suggestion by the Committee was that our current Seminary Book Store be consolidated with the new Conference Bookstore with the proviso that books intended for seminary students and their professors be set aside for that purpose and not offered to the general public for sale. The item the committee requested was $5000 in seed money with which to purchase an initial stock of books, especially orthodox books which soon may go out of print (i.e. Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, et al.). This proposal entailed a lively and long discussion. It was finally decided that instead of giving the bookstore $5000, $3000 would be given instead. There was one more resolution which proceeded out of this discussion, namely, that the *Concordia Lutheran* be provided to the members of the Conference congregations at no charge. Again, there was a great deal of discussion, but in the end it was decided that copies of the *CL* would be sent to our members *gratis*.

Finally, the Board of Control moved that the CLC *ad hoc* committee for the maintenance of the Conference Web Page be discontinued and the administration of the Web Page be placed under the administration of the Board of Control. The item was added to the recommended changes to Article XII of the Constitution and was voted on and passed by our congregations.

The Mission Committee gave its report. Its chief recommendation was that the subsidy of $600 per month to St. Stephen's, Wilmot, be continued another year. That motion passed unanimously and Pastor Dierking expressed his thanks on behalf of his entire congregation.

The Committee on Theological Education gave its report, supplemented by reports from both our Seminary Professor, Pastor Mensing, and our Seminarian, Mr. Paul E. Bloedel. We noted with thanksgiving to God the work both men had done this past year, especially giving thanks to Pastor Mensing for a very difficult and busy schedule. Our seminarian is doing excellent work, and once he finishes his seminary training, he will probably be the best trained pastor in this country today.

The last major item on Saturday's agenda was the Election of Officers and Committees. The results of that election were as follows:

President: The Rev. M. L. Natterer
Vice President: The Rev. David T. Mensing
Secretary: The Rev. Mark W. Dierking
Treasurer: Mr. Victor K. Bloedel

Board Member-at-Large, Midwest — Mr. JC Perry
Board Member-at-Large, Far West — Mr. John D. Okamoto

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:
Rev. E. R. Stallings, Rev. M. L. Natterer, Mr. John M. Steinke

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS:
Rev. David G. Redlin
Rev. Ross Mahan
Mr. John Mensing
Mr. Bill Bergstrom
Mr. John Mayrhofer

FINANCE COMMITTEE:
Mr. Victor K. Bloedel
Mr. Mark Mensing
Mr. John M. Steinke
Mr. Clayton Palmquist

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:
Rev. Paul R. Bloedel
Rev. David T. Mensing
Mr. Lloyd E. Martin
Mr. Dan Bloedel

COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION:
Rev. David T. Mensing
Rev. Mark W. Dierking
Rev. E. R. Stallings
Mr. Phillip R. Martin

PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL:
Rev. David T. Mensing
Mr. Phillip R. Martin
Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi

It was moved and seconded that all elections be declared unanimous.

The motion carried. The Saturday session closed with a prayer and the Apostolic Blessing.

The Sunday session of the Convention began with a divine service with Pastor Mensing, the *pastor loci,* serving as liturgist and the Rev. M. L. Natterer of St. John's, Lebanon, preaching the sermon. The congregation and visitors from around the country were also privileged to take the Lord's Supper and thereby manifested both their unity in the Spirit and their growth in the grace, knowledge, and faith of their God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

After a delicious lunch served once again by the ladies of Peace congregation, the afternoon session began. We then heard the second part of Pastor Stallings' essay which focused on the function of church discipline, both private and public. Matthew 18:15-17 is, of course, the *sedes doctrinae* for church discipline. Pastor Stallings explained each of the "three steps" of church discipline, emphasizing the importance of exercising each step with love, humility, and appropriate patience. However, such patience and love must not imply in the least the compromise of principle nor a laxity toward sin, but a sincere attempt to gain the salvation of a brother's soul from unrepentant sin and certain damnation. There was a great deal of excellent discussion which accompanied this essay and Pastor Stallings' essay was accepted with both thanks and appreciation for his methodical and evangelical presentation.

The last part of the Convention was filled with final reports by various committees, resolutions of thanks to individuals and groups who helped make the convention such a success, and was finally closed with the Closing Devotion, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostolic Blessing.

We give thanks to God that, in His grace, He has once again led us through a spiritually profitable and edifying convention. We give our special thanks to Pastor and Mrs. Mensing and the congregation of Peace Lutheran in Oak Forest. And we look forward to our next convention to be held at St. Luke's Lutheran, Seattle, Washington next June. The complete proceedings of this year's convention should be out to you, we pray, no later than January, 2000.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Mark W. Dierking, Secretary

HISTORICAL ESSAY

delivered to the

Forty-Eighth Annual Convention of the *Concordia Lutheran Conference*

by

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastor • Peace Ev. Lutheran Church,
Oak Forest, Illinois

The Missouri Synod's Slide into Heterodoxy, 1932-1947

In just two years, our Concordia Lutheran Conference will mark its Golden Anniversary. To the world round about us, our little church body, comprised of only seven small congregations, is statistically insignificant on the ecclesiastical landscape and barely worth a mention among the huge synods and federations that have arisen and grown by leaps and bounds during this same fifty-year period. Nevertheless for half a century we shall have enjoyed the singular gracious blessings of our Lord and God for Jesus' our Savior's sake, whereof we are glad; and we have survived as a Conference— yea, we have flourished in many respects— much to the surprise of those who never even heard of us, much to the disgust of those who hate us and despise our stand, and much to the frustration of those whose bowl of pottage scraped out of the fleshpots of Egypt no longer satisfies them. For us, the unadulterated Holy Scriptures have been Manna for our souls and a fountain of living water springing up unto everlasting life. Therefore we gratefully ascribe all glory to God for having preserved unto us in their purity His saving Word and the sacred ordinances of His House as the precious means whereby He has strengthened us in the true and saving faith and promises to keep us therein even unto the end. In order to focus our younger members in particular upon the reasons for our existence as a church body, it behooves us specially to consider retrospectively the reasons for the formation of our "parent" body, the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, in 1951, and to thank and praise our gracious God and Lord for having preserved us in true orthodoxy to the present day. *"That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children"* (Psalm 78:6), it is essential that we examine the events in history which caused our Conference's "fathers" to *"mark"* the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod as a heterodox church body and made it essen-

tial for them to *"avoid"* it and to go it on their own (Romans 16:17).

Our people, as well as others who may hear or read this essay, should understand that those who protested against the errors making steady inroads into the synod and particularly against the toleration of those errors by the very ones who were charged with maintaining doctrinal discipline within that body, dearly loved the Missouri Synod and its heritage of the truth championed by Dr. Walther, Dr. Pieper, and many others. As was the case with Luther in the early days of the Reformation, it was not their desire to leave the Missouri Synod and to form another (or a "competitive") church body. On the contrary, it was their fervent hope and prayer that their earnest protests would not fall on deaf ears but would be heard as the clarion call of the Holy Scriptures to the pastors, laymen, professors and officers of the synod to be more zealous in *"endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3), by exercising vigilance, identifying variance, disciplining those who *"cause[d] divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which [they had] learned"* (Romans 16:17), and thus guarding the confessional position of the synod in both doctrine and practice. When this was not done, in spite of patient admonition, and they realized that they were viewed by the leaders of the synod (and even by the rank and file) as crackpots, troublemakers and self-serving saber rattlers, our faithful fathers had no choice but to leave.

PART ONE

Ironically, Missouri's slide into heterodoxy —an admittedly *gradual* one— began some twenty years earlier as an unexpected result of what had seemed to be a completely legitimate, yea, a Godpleasing, interest on the part of our Lutheran forebears, namely, to seek to bring together the various synods bearing Luther's name into a fellowship characterized by complete unity in faith and confession, in doctrine and practice, based on the verbally inspired, inerrant, and completely clear and all-sufficient Word of God. This had been, after all, Dr. Walther's fond desire which he saw at least partially fulfilled in the formation of the Synodical Conference in 1871. Sadly, but not surprisingly, the yen for outward "union" soon replaced the insistence on true "unity" on the agenda of some of the staunchest theologians of the synod, especially between 1930 and 1950 (as can be seen by comparing their earlier writ-

ings with their later ones). The leaven of indifferentism spread like a cancer (II Timothy 2:17), and subtle compromise (couched in non-specific language which deliberately blurred points of controversy) became the order of the day not long after the adoption of the *Brief Statement* in 1932.

By 1930, the "Lutheran" landscape was still painted in black and white with a "muddied" grey scale in between. But the "Technicolor" hues had not yet hopelessly confused the picture, making even the grossest departures from God's Word attractive to the casual and non-critical viewer as the situation is today. There were basically <u>three</u> "Lutheranisms" on the scene: Liberal Lutheranism, middle-of-the-road Lutheranism, and orthodox Lutheranism. Since this year's essay is intended to be fairly brief, we shall endeavor to distill the historical development of these as much as possible.

In 1918, the **United Lutheran Church in America** (ULCA) was formed by the union of the ***General Synod*** (dating from 1820, a rapidly growing body covering practically the entire eastern third of the United States, but characterized by laxity in doctrine and practice), the ***General Council*** (formed in 1867 by "conservatives" who had defected from the General Synod), and the ***United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South*** (a body composed of synods below the Mason-Dixon Line, organized in 1863, which had retained its separate identity since Civil War days). This **United Lutheran Church in America** represented the most liberal and latitudinarian of nominal Lutherans in both doctrine and practice.

In 1930, the **American Lutheran Church** (ALC) was constituted by the union of the ***Buffalo Synod*** (founded by J. A. A. Grabau and other Prussian Lutherans in 1845), the ***Iowa Synod*** (founded in 1854 by Franconian Lutherans who had migrated from Michigan to Iowa), and the ***Ohio Synod*** (organized by Lutheran pioneers already in 1818). This **American Lutheran Church** then united in October of 1930 with the ***Augustana Synod*** (organized in 1860 by Scandinavian Lutherans who had left the *General Synod* because of its laxity), the ***Lutheran Free Church*** (of Norwegian Lutherans who did not join the larger Norwegian body in 1917 but organized their own synod), the ***Evangelical Lutheran Church*** (ELC), known until 1946 as the *Norwegian Lutheran Church* (organized in 1917 by *most* of the Norwegian Lutherans

chiefly on the basis of their common language and heritage), and the ***United Evangelical Lutheran Church*** (UELC), known until 1946 as the *Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church,* (organized in 1870 by Norwegian and Danish Lutherans). This federation, known as the **American Lutheran Conference,** was created to facilitate cooperation among all the above-mentioned bodies, and had as its doctrinal basis the *Minneapolis Theses* of 1925. The bodies comprising the **American Lutheran Conference** represented in 1930 the middle-of-the-road Lutherans in doctrine and practice.

Finally, we come to the **Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America**, referred to commonly as the **Synodical Conference**. This federation had been founded in 1871 as an advisory body whose main purpose was the expression, encouragement and promotion of unity in doctrine and practice and the practice of unity-based fellowship in cooperative church work and worship. The constituent bodies of this orthodox fellowship were the ***Missouri Synod***, now known as the *Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod* (LCMS), founded in 1847 by Saxon immigrants under Dr. C. F. W. Walther and others, who had left Germany because of religious oppression; the ***Wisconsin Synod***, now known as the *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (WELS), founded in 1850 by Germans who came to America as missionaries to those who had earlier emigrated but had no preachers and teachers of the Word; the ***Norwegian Synod***, now known as the *Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (ELS), a minority remnant of the old *Norwegian Synod* which refused for doctrinal reasons to merge with others into the large *Norwegian Lutheran Church* (ELC) in 1917 [see paragraph above] and formed its own synod in 1918; and the ***Slovak Synod*** (SELC), founded in 1902 by Lutheran congregations of Slovak descent and language. When the slide of the Missouri Synod into blatant heterodoxy was plainly marked by its sister synods in the late 40's and early 50's, and the Missouri Synod refused their admonition and pleas to correct their self-destructive course, the Synodical Conference broke up with the withdrawal of the ELS in 1961 and of the WELS in 1963. It became totally inactive in 1966 and was dissolved in 1967. Ironically, the synod founded by Dr. Walther in 1847 destroyed his dream of God-pleasing Lutheran union based on true unity of faith and confession. Within less than a hundred years after its founding, the ***Synodical Conference*** was scuttled because of the consistent and unabating slide of the Missouri Synod into persistent heterodoxy!

While the years immediately following World War I have been characterized by many church historians as a time of "rapprochement," a period during which concerted efforts were made on the part of the various Lutheran groups to come to a "meeting of the minds" in matters of doctrine and practice and thus eventually into some sort of pan-Lutheran organization, this is an oversimplification. This may indeed be the view of those who regard the entire matter of Lutheran union to be "political" in nature, to be settled by "negotiation" in which the art of "compromise" is the tool which crafts eventual agreement; but it fails to consider the requirements of Holy Scripture for truly Godpleasing fellowship, namely, true unity in faith and confession, in doctrine and practice, based alone on God's inerrant Word, without compromise, without ambiguity, without accommodation, without "yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility and unity" (Thorough Declaration, *Formula of Concord,* XI, 95, ***Triglotta***, p. 1095).

Significant social pressure was brought to bear during this period for pan-Lutheran cooperation in the spiritual care of Lutherans in the armed forces. In 1917, a *National Lutheran Commission* was created for this very purpose representing all of the Lutheran bodies except the members of the Synodical Conference, the latter synods maintaining "purely external cooperation." But a year later, a more permanent intersynodical organization, the *National Lutheran Council*, came into being under a series of "regulations" which included by 1926 the declaration that the unity of this council was based upon the basic doctrinal agreement of its member bodies. This so-called "agreement" was tenuous at best due to variations in "interpretation" of Lutheran doctrine and practice, and it turned out to be the virtual *sham* of "agreement to disagree" which set the tone and standard for later efforts at Lutheran union. And for the *Synodical Conference,* there was always the question with respect to such organizations —as well as chaplaincy in the armed forces then and later— as to how much "cooperation" could be rendered that would remain "purely external". The heat was being turned up.

Still a fellowship of truly orthodox synods, the *Synodical Conference* was constantly being accused of standing in the way of progress toward

Lutheran union. Specific reference was made to the "unreasonable" insistence of its constituent bodies that full agreement in doctrine and practice be the sole requisite not only for church *fellowship* but also for church *work* ("cooperative endeavors") with other Lutheran groups. With the view toward shedding the label of arbitrary obstructionism, representatives of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods joined an Intersynodical Committee which included members of the Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio Synods to hammer out a document which, it was hoped, could become the basis for mutual cooperation and eventual fellowship. The initial draft of the *"Intersynodical (Chicago) Theses"* was presented in 1925, but the committee itself could not reach a consensus on the wording until 1928, when the document in its final form was presented. In 1929, the Missouri Synod rejected the Theses as totally inadequate because a) certain paragraphs did not address the specific points of controversy, b) others were so ambiguously phrased that both parties could find in them their own positions, and c) at times the statements represented the false position of the opponents rather than the orthodox position of the Missouri Synod and Synodical Conference. The Synod decided instead to draw up ***its own*** theses addressing the specific unresolved controversies, and to make this document the doctrinal basis for any further discussions toward fellowship and church relations. This document, crafted by a committee appointed by President Pfotenhauer (which included Drs. Pieper and Engelder), was entitled *"Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod."* It was adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1932, was never amended by the Synod, nor withdrawn, nor retracted; and, as the sound and "living" document it continues to be, having had its roots in the now long-gone days of the Missouri Synod's orthodoxy, it still belongs to the Confessional Standard of our ***Concordia Lutheran Conference*** today.

What then happened to start the Missouri Synod on its downward slide into heterodoxy? What changed shortly after the adoption of the *Brief Statement* to steer the synod onto a different course? And was a real mid-course correction ever made to bring that body back to its insistence on *true unity* as the only basis for Christian fellowship and cooperative church work? In this first part of our essay, we shall address these questions and answer them briefly. But we shall save the crowning evidence, the "proof of the pudding" of Missouri's patent heterodoxy, for Part Two.

Not long after the *Brief Statement* was adopted and the clear assumption was established that discussions were thence to be based upon *its* Scriptural declarations, the representatives of the American Lutheran Church filed their reaction to that document and the result of their deliberations. In their *Declaration* of 1938 (also known as the *Sandusky Declaration*), they stated that, on the basis *not* only of the *Brief Statement* but also of the *Minneapolis Theses* of 1925 (the agreement which paved the way for the organization of the American Lutheran Conference) and of the *Chicago Theses* (already rejected by the Missouri Synod as defective), they were issuing a series of summary statements. Those statements watered down the unequivocal wording of the *Brief Statement* and insisted that certain differences be acknowledged as not being divisive of Church fellowship. The subsequent resolution of the American Lutheran Church in the same year reiterated this position and further insisted that the *Brief Statement* be viewed in the light of their *Declaration* as not being in contradiction to the *Minneapolis Theses*, inasmuch as they were not about to give up their membership in the American Lutheran Conference. They therefore declared that the *Brief Statement* together with their *Declaration* constituted "a sufficient doctrinal basis for Church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church." —So near, and yet so far! The power-play had been made. The ultimatum had been laid down: All or nothing! Take it or leave it! Missouri would either agree to the ALC's terms or would have to bear the stigma of having scuttled the negotiations! The ball was in Missouri's court!

Suddenly, the once unbending, uncompromising, orthodox synod of Walther, Pieper, and Engelder ***yielded*** and accepted the conditions stipulated by the American Lutheran Church, even though it stopped short of the ALC's expectation that it would immediately establish Church fellowship on the basis of what had been mutually accepted. The Wisconsin Synod was furious over the fact that Missouri had accepted a document that was not only defective but represented an easy compromise couched in deliberately ambiguous language. The *Declaration*, they held, did not state the truth clearly and did not exclude error in controverted doctrines. Moreover, the Wisconsin Synod pointed out that the ALC's *Pittsburgh Agreement* with the United Lutheran Church in America showed its true and completely transparent intention, namely, to attempt union with *both* the Missouri Synod *and* the

radically liberal ULCA at the very same time! The outrage of their Synodical Conference brethren — not an accusing conscience because of the forbidden fruit it had just swallowed— caused the Missouri Synod to issue in 1940 an explanation to the American Lutheran Church about "candidly what in our view ... still stands in the way of actual fellowship between our two bodies." And Missouri carefully back-pedaled into safer territory. The ALC, too, saw the impractical and almost insurmountable task of becoming the bridge between the Missouri Synod and the ULCA; and it backed away from both of them. Yet the sugary-sweet taste of the fruit lingered on the tongues of all three parties; and, as the "loss of innocence" makes carnal indulgence easier the next time around, the loss of true orthodoxy in an *attitude of latitude,* in a lapse of *confessional standards,* in ambivalence toward *doctrinal purity,* and in the willingness to couch disagreement in *deliberately crafted ambiguous language*, became evident in the subsequent appearance of ***A Statement*** in 1945 and in the easy and frankly "sleazy" way in which the signers were permitted to escape virtually unscathed!

These were the "official" dealings of the "officials" of the Synod that signaled the beginning of the end of Missouri's orthodoxy. But there were other symptoms of the festering cancer of heterodoxy eating away at the heart and other vital organs of the once orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Indeed, the blame for Missouri's fall from its once cherished perch on *"the foundation of the apostles and prophets"* (Ephesians 2:20) cannot be laid solely at the feet of her leaders.

The orthodoxy of the Missouri Synod after 1932 began to take on the stench of "dead orthodoxy"— an orthodoxy professed, an orthodoxy preached, an orthodoxy taught, an orthodoxy committed to paper, pointed to and boasted of by one and all as the hallmark of "Synod" (a name which almost *personified* the institution)— but an orthodoxy that *in **practice*** was a sham! ["Practice" is defined as the consistent application of doctrine (Exodus 34:11; James 1:22; Luke 6:46; etc.)] The rank and file of both clergy and laity became infected with the insidious contagion. "Doctrinal discipline" (whereby brethren hew to the mark of God's inerrant Word and by sound doctrine both exhort and convince gainsayers in their fellowship) was neglected; and those pastors who

practiced it in pastoral conferences and conventions were sometimes actually booed down and told to keep their dogmatics to themselves! [Your essayist recalls from his childhood an instance in which his father and several other orthodox pastors in a conference out East were labeled "SOB's" by their fellow pastors—"super orthodox brethren"! Some fellowship!] "Church discipline" in the local congregation according to Matthew 18:15-17 was also sorely neglected, and the principles of Holy Scripture became purely "theoretical" for the average church member, principles to be confessed on Sunday mornings and to be ignored during the week. The doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod was "solid" on paper —concerning the inerrancy of Scripture and its verbal inspiration, unity as the requisite for fellowship, close communion, sinful religious unionism, the chaplaincy, lodge membership and Scouting, merchandising to support the work of Christ's church, modern social dancing, gambling, engagement being tantamount to holy marriage, etc. Even a casual look at the books and tracts published during this period bears this out. BUT ***in practice*** things were otherwise! Practice on these matters varied from pastor to pastor, from congregation to congregation, from member to member within the same congregation; and virtually NOTHING was done about it! Personal variance was not considered "divisive of fellowship" in spite of I Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3, and many other passages. "Personal unionism" in joint prayer between individuals not in fellowship with one another was not as bad as "institutional unionism" between church bodies. Toleration of occasional lodge membership was not as bad as "synodical policy" approving it. Bake sales, suppers, and bazaars to support the church were okay as long as the synod was "on record" as opposing them. Modern social dancing was perfectly acceptable, even at wedding receptions in parish halls, as long as books and tracts were published "officially" condemning it. Is it any wonder that the American Lutheran Church was suspect of the Missouri Synod's insistence on complete agreement in doctrine and practice for the establishment of fellowship? The *synod itself* wasn't consistent; the *pastors* didn't want to be consistent; and the *laymen* were quite content with the inconsistent application of their precious orthodoxy. Some orthodoxy! The Missouri Synod was already in a precipitous slide, and there was no evidence of an imminent turnaround in spite of the vigorous protests of a precious few who dared to raise their voices.

— D.T.M.

Welcome

to all old and new subscribers!

We appreciate your concern for true orthodox Lutheranism and are certain that, by God's grace, you will receive rich spiritual benefits from your faithful reading of CONCORDIA LUTHERAN articles which are based solidly upon the pure and unerring Word of God.

Only 5.00 per year!

Give a subscription to a friend or relative!

Scriptural Publications
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

For detailed information about our Conference,
we invite you to visit our official Web Site!

The Concordia Lutheran Conference

www.concordialutheranconf.com

- Who We Are
- Our Doctrinal Position
- Our Constitution
- Our Early History
- Our Directory
- Our Seminary
- Our Publishing House
- Our Archives
- News and Events
- Our Guest Book

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE
110 Grasmere Ct.
San Antonio, TX 78218

Non Profit Organization
U. S. Postage
P A I D
San Antonio, Texas
Permit No. 322

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE CHURCH DIRECTORY

See our web site at: www.concordialutheranconf.com

FAITH EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
2620 Francis Street
Jackson, MI 49203 (517) 787-1411
Sunday School and Bible Class.....9:00 a.m.
Worship Service.....10:30 a.m.
REV. ROSS A. MAHAN, Pastor
2175 Pioneer Drive
Jackson, MI 49201 (517) 750-3946

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730 (520) 721-7618
Worship Service .....10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class .....11:15 a.m.
REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730 (520) 721-7618

HOLY SCRIPTURE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
5605 Windsong Drive
Windcrest, TX 78239 (210) 650-9053
Worship Service.....9:30 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class.....11:00 a.m.
REV. E. R. STALLINGS, Pastor
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218 (210) 656-2125

PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, IL 60452 (708) 532-4288
Sunday School and Bible Class.....8:30 a.m.
Worship Service.....10:00 a.m.
REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452 (708) 532-9035

Note: Services are also held each Sunday in our Midland, Michigan chapel at the **Ramada Inn**, 1815 South Saginaw Road:
Sunday School and Bible Class.....6:30 p.m.
Worship Service.....7:30 p.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
6th and Tangent
Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-8212
Sunday School and Bible Class .....10:00 a.m.
Worship Service.....11:00 a.m.
REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
55th Ave. S & S. Fountain St.
Seattle, WA 98178 (206) 723-1078
Sunday School and Bible Class ..... 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service.....10:30 a.m.
REV. PAUL R. BLOEDEL, Pastor
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418

Note: Services are also held in Victoria, British Columbia on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.
Worship Service..... 3:45 p.m.
Bible Class ..... 5:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279
Worship Service.....10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class .....11:15 a.m.
REV. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279 (605) 938-4710

E-MAIL DIRECTORY

Rev. Paul R. Bloedel.....stluke@connectexpress.com
Rev. Mark W. Dierking.....dierking@tnics.com
Rev. Ross A. Mahan.....faith@modempool.com
Rev. David T. Mensing.....peace@orbitel.com
Rev. M. L. Natterer.....mlnatterer@dnc.net
Rev. E. R. Stallings.....stallings@freewwweb.com