

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

by

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More Controversy — Satan's Plague to Disrupt Godpleasing Fellowship

Introduction — With the reorganization of the Conference under its new name but with an unchanged doctrinal and confessional position, we were determined under God's grace not to be a temporary organization but to make arrangements that would help us preserve and carry forward God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure for the generations still to come. (Psalm 78:6). Moreover, we were determined under God, by His grace and with His help, to learn from the immediate past **a**) how to *avoid controversy* by adhering to God's precious truth in all matters of doctrine and practice (John 8:31-32; Amos 3:3; *et al.*) and by dealing with one another in love according to His precepts (Galatians 5:13-15; *et al.*); **b**) how to *deal with controversy* when and if it occurred by means of doctrinal discipline (Acts 20:30; I Timothy 1:3; Titus 3:10; *Brief Statement ¶ 29*) and the maintenance of decency and good order (I Corinthians 14:40) according to love (Galatians 5:13-15); and **c**) how to *heal after controversy* by endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) and by maintaining thenceforth true consistency in orthodox **doctrine** and in orthodox **practice** (I Corinthians 1:10) according to the only infallible source and standard [norm] of Christian faith and life (John 8:31-32; Ephesians 2:20; Romans 16:17; *et al.*).

I. The Background

A monumental step forward toward this end was the decision to establish our own theological seminary for the training of faithful pastors for the future since the seminaries of the Missouri Synod, infiltrated with heterodoxy and supported by a heterodox body, were not schools to which we could, with good conscience, send our young men; and the seminary which we had established in Minneapolis together with our then brethren in the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* was now completely in the hands of our adversaries.

The initial impetus for this project came as in the form of an informal offer from Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, then of Tinley Park, Illinois, to make available a portion of its property as the permanent location for a Conference seminary. The Conference thereupon, in its **Eighth Annual Convention** assembled [1958], authorized its Board of Directors to seek from Peace Congregation an official proposal which could then be laid before the member congregations in a *referendum* for their consideration. In October of that same year, Peace submitted its bonafide offer to donate $3\frac{5}{8}$ acres of its property to the Conference for the construction of a seminary building, any building erected and the upkeep of the property to be the joint responsibility of the entire Conference. Approximate value of the land then was estimated at \$ 5,000.00; and the erection of a 30' x 40' flat-roofed brick-and-block structure (to include two small classrooms, a library, office and storage space, and toilet facilities) together with a road for ingress and egress, well, septic, and sidewalks had been priced with a local contractor at \$ 12,300.00. A professor would need to be called and supported (initially at the approximate level of the Conference pastors), students would need to find their own room and board in the community and provide transportation for themselves (as is generally the responsibility of most college students), and the "running expenses" (including a small mortgage and insurance, utilities and maintenance) would have to be paid by the Conference. Total monthly cash outlay was estimated at \$ 511.00. This proposal, known as the "Tinley Park Plan," was laid before the congregations.

At its regular spring meeting at the end of March, 1959, the Board of Directors heard President Mensing's report that four congregations had approved the plan, two did not respond to the referendum, and one congregation, Christ Lutheran Church of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, had made a counterproposal which became known as the "Milwaukee Plan."

Its plan involved no mortgage to be taken out by the Conference and thus no Conference-owned physical plant; but it proposed housing the seminary in the facilities of Christ Congregation. The congregation envisioned purchasing a building which could serve the threefold purpose of a chapel, a parsonage, and seminary facilities, made possible by a loan from the Conference of \$ 1,000.00 for a down payment. If the Conference then called the Milwaukee pastor as its temporary seminary instructor, that would have the desired effect of relieving their pastor of necessary secular work by supplementing his pastoral salary with the professorial salary. According to the congregation, their pastor would thus serve both as the Conference-subsidized missionary-pastor of Christ Lutheran Church and as instructor in our seminary. The initial monthly cost to the Conference of this plan was estimated at \$ 300.00. The six "*whereas*" clauses in the introduction of the "Milwaukee Plan" specially appealed to the congregations of the Conference to consider the *financial efficiency* of this plan in view of prevailing fiscal conditions in the Conference, including the needs of other congregations for financial assistance, the scarcity of pastors and concern that we not take one of them out of the pulpit for the sake of the seminary, and practical considerations that might be better addressed by locating the seminary in an urban setting.

NOTE that the **sixth** “*whereas*” in particular inadvertently became the “flash powder” that eventually was triggered *in a different context* to ignite a needless and completely unwarranted controversy as the first decade of our reorganized body unfolded:

**WHEREAS— ... 6. the Lord exhorts us to exercise faithful
and wise stewardship (Luke 14:28-30; 12:42; I Corinthians
4:1; 12:25-26; I Peter 4:10); ...**

Since the margin approving the “Tinley Park Plan” had been so *narrow*, the Board resolved to send both the “Tinley Park Plan” and the “Milwaukee Plan” back to the congregations in another referendum with the choice of **a**) choosing one or the other, or **b**) recommending deferring action on either and submitting a substitute plan for further study.

Just prior to the 1959 convention, at the regular meeting pre-convention meeting of the Board, the President reported that **ALL** the congregations had favored the “Milwaukee Plan,” but that they had pledged to the estimated monthly cost of \$ 300.00 only \$ 130.00. Despite this obvious deficiency, the “Milwaukee Plan” would now be the plan recommended to the **Ninth Annual Convention**.

Complicating the convention’s consideration of the “Milwaukee Plan” and the need for the regular monthly support of the congregations to fund it were **TWO mission subsidy requests**—one a request for *continuing* subsidy for Trinity Lutheran Church of Sigourney-Muscatine, Iowa, the Rev. J. Ernest Shufelt, Pastor, in the amount of \$ 1,200.00 annually, and the second from the newly-formed St. Luke’s Lutheran Church of Seattle, Washington, which was at the time being served by the Rev. M. L. Natterer of Lebanon, Oregon, as its vacancy pastor. The latter congregation desired to call a full-time pastor and missionary-at-large and needed \$ 150.00 per month (\$ 1,800.00 annually) to augment the \$ 100.00 per month raised by the congregation for the “full time support” of a shepherd. In his annual report to the Conference, President Mensing urged the convention to give “this small congregation of very zealous, consecrated fellow Christians ...very careful consideration” as to its request. Thus, between the need for increased seminary funding to meet the cost of the “Milwaukee Plan” and the need for requested mission subsidies, the Conference was looking for an influx of additional regular monthly support from the Conference congregations, over and above that already pledged for the seminary project, totaling \$ 320.00 (or \$ 3,840. annually).

The **Ninth Annual Convention** in June, 1959, **a**) accepted the “Milwaukee Plan” and resolved to put it “into operation” through the Board of Directors and the Committee on Theological Education “as soon as the congregations of our Conference fellowship assure us of the necessary funds for the seminary; and that they inform the President and the Secretary of their decision within two months of this convention.” The convention also **b**) decided to place a subsidy for Seattle before the congregations as a *referendum*, to wit: “That the Conference grant the subsidy as requested as soon as the congregation extends a divine call to a pastor and the call is accepted.”

The following October, the Board was informed at its regular meeting that the *seminary* referendum has **passed** with a total of \$ 303.00 per month having been pledged for the purpose. The *Seattle subsidy* referendum, however, had been **lost**, inasmuch as only one congregation, St. Luke’s itself, had pledged \$ 10.00 per month to its own subsidy. Apparently, however, there had been a “difference of understanding” regarding the question in the referendum. One congregation in particular did not understand that passage of the referendum was contingent

upon pledges received to fund it. It felt that the Conference had not right to *insist upon* the funding assessment, since this is not required by God's Word. The Board, therefore expressed itself in an after-the-fact interpretation of the referendum's *purpose*, namely, to determine the Conference's financial *ability* consistently to *fund* the requested subsidy as an on-going additional commitment so that the entire cash balance of the Conference might not be depleted for lack of foresight. In his supplementary report, the Conference Treasurer, Mr. Alfred Bloedel, stated that, from June to September of that same year, expenditures had already outpaced receipts by \$ 200.00. Moreover, the total balance on hand in the General Fund on May 31, 1959, was reported as only \$ 1,224.58, making additional pledges and regular contributions *essential* to the ratification of Seattle subsidy in the amount of \$ 1,800.00.

The "difference of understanding" having thus been addressed by the Board, this was shared with the protesting congregation hopefully to clear up any misconceptions still remaining with those brethren as to the purpose of the referendum. Moreover, the Board, in its subsequent meeting, February, 1960, again sought to resolve the situation by means of a resolution recognizing and deploring the fact that the convention had neglected to specify the manner in which the referendum resolution should be carried out and thus had brought about this unfortunate development. This resolution satisfied both the pastor and the lay representatives of the congregation; and they withdrew and retracted their church's accusatory letter. Sadly, however, its voters' assembly did not approve the action of its pastor and representatives; and the matter came up again in June.

The special pastoral conference of June 16-17, 1959, continued to work at satisfying the objections of that one congregation and addressed specifically "**the principle**" of *Scripture* involved in all of this, namely, that **not only our willingness but also our ability must be taken into consideration before committing ourselves to a project and promising certain support.** Among the passages thoroughly studied and considered were **Proverbs 3:27, II Corinthians 8:11-12, and Luke 14:28-32.** A question was raised as to the appropriateness of the Luke passage being included, inasmuch as it is an illustration from a parable of the Lord Jesus and not a prooftext in the proper understanding of that term. The minutes state regarding the pastors' conclusion:

All were agreed that the first two passages clearly speak of considering both our willingness and our reasonable ability before making any financial commitment as a Conference of congregations, while in the third passage this fact is a secondary lesson and not the main point of comparison in the parable stated.

Subsequently, the following **statement of principle** was adopted:

Holy Scripture requires that, before we launch out into any such project where we contemplate promising definite financial help, we are obliged under the authority of God's Word, not only to consider our willingness, that is, whether or not we favor it, but also our reasonable ability to carry out the promise which we contemplate making. Prov. 3:27. 2 Corinthians 8:11-2.

The passage Luke 14:28-32 was omitted from this statement, **NOT** because it did not apply, but because it was not a *sedes* or prooftext but rather an illustration of the principle. In its June 17th meeting, the Board added that "the convention might well have re-stated the principle involved here which had already been sufficiently and clearly presented in the President's report at the

1959 convention when such matters were spoken of in that report.” And as to the “difference of understanding” of what might have or might not have been done in the handling of the referendum, that which was deemed a neutral matter by the Board at its February meeting, the Board now adopted the following resolution of clarification in view of the **statement of principle** acknowledged above:

We cheerfully acknowledge that if a certain thing is required by Holy Scripture and an opposite view to that is held, then it would *not* be correct to state that neither side should insist on its view as binding. The Board realizes that it did not have complete information on the matter in question at that time (the Febr. Board meeting). The President and the Vice-president are fully satisfied with this expression of principle on the part of the Board in view of their letter dated May 19, 1960.

Since an official response from the protesting congregation’s voters’ assembly could not reasonably be expected before the immediately following convention, it was assumed by the Board that “the entire matter would now, of course, become official convention business, and it was hoped that in the delegate sessions it might be resolved.”

The minutes of the convention report, by the grace of God, that when in the Saturday afternoon session, June 18, 1960,

“the Scriptural principle of church financing as stated in the President’s annual report and the application of it with reference to the Seattle subsidy referendum were discussed, the motion was unanimously carried [including the votes of the protesting congregation’s pastoral and lay delegates] that the Conference go on record as adopting the principle set forth in the Pres. report with its Scriptural basis: ...”

...and the entire **statement of principle** was included in the motion verbatim as quoted above. The *Common Doxology* was then sung by the standing assembly, followed by this welcome resolution:

The motion was then made and seconded that we go on record as holding that the President and the Board carried out the resolution regarding the Seattle subsidy referendum in an orderly manner and in the light of these Scriptural principles which we have adopted, and that therefore the serious differences which had arisen were resolved.

Thus what could have been a prolonged and completely unnecessary controversy was by the grace of God averted, and true unity of faith and purpose, evidenced by love, was restored. Two Conference projects, both earnestly desired for their salutary causes, had experienced quite different outcomes: —The “Milwaukee [Seminary] Plan” had been put into operation, fully funded by the congregations of the Conference through their pledged contributions; and in November, 1959, the pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Rev. E. L. Mehlberg, had been installed as professor on the basis of the “*Solemn Arrangement*” conveyed to him by the Committee on Theological Education. Two students were initially enrolled: Mr. Amil Ulrich, who, because of necessary full-time work, could devote only two evenings per week to theological studies; and Mr. Julius Schmitt, formerly of the congregation in Muscatine, Iowa, who was studying full-time. This milestone was celebrated with great joy in the Lord. —On the other hand, our fledgling congregation in Seattle, unable because of its small size fully to support a pastor, nevertheless called the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel from Empire, Oregon, desperately hoping for a financial subsidy from their Conference brethren. When the

congregations found themselves unable to raise the needed funds on a regular basis, the subsidy was denied; and Pastor Bloedel was compelled to take on full-time secular employment to provide for his growing family according to the Word of God *to him* in I Timothy 5:8. This turn of events was very regrettable, especially after the Conference's unanimous resolution in 1958 recognizing that the full support of the ministry is the ordinance of God. (See: *Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference.*)

II. The Controversy

Satan had only temporarily been held at bay. For a tiny seed of discord, barely evident even to a careful observer, had been sown by the Father of Lies during the discussion of that **statement of principle** regarding our obligation under the authority of God's Word, not only to consider our *willingness*, that is, whether or not we *favor* a proposal, but also our reasonable *ability to carry out* the promise which we contemplate making as part of that proposal. The reader is reminded that, by mutual consent of the pastors, the passage **Luke 14:28-32** was omitted from that statement, **NOT** because it did not apply, but because it was an illustration in support of the principle rather than a *sedes* or prooftext. It could well have been cited as a support passage, as we commonly cite so-called "Bible narratives" in our *Catechism* as examples, illustrations and supports of principles that have already been established by **prooftexts**. Prooftexts, however, are the "clear and certain passages" that can stand alone, texts that neither need nor permit of interpretation (*exegesis*) to determine what they say and their authority to establish and norm Christian doctrine. On the other hand, illustrations, allegories, parables, and the like belong to the "less clear" passages, sometimes called the "obscure" passages, which, according to sound *hermeneutics* or principles of Bible interpretation, do not qualify as "prooftexts."

What transpired is clearly documented by extant correspondence, position papers, minutes of the Board of Directors and of Pastoral Conferences, and the *Proceedings* of the **Eleventh Annual Convention**, June 22-26, 1961.

There were in reality **THREE factors** which contributed to and created this divisive controversy—factors **each** of which, in and of itself, was egregious enough to warrant the Conference to **require** the offending brother, on the basis of God's Word, to cease and desist from his sinful, offensive behavior of disrupting the unity of the Spirit in its midst: **First**, charging a brother pastor with "public false doctrine" *without evidence of fact* and *without proof from Holy Scripture* (8th Commandment; Romans 16:17a; John 18:23; etc.); **secondly**, interfering in the internal affairs of a congregation other than his own, specifically in a case of Christian church discipline (Acts 20:28; I Peter 4:15; 5:2; etc.); and **thirdly**, refusing to deal with his avowed brethren in a decently and orderly fashion in an effort properly to resolve his grievance (I Corinthians 14:40; Galatians 5:13; etc.).

Since the offensive second factor developed out of the first, and the third factor was only the culminating result of the first two, aggravated by one's stubborn insistence on having his own way, we **first** present the unsubstantiated charge of "public false doctrine against" a brother pastor, a charge which grew out of a difference in *exegesis* [i.e. Bible interpretation], which stemmed from a disagreement over a rule of *hermeneutics* [i.e. a principle of Bible interpretation], which **ULTIMATELY** centered upon the authority and purpose of Holy Scripture.

We direct the reader's attention again to the discussion of the **statement of principle** regarding our obligation under the authority of God's Word, not only to consider our

willingness to accept a proposal [involving commitment of funds to a project, financial aid, or a subsidy, for example] but also our reasonable *ability to carry out* the promise which we contemplate making as part of that proposal. When that **statement of principle** was adopted, two *sedes* or prooftexts were cited that clearly *established* the principle (**Proverbs 3:27** and **II Corinthians 8:11-12**). A third passage had also been considered as an example and support passage, namely, **Luke 14:28-32**; but this passage had been objected to since it was a *parable* text, indeed the *earthly situation* in a parable text, which, opponents argued, could not be used a) apart from the *tertium* or “point of comparison” in that parable, and b) certainly not as an entity unto itself to *establish* or *prove* a principle. [The reader would do well at this point to look up and read carefully **Luke 14:28-32**, as well as Jesus’ “point of comparison” in **verse 33**, as this passage and its application is the thread that runs through this entire controversy.] The hermeneutical principle indeed is clear: Neither a mere example in Scripture nor a parable can be used as a *sedes doctrinae* or prooftext because such passages belong to the “less clear” passages. The so-called “order of clarity” of Scripture passages is, in descending order, a) the *sedes*, b) prophecies, c) examples, and d) parables and the Book of Revelation. The “less clear” passages must always be interpreted in the light of the clearer passages [*Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*], and this order dare never be reversed. Accordingly, all passages that deal with a certain doctrine, even as examples of the doctrine and its application, must be understood and expounded according to the *sedes doctrinae*; and no exposition may contradict the “analogy of faith” [*analogia fidei*], that is, the “certain and clear passages of Scripture” (*Apology*, p. 441, §60). [For a more complete discussion of these principles, see Ludwig Fuerbringer’s *Theological Hermeneutics—An Outline for the Classroom*. St. Louis, 1924.]

Sadly, had **Pastor E. C. Hallstein** of Clark, South Dakota, given due to what his brethren actually said concerning what soon became known as “the Luke passage,” he would not have leaped to the unfounded conclusion that they were using it as “a proof” for the **statement of principle** adopted by the Conference. The minutes of the Special Pastoral Conference held in Milwaukee, June 16-17, 1960, show the following pastors as present: Pastors H. D. Mensing, E. L. Mehlberg, M. L. Natterer, E. C. Hallstein, J. E. Shufelt, and O. W. Schaefer, as well as Mr. Amil Ulrich, the part-time student at our seminary there. During the Thursday afternoon session,

The history of the Seattle subsidy referendum was then discussed, beginning with the reading of the pertinent minutes of the 1959 convention. After this the Scriptural principles involved received thorough consideration and study on the basis of such passages as Prov. 3:27; 2 Cor. 8:11-12; and Luke 14:28-32. All were agreed that the first two passages clearly speak of considering both our willingness and our reasonable ability before making any financial commitment as a Conference of congregations, while in the third passage this fact is a secondary lesson and not the main point of comparison in the parable stated.

On Friday morning, the discussion continued about the Scriptural principle that BOTH **willingness** and **reasonable ability** should be considered when making a significant commitment; and the minutes state that “the following passages were studied thoroughly: Luke 14:28-32; Matt. 21:28; and Luke 10:25ff. Pertinent quotations were also read from Stoeckhardt’s *Biblische Geschichten* [sic.], Luther, and Kretzmann’s *Popular Commentary*.” Dr. Stoeckhardt’s comment on “the Luke passage” is particularly striking, in that he used the imagery of building a tower and of preparations for war not only with reference to the Savior’s “point of comparison,” namely, **the necessity of counting the cost of being His disciple**, but

ALSO the **secondary** lesson or application, the **side** lesson, the **example** of the principle established by Proverbs 3:27 and II Corinthians 8:11-12, as follows:

Both parables teach us that if we wish to undertake a great and important task, we dare not overlook any of the difficulties involved. So must everyone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus also consider all the heavy responsibilities and take upon himself all the requirements of discipleship. [Our emphasis on the *side lesson*.]

Although the Conference President, Pastor Mensing, and especially the Vice President, Pastor Mehlberg, were singled out by Pastor Hallstein for “public false doctrine” for their use of “the Luke passage” as even an **example**, a **secondary** lesson, and an **illustration** of the “statement of principle” adopted by the Special Pastoral Conference, neither Pastor Hallstein nor Pastor Shufelt (who sided with him in this controversy) ever attacked Dr. Stoeckhardt for the above statement, which is in essence what our Conference pastors said, wrote, and taught.

Moreover (and this is truly significant), when the “Milwaukee Plan” for the establishment of a seminary was first presented to the Conference Board of Directors back in the spring of 1959 —when Pastor Shufelt was the chairman of the Committee on Theological Education and Pastor Hallstein was Secretary *pro tempore* of the meeting— **neither man** took exception of the wording of that “Milwaukee Plan” which stated on its first page in its sixth “*whereas*”: “The Lord exhorts us to exercise faithful and wise stewardship (LUKE 14:28-30; 12:42; I Corinthians 4:1; 12:25-26; I Peter 4:10).” (See Part I above.). And, when Pastor Hallstein was elected chairman of the C. T. E. at the convention the following June, he oversaw the final approval and implementation of the “Milwaukee Plan” and administered it *for two consecutive terms* (through the entire span of the controversy and confrontation), and never challenged that important Scriptural principle rationale for establishing a more streamlined and economical seminary in Milwaukee, nor the “Luke passage” cited in its support..

The minutes of that Special Pastoral Conference state that “**all were agreed** that...in [the Luke passage] this fact is a secondary lesson... “ Nevertheless, President Mensing in his annual report did not mention “the Luke passage” even as an example —not because it would have been a false and inappropriate use of God’s Word to do so, but out of deference to brethren who, he hoped, would in time come to the realization of its legitimate use as an example and, in the meantime, would not stubbornly obstruct the adoption of a Scriptural principle just to make their point.

As noted in Part One of our essay, the **Tenth Annual Convention** unanimously adopted the **statement of principle** —*without* the Luke passage— and nothing further was said about it. Whether Pastors Hallstein and Shufelt were truly satisfied remained to be seen, and whether their agreement in principle that the Luke passage was a “secondary lesson” in the Savior’s parable would soon be tested. The same was true for the seminarian, Mr. Ulrich. The Conference would soon learn the sad but inescapable truth that, because of the perverse, fleshly heart of man, unanimity in a vote, even on a matter of God’s Word, and unanimity on paper recorded as a testimony to others, does not always mean that the parties thereto are “*of one heart and one soul*,” as were the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32), or that they are “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Corinthians 1:10).

III. The Confrontation

When the 1960 Convention in Milwaukee was over, Christ Lutheran Church took up the matter of Mr. Ulrich's public error manifested already before the convention, then at the meeting of the Pastoral Conference, and even on the floor of the convention itself, in that he had rejected *all three* passages under discussion as inapplicable to the matter of counting the cost in church financing. Because of Mr. Ulrich's intransigence in refusing to accept God's Word as not only addressing but also settling this issue, the congregation dealt with his case as a matter of **church discipline** and eventually succeeded, under the Lord's blessing, to persuade him to accept the *sedes* as establishing the principle of counting the cost and its application to financing the Lord's work in His Church. However, the congregation was NOT successful in reaching unity with him on the legitimate use of the Luke passage as an example and illustration of the principle. It was then decided by the voters' assembly that the problem of disunity would be taken up at a subsequent meeting of the congregation at which Pastor Mehlberg would present in written form the Scriptural position of both the Conference and of the congregation on the Luke passage. It must be borne in mind that not just Pastor Mehlberg and Pastor Mensing but **all** the pastors had agreed that it carried the force of at least a "secondary lesson" and certainly of "an illustration" and "an example" of the **statement of principle** in its practical application. Pastor Mehlberg first set about carefully to draft a summary statement for his congregation concerning the proper use of a parable. Since the paper is rather brief, we include it here for the sake of clear testimony that the hermeneutical principles adhered to by our Conference pastors were then and are still today Scripturally sound:

A SUMMARY OF OUR POSITION IN THE MATTER OF THE USE OF A PARABLE

- I. A parable is a real or fictitious story from everyday life and common experience by means of which a heavenly or spiritual truth is taught.
- II. Since parables of Scriptures are a part of God's revealed Word, they, too, are intended for our learning. They are therefore binding upon the Christian conscience.

Romans 15:4 — "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

2 Timothy 3:15 — "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

- III. The main or chief point of instruction in a parable is given by the point of comparison. Such point of comparison should therefore not be stretched beyond its actual limits; but this fact that there is a main lesson does not rule out the teaching and learning of secondary lessons from the parables.
 1. Since parables are in themselves a form of instruction by pictures and therefore among the less clear passages of Scripture, these are to be interpreted or set forth in the light of the very plain and clear statements of Scripture.
 2. A parable should therefore never be so used as to teach what contradicts the very clear Scripture passages regarding any doctrine.
 3. And no lesson from a parable, either from the point of comparison or from the so-called embellishment of the parable, should be considered a seat of Christian doctrine.

4. Whatever, nevertheless, is taught in a parable that is in accordance with very plain statements of Scripture or seats of doctrine is to be considered a further emphasis or example of such Scripture doctrine and is therefore binding upon the Christian.

Pastor Mehlberg then also carefully wrote for his flock an instructional paper on “the Luke passage.” He did not submit this paper in the *Concordia Lutheran*, neither did he advertise it to anyone, nor did he (to the writer’s knowledge) disseminate it outside of his own flock. The paper entitled “An Exegetical Treatment and Defense of Our Use of the Luke Passage: 14:28-32.” came into being as a direct result of the *internal* problem within Christ Lutheran Church. It was intended specifically to correct the false position of a member of *that* congregation. And at no point in that treatise did the pastor teach, as Pastor Hallstein accused him, that Jesus’ parable constituted “doctrinal proof” for the statement of principle adopted by the Conference. Instead he maintained, together with *all* the pastors, that the “secondary lesson” contained in the passage was a Scriptural example of the principle that had been established by other passages, by sedes passages. This fine study was only provided to the Board of Directors of the Conference by Christ Lutheran Church in Pastor Mehlberg’s defense after Pastor Hallstein had accused him of “public false doctrine.” Then and only then did Pastor Mehlberg’s paper become public outside the congregation, at the congregation’s own instance; and the Board of Directors, at its meeting on Tuesday, April 4, 1961, having examined it, unanimously adopted the following resolution:

We still hold to the position that our Conference has thus far maintained, namely, that this passage (Luke 14:28-32) not only teaches as the main lesson the cost of discipleship, but also serves as a Scriptural example of the principle involved in matters of stewardship and Christian finance. As such, it is, of course, binding upon the Christian conscience. Romans 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16.

Since the exegetical study is about three and one-half pages in length, it has not been included in this essay in its entirety; but is available as a separate document from *Scriptural Publications* for the profitable examination and study of the reader.

If Pastor Mehlberg and his congregation had not disseminated the paper, how had it gotten into the hands of Pastor Hallstein in the first place? The **second factor** that both contributed to and caused the controversy explains this mystery, namely, Pastor Hallstein’s brazen interference in the *internal* matter of a local congregation other than his own in clear violation of such passages as Acts 20:28, I Peter 4:15; and I Peter 5:2.

We note first of all, the sound Scriptural, Christian, and orthodox Lutheran practice in this regard as articulated by Dr. John H. C. Fritz in his *Pastoral Theology* (1932 Ed.), p. 57:

Since a congregation (even a heterodox congregation, inasmuch as it is a Christian congregation) is a divinely established institution and its pastor has been divinely called and entrusted by the Lord with the care of the souls of his parish, every pastor should honor such a divine arrangement and therefore not officially minister to the spiritual needs of the members of another Christian congregation or for such perform any official acts without the knowledge and consent of the pastor to whose parish such souls belong. ...The very relation of the pastor to his members and the relation of the members to their pastor makes it imperative that such relation be honored and preclude any outside interference.

As noted above, Mr. Amil Ulrich, a communicant and voting member of Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, was in the process of being dealt with by his congregation, as a matter of church discipline, for his persistent refusal to accept the principle of Scripture regarding counting the cost in Christian stewardship. While in the midst of these dealings, Mr. Ulrich and his wife moved from Milwaukee to Minneapolis without first having been reconciled to their brethren on this matter (Matthew 5:23-24), without having been thus restored to good standing as those who were, by God's grace, once again in the unity of the Spirit with their congregation (Ephesians 4:3; I Corinthians 1:10). Had they done the latter, the matter of Christian admonition would have been concluded in a Godpleasing manner; and the Ulrichs would have been eligible for a peaceful release and a transfer to a sister congregation. However, such was NOT the case. The Ulrichs were still members of Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, and their matter had NOT been resolved.

Contemporaneous marginal notes and comments inserted by a brother pastor into Pastor Hallstein's anecdotal account of this case point out that the Ulrichs at no time requested a release. They merely expressed the desire to Pastor Hallstein to join his congregation in Clark, South Dakota, stating that they could not in good conscience accept as Scriptural the document prepared by their pastor. On the contrary, the record shows that Mr. Ulrich was not as unequivocal about this as Pastor Hallstein claimed, for he apparently accepted the document at first and then, two weeks later, changed his mind. He also knew that Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, would not grant him and his wife a peaceful release and a transfer to Trinity, Clark, as long as the admonition was ongoing and had not been successfully concluded. When Mr. Ulrich gave him a copy of the document in question, Pastor Hallstein, by his own admission, involved himself in the case, challenging the Milwaukee congregation's position on Luke 14:28-32 and its right to admonish a member who refused to accept it. He wrote to Christ Lutheran Church on November 7, 1960, asking why the Ulrichs could not be transferred, and just six days later received the prompt reply that the member was still under discipline. That answer should have been enough; but Pastor Hallstein continued to press the matter.

Since Pastor Mehlberg was at the same time pastor of Christ Lutheran Church and president of the Conference that year and recognized his responsibility in the latter capacity to make every reasonable and proper effort to resolve an ongoing dispute between two congregations, he made three attempts to do so by offering to meet personally with Pastor Hallstein in hopes of arriving at a settlement. All three attempted meetings, however, were refused by Pastor Hallstein. And, when the Milwaukee congregation and its pastor rejected Pastor Hallstein's continued interference and his counsel of their erring member, Pastor Hallstein responded by recommending to his voters' assembly that they simply receive Mr. Ulrich into membership *without a release*; and the congregation in Clark unanimously accepted this recommendation of its pastor and notified the Milwaukee congregation of its action.

Christ Lutheran Church thereupon exercised the only option left open to it by the Conference *Constitution* in Article VI, 3, namely, that of laying the interference of Pastor Hallstein before the Board of Directors for its evaluation and action. However, when Pastor Hallstein, who was a member of the Board as chairman of the Committee on Theological Education, refused to attend the meeting, stating no valid reason, the Board was compelled to hear the Milwaukee congregation's complaint on the basis of the correspondence *without* Pastor Hallstein's immediate answer to the charges and specifications. In its April 4-5, 1961 meeting, the Board unanimously held that Pastor Hallstein and his congregation had improperly and unscripturally interfered in the internal business of Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, by accepting into

membership one who was still a member of the latter congregation and under ongoing discipline. The Board insisted that Pastor Hallstein and his congregation first of all thoroughly and completely remove the offense which they had created by arbitrarily receiving the Ulrichs into membership, and then cooperate with the Conference President and the Board of Directors in the proper settlement of this matter, following the orderly procedure laid down in the *Constitution*. The Board also noted that they did not have the right to bring their case to the Conference in convention assembled unless and until they had exhausted all preliminary procedures and remedies. Should they fail to cooperate in this manner, said the Board, they would seriously jeopardize their relationship with our Conference. (Board Resolution unanimously adopted on Tuesday, April 4, 1961).

The next matter to be addressed by the Board was Pastor Hallstein's persistent exception to the Scriptural doctrine and practice of President Mehlberg and of his congregation; for Hallstein had now made his exception a charge of **false doctrine** which he intended to bring to the convention floor, holding that such a charge was not merely a dispute between two pastors but a matter of sufficient gravity to by-pass the President and the Board. Christ Lutheran Church, therefore, appealed to the Board for its examination of Pastor Hallstein's charge in view of the Conference's position:

WHEREAS our congregation has accepted a document called "An Exegetical Treatment and Defense of Our Use of the Luke Passage 14:28-32"; and

WHEREAS our congregation holds that this document not only shows that the passage in question is a Scriptural example of the principle involved in matters of stewardship and Christian finance, but is also a correct expression of the position of our Conference on this text, which it showed in the 1959 Convention by its acceptance without reservation of the Milwaukee Plan in which this passage was used as a guide for the application of the aforementioned principle; and

WHEREAS a differing position is presently causing serious confusion in our Conference; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that we request the Board of Directors to discuss the Luke passage and declare that it holds to the position that our Conference has thus far maintained.

(Affixed to the resolution was a copy of the exegetical treatment referred to, as well as "A Summary of Our Position in the Matter of the Use of a Parable," cited in full above.)

In reply to the congregation's resolution, the Board unanimously adopted the following resolution:

We still hold to the position that our Conference has thus far maintained, namely, that this passage (Luke 14:28-32) not only teaches as the main lesson the cost of discipleship, but also serves as a Scriptural example of the principle involved in matters of stewardship and Christian finance. As such it is, of course, binding upon the Christian conscience. Romans 15:4. 2 Tim. 3:16.

The Board also examined a letter dated March 8, 1961, from the Clark congregation in which it stated that it would no longer remit any contributions to the Seminary Fund (which provided Pastor Mehlberg's salary as professor) until the treatise in question had been retracted. It also examined the President's reply to that letter dated March 24, and unanimously concurred in that reply. Moreover, it also unanimously asked Pastor Hallstein to retract his unfounded charges against Pastor Mehlberg.

The next day, President Mehlberg informed the Board that a letter had just been received by Christ Church, Milwaukee, from Trinity, Clark, indicating no change regarding its acceptance of the latter's member still under discipline.

Then, completely by-passing both the President and the Board of Directors (See *By-Law 5* concerning Memorials to a convention), in a circular letter dated May 9, 1961, Pastor Hallstein addressed directly "the pastors and lay delegates who will be attending the 1961 Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference to be held, God willing, at Wilmot, S. D. June 22-26." In that letter he immediately set forth publicly his entire dispute with Pastor Mehlberg and with Christ, Milwaukee, justified his interference in that congregation, reiterated his charge of false doctrine against them, and proposed the following "request," namely, that

An adequate portion of the 1961 Convention, in open session, be allotted for study of the essay entitled "An Exegetical Treatment and Defense of Our Use of the Luke Passage 14:28-32", to the end that the errors therein presented may be retracted and the author restored to the orthodoxy which God requires of all His professing followers.

He also added the following note: "This request is being sent to all pastors and delegates to the coming convention only because the President of our body has arbitrarily protested the placing of this matter on the part of the undersigned into anyone else's hands save his own." This was, of course patently untrue since both the Pastoral Conference and the Board of Directors were involved as well, as what now follows plainly indicates.

On June 22-23, 1961, the Pastoral Conference met in Wilmot, South Dakota, at which time Pastor Hallstein asked the question: "Does the President alone have the right to make the decision regarding the placing of a memorial sent to him by one of our congregations for presentation to the convention?" The Pastoral Conference agreed to take up that question. First, the duties of the President were read as found in the *Constitution*, Article VIII; and President Mehlberg declared that his responsibility of leading the Conference in guarding its confessional position and in stemming public offense might make it necessary for him to withhold a memorial from the floor **IF** he were convinced that public offense might be given through a memorial; but, in any case, he would seek final advice from the Vice President and the Board of Directors. Then, with regard to Article VI of the *Constitution* on the necessity for orderly procedure, Pastor Hallstein stated that in this connection and in matters of doctrine, "all Constitutional order is to be by-passed and trampled underfoot." (*Minutes*, p. 1). Pastor H. D. Mensing cautioned that this is precisely what Dr. Kretzmann had done over five years earlier in violation of I Corinthians 14:40. Thereupon Pastor Hallstein informed the Pastoral Conference that he would not take part in the Board Meeting, nor in the opening service of the Convention on Saturday morning, citing Romans 16:17 against President Mehlberg and stating that he was no longer in fellowship with our President (*Minutes*, p. 2). The next morning he retracted his use of Romans 16:17 and substituted for it II Thessalonians 3:14-15, claiming that his remarks at *this* Pastoral Conference already constituted *one* admonition. Finally during an evening session on the second day of the conference, having consumed the entire agenda on this one matter, the Pastoral Conference resolved that the [advisory] answer to Pastor Hallstein's original question was "No, because the President is expected to submit his action, as well as all his official work, to the Conference in convention assembled for review." Pastor Hallstein refused to vote on this motion, and the Pastoral Conference adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

The first session of the Board of Directors Meeting convened the same day just fifteen minutes after the Pastoral Conference had adjourned. Already at the beginning of the meeting, Pastor Hallstein indicated that he would not participate in the meeting, except to the extent of reviewing the minutes of the recent April meeting. When asked for a reason according to Scripture, he answered that his question about the placing of a memorial before the convention had not been answered to his satisfaction, and that he was not in fellowship with the President because of the doctrinal matter with which the memorial from Trinity, Clark, dealt. In this meeting, the Board ascertained that Pastor Mehlberg had attempted several meetings with Hallstein regarding the issues between them, but Pastor Hallstein had refused to meet. Instead, he was determined to bring his grievance directly to the convention, even though that action would violate the constitutional procedure of the Conference. Regarding the minutes of the April Board meeting, Pastor Hallstein objected to certain resolutions and statements in the record; but he refused to discuss them with the Board. Instead he intended to present them to the Conference in convention assembled. Pastor Shufelt of Muscatine, Iowa, then joined Pastor Hallstein in his exception to the position of the Conference on Luke 14:28-32; but his objection had no basis in Scripture itself but only in his opinion on the use of illustrations. The meeting ended with no resolution of this on-going debate.

At the **Eleventh Annual Convention**, June 24-26, 1961, Pastor Hallstein continued his arbitrary efforts to have his grievance brought before the delegates *without* having first exhausted the procedures of good order specified in the *Constitution*. When he was repeatedly given opportunities to do so, he asked for time to consider, came back with counter-proposals, as if the matter were open to negotiation and arbitration, and then, when his maneuver was rejected, entrenched himself again in his original position. Although he later would complain over and over again that he had been dealt with unfairly and that he was not given opportunity to show his compliance with good order, the record of the convention clearly shows, particularly in the light of the correspondence and of the meetings that had gone before, that the Conference had extended to him great patience despite his intransigence, longsuffering in spite of his arrogance, and consideration even in the face of his persistently uncooperative spirit.

In witness thereof, we cite for the sake of simplicity the fact that Pastor Hallstein's obstructionistic attitude was manifested from the beginning of the first session on Saturday, June 24, when he objected to a simple adjustment to the agenda; and the matter of his insistence to ride roughshod over the rules of good order mutually established by the Conference for the settlements of disputes took up over two full days of the three-day convention. Far from being precipitous, the Conference took its time carefully to consider the appropriate action. There were several proposals, several revisions of the proposals, and finally this recommended action of the President moved and seconded at about ten o'clock on the evening of June 25th:

Since Pastor E. C. Hallstein, in seeking the settlement of his grievance, persistently refused to follow the Christian procedures required in our Constitution, Article VI, 1-3; since he has thus far refused to cooperate with the President and Board in seeking the settlement of the problems at issue; and since he is still upholding these violations of the bonds which form the very basis of our fellowship as set forth in our Constitution, Article IV, therefore I solemnly recommend to this Convention that after it has considered the matter sufficiently, it expel Pastor E. C. Hallstein from the Conference, and that such expulsion remain in effect until the following three conditions, under God, have been fulfilled: 1) that he in a brotherly spirit cooperate with our Conference in the Christian procedures outlined in our Constitution, submitting himself to the Scriptural principles and objectives on which our Constitution is based; 2) that he give evidence of this Christian spirit by indicating his willingness to bring this controversy to a God-pleasing conclusion by cooperating

with the Conference in carrying out the resolution adopted at this convention [that the two congregations meet together to resolve their differences]; and 3) that he, under God's blessings, again has reached full unity of faith with our Conference – which may God graciously grant! And that we recognize the Trinity, Clark, itself has broken fellowship with our Conference for the same reasons and that the aforementioned action be authorized to be carried out by the President of the Conference unless he has been officially notified by the congregation within 90 days from the close of this convention that Trinity, Clark, does not share the unscriptural and disorderly position of its pastor.

In order to give Pastor Hallstein still another opportunity to show, if possible, that he had follow the Christian, orderly procedure of our Constitution, action on the motion was tabled to the next day. On Monday morning, June 26, 1961, Pastor Paul Bloedel moved the question on the motion after an impassioned statement of “love and concern for Pastor Hallstein” and of the fact that, “in all brotherliness the Conference had by-passed [its] entire agenda entirely and had given two full days for the consideration of just this matter . . . when he himself had publicly declared during the course of two full days that he does NOT accept the Scriptural principle upon which such brotherly procedure is based .”

The rising vote showed fourteen delegates in favor and three opposed. The three votes in opposition came from the Muscatine, Iowa, delegates, who thereby indicated that they too had broken fellowship with the Conference. It was now incumbent on the congregation in Sigourney/Muscatine to inform the president and the Board of Directors, without delay, whether or not it concur in the negative vote of its delegates! And a motion to that effect was unanimously carried.

A Popular History of the Concordia Lutheran Conference [1980], properly documented, states:

On June 25, 1961, The Concordia Lutheran Conference, in its convention, had to expel the Rev. E. C. Hallstein from membership in the Conference and suspend fellowship with his congregation, Trinity of Clark, South Dakota. This action was necessary because he and his congregation persistently and without valid reason refused to be governed, in a grievance, by the Scriptural objectives and Christian procedures outlined in the Conference Constitution. On June 26, the same convention recognized that Pastor J. E. Shufelt and his congregation, Trinity of Sigourney-Muscatine, Iowa, had also broken fellowship with the Conference by their vote against the expulsion of Pastor Hallstein and the fellowship suspension of his congregation.

After both congregations, with their pastors, had however been given several months to reconsider their position but gave a negative response, it was officially recognized that both of these congregations and their pastors were no longer in fellowship or in membership with the Conference. (For further details, see: *Proceedings*, 1961, “Presidential Report”, p. 13; “Minutes”, pp. 22-26; Board Minutes, April 4-5, 1961, pp. 1-5; Board Minutes, June 23--24, 1961, pp. 1-2; *Concordia Lutheran*, July, 1961, “Convention Digest”, p. 103; *Concordia Lutheran*, October, 1961, “Official Notice”, p. 151; *Proceedings*, 1962, “Presidential Report”, p. 10.)

Neither Pastor Hallstein nor Pastor Shufelt ever expressed repentance for their disorderliness, nor for the sinful separatism by which they broke fellowship with Pastor Mehlberg and eventually with all the pastors of our Conference; nor did they, needless to say, rejoin our Conference at a later time. Pastor Hallstein, however, engaged for quite a few years in a kind of “obsessive stalking” of our pastors in a constant stream of polemical attacks upon words and expressions in our *Concordia Lutheran*; and, in keeping with his tenacious manner, was never satisfied with answers received if they did not measure up to his pre-conceived notion of what should have been said or written. Particularly since he did not have Scripture as the basis of his

objections and criticisms, his consistent fixation with bringing the pastors of our Conference legalistically to account to *his* will for virtually everything, and his constant state of dissatisfaction evident in his speech, we note the warning of the holy writer to the Hebrews (12:14-15), written also for *our* learning:

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

From this preserve us, heavenly Father, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!