

---

# Lutheran Synod Quarterly

---



ISBN 0360-9685

## CONTENTS

Seminary Dedication Sermon.....	4
<i>George Orvick</i>	
Seminary President Installation Sermon.....	11
<i>Wilhelm W. Petersen</i>	
Our Seminary: The First Fifty Years.....	19
1997 - An Anniversary Year.....	22
<i>Gaylin Schmeling</i>	
The Life-giving Word: God's Gift to You.....	25
<i>Gaylin Schmeling</i>	
The Dissolution of the Synodical Conference Revisited: An ELS Perspective, 1957-1962.....	49
<i>Mark Marozick</i>	

# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

Theological Journal of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Edited by the faculty of  
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

Editor.....Pres. Gaylin Schmeling  
Managing Editor.....Pres. Gaylin Schmeling  
Book Review Editor.....Prof. Adolph Harstad  
Layout.....Paul Fries  
Printer.....Quick Print  
*Mankato, MN*

Subscription Price: \$8.00 U.S. per year

*Send all subscriptions and other correspondence  
to the following address:*

BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
ATTN: LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY  
6 BROWNS CT.  
MANKATO, MN 56001

## Foreword

*The Lutheran Synod Quarterly* is issued by Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary as a testimony of its theological convictions, as a witness to the saving truths of the inerrant Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and in the interest of the theological growth of the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This was the purpose of the *Quarterly* while President Wilhelm Petersen was its editor and this continues to be its purpose. As President Petersen enters his retirement, we thank him for his faithful work and for a job well done during his seventeen years of editorship. We wish him God's blessing as he continues to write and teach for the edification of Christ's body the church.

The greatest concern of the *Quarterly* staff is to remain faithful to the teachings of our Lord and Savior. The main purpose of each issue is to help our readers continue in the teaching of Christ. In carrying out this purpose the *Quarterly* staff welcomes contributions from the pastors of our synod so that we make use of all the gifts that the Lord bestows upon His church.

Sunday, June 15, 1997, was a historic day for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. On that day our new seminary building was dedicated to the honor and glory of our Triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Rev. Raymond Branstad performed the rite of dedication and President George Orvick preached the dedication sermon based on Luke 15: 1-10 using the theme: The Good Shepherd: a Pattern for Parish Pastors. This sermon and a short history of the seminary are found in the issue of the *Quarterly*.

Our readers will appreciate President Emeritus Petersen's sermon at the installation of the new seminary president, Rev. Gaylin Schmeling, on June 15, 1997. In

his sermon he points out that pastors to be trained at the seminary need to be mission minded and doctrine minded.

An essay by the editor entitled, *The Life-giving Word: God's Gift to You*, reviews the vital doctrine of Holy Scripture. The battle for the Bible has been fought not merely because the Scripture is an errorless record of past history. Rather, we make our stand on the inerrant Word because it is the power of God unto salvation. The Word is an effective means of grace.

The essay by Rev. Mark Marozick on the dissolution of the Synodical Conference will be of interest to the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This essay continues the history of the synod by Rev. Theodore Gullixson in the last issue with special reference to the Synodical Conference. Rev. Marozick aptly describes how our forefathers struggled to preserve the cherished fellowship of the Synodical Conference established 125 years ago.

# Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Seminary Dedication Sermon.....	4
<i>George Orvick</i>	
Seminary President Installation Sermon.....	11
<i>Wilhelm W. Petersen</i>	
Our Seminary: The First Fifty Years.....	19
1997 - An Anniversary Year.....	22
<i>Gaylin Schmeling</i>	
The Life-Giving Word: God's Gift to You.....	25
<i>Gaylin Schmeling</i>	
The Dissolution of the Synodical Conference.....	49
Revisited: An ELS Perspective, 1957-1962	
<i>Mark Marozick</i>	

# Seminary Dedication Sermon

## June 15, 1997

by *George M. Orvick*

*Text: Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. (Luke 15, 1-7 KJV)*

A seminary probably has a greater impact upon the theology and the future of a church body than any other factor, because this is where the future pastors for generations to come learn the teachings of Scripture and what the church body stands for. We therefore give thanks to God that our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary has through the fifty-one years of its existence been blessed with professors that are totally committed to the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures. The historical critical method of biblical interpretation which destroys the plain meaning of the Bible has not gained entrance into the doors of our school.

God has not only blessed our school with faithful teachers, but He has also made it possible for us to have a new

building. Now our students can study in an environment that is very conducive to learning. It provides far more ample facilities than we have ever had before. It has all the latest technological devices available to enhance the availability of resources. It is in a beautiful location which also makes studying there a real pleasure.

Also included in this new building are the headquarters of our synod. For many years the synod office was in whatever study the pastor had who was serving as president. But when that office became full-time more room was needed. Now we have offices, a board room, secretaries' space, and space for archives.

We are therefore most thankful to our Lord for granting such a wonderful blessing to our synod. We thank these generous benefactors and the people of our synod who contributed to The Messengers of Peace offering that made all this possible.

So today we are gathered here to dedicate this building to the glory of God and to the welfare of His church. May the pure teachings of God's Word ever sound forth in the classrooms of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

One of the chief purposes of our synod and our seminary is to train and provide pastors for our congregations. But then the question arises: What kind of pastors do we want? This question can be answered in many ways. On the basis of our text let me set forth this theme:

### **CHRIST, THE GOOD SHEPHERD: A PATTERN FOR THE PARISH PASTOR**

Our new seminary building has a beautiful little chapel. Here the students have devotions, here they practice their sermons in a real worship setting. In this chapel there is a most gorgeous window depicting the Good Shepherd.

Around the perimeter of the window you will see the three great principles of the Lutheran church: *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*. You will also see the symbols of the means of grace and the office of the keys. The Board of Regents has fittingly named this chapel the GOOD SHEPHERD CHAPEL. It is our hope and prayer that whenever our young men gaze up at this window they will say "That is the kind of pastor I want to be. I want to be a shepherd like the Good Shepherd."

In our text the Lord Jesus is teaching the scribes and pharisees a lesson. And it is a lesson that we can apply to ourselves, to our synod, and to our future pastors.

**THE FIRST LESSON:  
SPEAK THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL**

The scribes and the pharisees were murmuring and complaining because all manner of publicans and sinners, social and religious outcasts, came to hear Jesus. What is more, they even sat down to eat with him. Now these people were sinners. The publicans or tax collectors had a reputation for being dishonest. The others were also guilty of various transgressions. Yet something had happened in their lives. They had heard a voice which had both made them see their sins and at the same time given them hope. It was the voice of Jesus. Never had they heard such a gracious invitation. Yes, Jesus laid bare their sins. He exposed the corruption of their lives. But then He told them wonderful things that they had never before understood. In Him there was forgiveness of sins. In him there was everlasting life. He made them feel welcome. No one was turned away. "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," He said. (John 6:37) He told them stories like that of the Prodigal Son which demonstrated how the Father in heaven felt about them. He issued in-



vitations like "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) It is no wonder, then, that these people flocked to hear him and sat down to eat with him.

First of all let us apply this lesson to ourselves. We are like those publicans and sinners. There is no one here today who doesn't fall into that category. No amount of good qualities, no years of service, no high position, no exemplary family can remove the fact that we are still poor, miserable sinners.

But there is real comfort for us here in the charge that was made against Jesus: "This man receiveth sinners." That which was intended to be the most harsh condemnation turned out to be the greatest comfort. The blessed Savior receives us also. He does not cast us away. He does not reject us. He proclaims to us the forgiveness of all of our sins. He can do this. He earned this for us. His blood on Calvary atoned for us. His life and death and resurrection opened the door for us into His kingdom. He has reconciled the whole world to the Father by paying the ransom for our sins.

Death's terrors need no longer appall us. There is victory over the grave. There is a place at the table in paradise. You and yours and I and mine may come and sit at the table in the church triumphant with our blessed Savior. All because of this blessed word: "Jesus Sinners Doth Receive."

Now this is the kind of synod we want to be. One which speaks this word of the Gospel in all of its overwhelming beauty. And this is the kind of pastor we want to train in our new seminary building. We want pastors whose hearts are so appreciative of the love of Jesus that their Gospel preaching makes the most downcast sinner a welcome guest at the banquet table of our Lord.

**IN THE SECOND PLACE WE WANT PASTORS WHO NOT ONLY SPEAK THE WORD, BUT ALSO SEEK THE LOST.**

Jesus tells a simple yet remarkable parable to get His point across to those self-righteous pharisees. It's not a complicated parable, but who can forget it? Here he stops the mouth of His critics with this story: *What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it?* (Luke 15:4)

Again, we first of all apply the parable to ourselves. We were all in that condition of being lost sheep. All we like sheep had gone astray, we had turned every one to his own way. (Isaiah 53:6) But the Lord Jesus sought and found us. He does not want a single one of us to perish. No one was insignificant to him. The woman at Jacob's well was lost but He won her back. Peter had fallen, but Jesus brought him back into the fold. Thomas had lost his faith in the battle with human reason. Yet Jesus pulled him back from the brink of eternal destruction. Even on the cross He brought that dying thief into the kingdom.

Praise to our Lord Jesus that He also rescued us. He gave us parents who brought us to holy Baptism. Praise him for pastors who trained us in the Word in our youth. Praise him for Bethany College where many have learned that ONE THING IS NEEDFUL. Praise him for our pastors in our congregations who Sunday after Sunday renew our faith through Word and sacrament.

Now this is the kind of synod we want: a synod that is concerned about the lost; a synod that does not get so caught up on peripheral things that it forgets to seek the lost; a synod that has a burning zeal to snatch the lost sheep from the jaws of the wolf and bring it safely into the flock.

This is also the kind of pastor we want. Yes, you need

your Greek and Hebrew, your dogmatics and homiletics, otherwise you wouldn't know how to win the lost. But don't ever place your supposed intellectual superiority above your zeal for the lost. Don't become so computerized that you can't drive down that dusty road to minister to a suffering soul. Walk down the streets, and into the stores, and into the tenements and mansions, and see. Is there a lost sheep in here that I can bring to Jesus?

A pastor was once asked, "Well, how are you getting along in your new parish?" And he replied, "Well, I'm weeding them out!" "What! Weeding them out?" We ought to be compelling them to come in. Yes, we want a synod and pastors and professors and members who are seeking the lost.

Finally we have one more point to make today as we dedicate our new seminary and synod building. That is: SPREAD THE JOY. Yes, speak the message, seek the lost and spread the joy.

### **WHAT DOES THE SHEPHERD DO WHEN HE HAS FOUND THE LOST SHEEP?**

*And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors saying unto them, REJOICE WITH ME for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. (Luke 15:5-7) And again there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:10)*

What a lesson for us. Spread the joy. Make the angels happy. Who else has such a wonderful calling that he can cause joy in heaven?

Should we as a synod, as pastors, as a seminary, as a

people be downcast? Should we go about as though we had the most unpleasant work in the world? Indeed not. We have the most joyful task in the world. We can do things that no one else can do. We can create joy amongst the angels in heaven.

Let this be the character of our synod. Let this be the spirit of our seminary. Let this message fill the hearts and sermons and attitude of our pastors: "Jesus sinners doth receive." Amen.

# **Seminary President Installation Sermon June 15, 1997**

*by Wilhelm W. Petersen*

*Text: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matt. 28:18-20 NKJV)*

In Christ Jesus, fellow-redeemed and especially you, President-elect Gaylin Schmeling,

This has been another historic day in the life of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We recall that on this Synod Sunday a year ago, this beautiful chapel was dedicated to the glory of the Triune God. Already today we dedicated the new synod/seminary building. Who in their wildest imagination would have thought -say even five years ago- that all of this would have happened on this campus! All we can say is: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." (Ps. 118:23) "Yes, God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20)

Now this evening we are gathered in beautiful Trinity Chapel for the installation of the third full-time president of our seminary. Pastor Schmeling, the Lord has called you to this position and we welcome you and wish you

the Lord's richest blessings as you assume the presidential duties. I would also like to express a word of appreciation to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Okauchee, Wisconsin, for their unselfish attitude in giving you a peaceful release so that you could accept this call. I know that the congregation would like to have had you remain as their pastor, but they also realized that you have been blessed with gifts which could be put to good use in the seminary.

The text which I have chosen for this service is a very familiar one - and I hasten to add - an appropriate one. It is known as the Great Commission, spoken by our Lord shortly before his ascension into heaven, and is in effect until his return on the last day. The whole mission of the church rests on this command, and the purpose of our seminary is to train pastors to carry out that mission. From this commission we learn what kind of pastor the Lord wants us to train, namely,

### ***A MISSION-MINDED AND DOCTRINE-MINDED PASTOR***

First of all, a mission-minded pastor. The text says, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.* It is because of this command that we are gathered here this evening. What if the disciples to whom Jesus originally gave this command had turned a deaf ear to this commission and gone back to "business as usual!" It is very likely that Christianity would have been nipped in the bud, but because they responded positively, the Gospel spread, and by the grace of God it has been handed down to us and we are the recipients of its blessings. Now we are to carry on this important work until the Lord returns.

The seminary plays an important role in carrying out this work. Pastors need to be trained and sent out. The

apostle Paul points up the importance of training pastors when he writes, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved," and then asks four penetrating questions: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:13-15a)

To that end, our gracious God has instituted the office of the ministry, and it is through this office that the Gospel continues to be preached to the salvation of blood-bought souls. Our Lutheran confessions state that "the Church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it." (Ap. XIII 12) Martin Luther made this observation: "The work is finished and completed, Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his suffering, death, and resurrection. But if the work remained hidden and no one knew it, it would have been all in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not be buried but put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure of salvation." (LC II,38) It is through the preaching of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit works and sustains saving faith. Yes, the Gospel is a powerful means of grace which brings to us the blessings of Christ's redemptive work, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Baptism - which is a part of the command - is also a blessed means of grace through which these same blessings are made our own and through which we are made disciples of Christ.

This same Luther reminds us that "God lets us live here in order that we may lead other people to believe, doing for them what he has done for us." Having been

rescued ourselves from the jaws of death and damnation, certainly we ought to be filled with a love for souls and a desire to do everything we can to reach as many people with the Gospel as we possibly can. We have no greater example than our blessed Savior himself, who not only loved us with an everlasting love and willingly laid down his life for the sheep, but who also during his earthly ministry went out and sought the lost. He had no greater desire than to save souls. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) Follow him as he deals with Zaccheus, the woman at the well, the dying thief. Listen to him as he tells the stirring parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son. Hear his plaintive cry as he weeps over Jerusalem reminding them "how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt. 23:37)

The apostle Paul is another example of one who was truly mission-minded. He could not forget the boundless grace of God which transformed him from a despiser and blasphemer to the greatest proclaimer and defender of the Gospel that the Christian Church has known. Motivated by a burning zeal for the cause of Christ's kingdom and an unfeigned love for fellow-redeemed sinners he "spent and was spent" and was made all things to all men that he might save some. He considered himself a debtor to all men, saying, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and unwise." (Rom. 1:14) Regarding his own people he said, My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." (Rom. 10:1) Again "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. 9:3) Just think of it, willing to be eternally condemned if only his people might be saved!

Church history also records that God's people have



been a mission-minded people. Going back to our own synodical roots in the old Norwegian Synod, we note that President Herman Amberg Preus in his last address to the Synod in 1893, which was the 40th anniversary of the Synod, based his remarks on this passage from Proverbs, "A true witness delivereth souls." (Proverbs 14:25) He said: "When our orthodox Lutheran congregations in this country joined together 40 years ago in a Synod, the chief purpose of this church organization was to 'deliver souls' to the glory of God. By all its teaching and practice, by its resolutions, measures and institutions, it was to have the salvation of souls in mind and thus be 'a true witness.'" Oh, that this mission spirit would rub off on all the students who graduate from our seminary!

It is in that spirit, then, that we want to train our pastors. We want to send forth pastors who will do all they can to save every soul entrusted to their care and thus be faithful shepherds who pasture and feed the lambs. And as they tend the flocks entrusted to their care, may they remember those "other sheep" which are as yet not of the fold. Go, look for them, bring them in. "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." (Luke 14:23). Have a shepherd's heart for them and instill in the congregation a spirit of mission-mindedness. Be imbued with the spirit of a Dr. Walther who said to the seminarians of his day: "Do not the blessed angels descend with great joy whenever the Father in heaven sends them to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation? Why then should we be unwilling to hurry after them with great joy to any place where we can lead other men, our fellow-sinners, to salvation?"

The Great Commission of our Lord also bids us to be doctrine-minded pastors. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded.* This is a part of the command that is often overlooked, but if we are truly

concerned about winning souls we will also be vitally concerned about doctrine. "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (I Tim. 4:16) Luther reminds us that "doctrine belongs to God, not to us; we are called only as its ministers; therefore we cannot give up one jot of it." It is through the faithful preaching and teaching of doctrine that the faith of God's people is built up and strengthened. A doctrine-minded pastor will also be discerning so that he can distinguish between true and false doctrine. He will heed the warnings of Scripture: "Beware of false prophets." (Matt. 7:15) "Test the spirits, whether they are of God." (I John 4:1) "Mark and avoid those who teach contrary to what we have learned." (Rom. 16:17)

In our zeal to preserve purity of doctrine we need to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and to do this with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2-3) Our Confessions also remind us that "false doctrine cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended" (SD Rule and Norm, p. 503, Tappert) and also "we shall at all times make a sharp distinction between needless and unprofitable contentions (which since they destroy rather than edify, should never be allowed to disturb the church) and necessary controversy (dissension concerning articles of the Creed or the chief parts of Christian doctrine, when the contrary error must be refuted in order to preserve the truth)." (ibid, p. 507)

Mission-mindedness and doctrine-mindedness go hand in hand. The Great Commission demands that we be faithful *with* the Word and be faithful *to* the Word. Both are important and we cannot pit the one against the other. On the one hand, there is the danger of being so concerned

about winning souls that we overlook or underestimate the importance of doctrine. Not only does that dishonor Christ, but it also endangers the loss of the Gospel. On the other hand, we can be so concerned about doctrine that we hide our light under a bushel. Satan could care less if we contend for purity of doctrine, but then fail to spread it. It has been said: "The danger does seem to lie within Lutheran orthodoxy to become so concerned about 'purity of doctrine' that one loses sight of the responsibility to share it. One is almost afraid that, in sharing it, it will somehow become contaminated." The hymnist had it straight:

*God's Word is our great heritage,  
And shall be ours forever;  
To spread its light from age to age  
Shall be our chief endeavor;  
Through life it guides our way,  
In death it is our stay;  
Lord grant, while worlds endure,  
We keep its teachings pure,  
Throughout all generations.*

ELH 583

A mission-minded and doctrine-minded pastor! That is the kind of pastor we want to train at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, and to do so in the spirit of the words engraved on a plaque presented to you, Pastor Schmeling, by Holy Trinity Congregation on the day of your farewell. This plaque reads: *IN APPRECIATION TO PASTOR GAYLIN SCHMELING FOR ALL HIS GENTLE, UNDERSTANDING SHEPHERDING, SCRIPTURALLY SOUND TEACHING, AND LOVING FRIENDSHIP.*

That kind of pastoral training will truly glorify God

and be a blessing to many blood-bought souls. Go about your work, then, with dedication and zeal, realizing that the time is short and the task is great but that God's Word is powerful and will accomplish whatever he pleases. "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5b-6)

## **Our Seminary: The First Fifty Years**

From its reorganization in 1918 the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Synod) was without its own theological seminary for twenty-eight years. It depended on its sister synods for the seminary training of its pastors. During these early years the hope of establishing its own seminary had been kept alive, but not until 1931 did the convention take the significant action of authorizing its president to appoint a committee of three to prepare a plan.

Nevertheless, for another eleven years no concrete plan was in sight, until the 1942 convention commissioned the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College to take the necessary steps to make it possible for the synod's ministerial candidates to have "their last year of training in our own school." The next year's synodical convention stepped up the pace by authorizing the board of Regents "to establish our own theological seminary as soon as possible."

But this was wartime -World War II- and the Board of Regents' efforts to gain exemption from the draft for its ministerial candidates ran afoul of Selective Service guidelines concerning new seminaries. Eventually, however, a change in ruling by the Selective Service Administration removed the last remaining barrier.

In the summer of 1946 the synodical delegates, assembled in convention, resolved in the name of the Triune God to adopt fourteen resolutions relating to a new seminary, the first of which was: "To establish a full theological seminary course at Bethany Lutheran College, this course to begin in the fall of 1946." On September 24,

1946, a dedicatory service officially opened Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The first dean of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was the Reverend Norman A. Madson of Princeton, Minnesota. In 1957 Professor Milton Otto joined the staff and was named dean of the seminary in 1968. He had been the pastor of the Saude-Jerico parish in northeastern Iowa and had served as president of the synod.

The 1974 convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod resolved that the seminary presidency be separated from the college presidency. The Reverend Theodore A. Aaberg was called to become the first full-time president of the seminary in 1976. He had distinguished himself as a parish pastor and a theologian in the synod. At this time the Regents created the office of dean of students, to which position Professor Juul Madson, who had been on the staff since 1970, was appointed. President Aaberg tendered his resignation because of ill health in August of 1979 and passed away in January of 1980. Professor Glenn Reichwald served as acting president for the 1979-1980 school year. The Reverend Wilhelm W. Petersen accepted the call of the Board of Regents to be the new president of the seminary, beginning his work on August 1, 1980. He served the seminary as president until 1997, when the Reverend Gaylin Schmeling of Okauchee, Wisconsin, was called to succeed him.

The seminary was housed on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College for over thirty years. This was a blessing to the infant institution, yet the need for its own facilities became more and more evident. Therefore a seminary building was erected on the property at 447 North Division Street and was dedicated on June 18, 1978. This building served the needs of the seminary until 1996, at which time the present seminary building was constructed. The present beautiful building overlooking the Minne-

sota Valley will be a great benefit to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Lord of the church continues to bless this *school of the prophets*.

## 1997 - An Anniversary Year

by *Gaylin Schmeling*

The year 1997 marks a number of significant anniversaries for the church. It is the 1600th anniversary of the deaths of both St. Martin of Tours and St. Ambrose of Milan. It is also the 1400th anniversary of the death of the great Irish visionary St. Columbo, the great missionary to Scotland, and 1400 years since St. Augustine of Canterbury arrived in Britain.

The history of Christianity in Britain did not start with the arrival of Augustine, but with Alban and the great heroes of the Celtic Church - Ninian, Patrick, David, and Columbo. Yet following the Anglo-Saxon invasions in the fifth century, Christianity had almost disappeared in parts of Britain. In Rome, Gregory, an abbot at a local monastery, noticed some fair-skinned slaves in the market one day. He is supposed to have replied "*non Angli, sed angeli*" (not Angles but angels). When he became Bishop of Rome years later he chose Augustine to go and teach these fair-skinned people about Christ.

For Lutherans this is also an anniversary year. This is the 500th birthday of the reformer, Philip Schwartzerd, better known as Philip Melanchthon. He was greatly influenced by Luther and was a powerful influence on Luther. (See L. Green, *How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel*) He worked side by side with Luther in the Reformation and was by far his greatest co-worker. Thus he remains one of the great enigmas of the Reformation. On the one hand he is praised as the preceptor of Germany. Luther hailed him as one of the greatest theologians that ever lived, and of the *Loci* Luther said they should be esteemed next to the Bible. On the other hand,



his fluctuation in doctrine after Luther's death caused him to be denounced as a rationalist, a synergist, and a traitor to the Lutheran Reformation. Melanchthon died a lonely and tired man on April 19, 1560. He was laid to rest by the side of Luther in the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

The Bethany Reformation Lectures this year will deal with Melanchthon and his relation to the Lutheran Reformation. The Reformation Lecturer will be Dr. Oliver Olson who was a professor at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The lectures will be held October 30 and 31.

As confessional Lutherans we have another anniversary to commemorate. This is the 125th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. In July of 1872 the constituting convention of the Synodical Conference was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Norwegian Synod was represented by the following: Pres. H.A. Preus, Rev. U.V. Koren, Rev. P.A. Rasmussen, Rev. A. Mikkelsen, and Rev. F.A. Schmidt. In the opening sermon Dr. C.F.W. Walther exclaimed, "*O gesegneter, seliger Tag!*" (O blessed and blissful day!) The common unity of faith based on the inerrant Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions filled everyone present with joy and thanksgiving. The Synodical Conference was a mighty blessing for confessional Lutherans everywhere.

This federation came to an end in 1967 because of doctrinal conflict in the conference. Yet the same joy which our forefathers expressed at the founding of the Synodical Conference we have experienced in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. The ELS, the true descendant of the old Norwegian Synod, met with church bodies from around the world on April 27-29, 1993, at Oberwesel, Germany (near Frankfurt) for the constituting convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran

Conference (CELC), which is the spiritual heir of the Synodical Conference. While membership in the Synodical Conference was limited to church bodies in North America, the CELC is international in scope. What a wonderful privilege it is to be able to express with brothers from every continent of the globe the great heritage which was ours in the Synodical Conference.

The 1999 convention of the CELC will be held in Winter Haven, Florida, April 20-22. The theme of the convention will be: Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord: The Holy Spirit, His Person and His Work. The CELC is indeed the spiritual heir of the Synodical Conference.

# The Life-Giving Word: God's Gift to You

by Gaylin Schmeling

## I. The Word is Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant

- A. The Word Incarnate and the Written Word (1-3)\*
- B. The Written Word is Infallible and Inerrant According to the Scripture and the Fathers (4-5)
- C. The Written Word is Clear and Sufficient for Salvation (6)
- D. The Canon of the Holy Scripture
  - 1. The Books of the Canon Authenticate Themselves (7)
  - 2. *Homologoumena* and *Antilegomena* (8)
  - 3. The Old Testament Apocrypha (9)

## II. The Word is the Power of God unto Salvation

- A. The Word is an Effective Means of Grace
  - 1. The Word is the Supreme Means of Grace (10-11)
  - 2. The Spirit's Promise to Work Through Means (12-15)
- B. The Word is Creative and Life-giving (16-17)
- C. The Word Strengthens and Preserves Faith
  - 1. The Word is the Power Source of our Faith-Life (18)
  - 2. The Word is the Nourishment for our Faith-Life (19)
  - 3. The Word is our Comfort in Adversity and Hope at the Hour of Death (20)

## III. The Central Message of the Word is God Revealed in the Cross

- A. The Law/Gospel Distinction (21-22)
- B. The Theology of the Cross (23-25)
- C. The Joyful Exchange (*Der Fröhliche Wechsel*) (26)

#### **IV. The Word of the Cross Motivates Us to Live for Him**

- A. We will Read, Study, and Meditate on this Life-giving Word
  - 1. We will use the Word in Our Homes (27-28)
  - 2. We will use the Word as We Gather with Fellow Christians (29)
- B. We will Desire to Share that Word with All Those Around Us
  - 1. Personal Evangelism (30)
  - 2. Home and World Missions (31)
- C. Our Whole Life is a High Doxology (32)

\*The numbers in the parenthesis indicate paragraphs

### **I. The Word is Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant**

#### **A. The Word Incarnate and the Written Word**

1 The term “the Word of God” is used in various ways in the Scripture. John introduces his Gospel saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-3 & 14) Here the term “the Word of God” refers to that one who was God from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit and who became flesh for us and for our salvation. (See also 1 John 1:1)

2 The Bible also refers to the oral and written Word as “the Word of God.” As a directive to those who believe in Him, Jesus says, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32) Jesus is the Word par excellence. In Him all the glory and majesty of the deity was manifested in human form. The Scripture is the Word of God because here the Word made flesh is revealed. The One who was the Word of God from all eternity, and through whom God spoke and it was done in the beginning, now speaks to us in His creative Word, the Holy Scripture. Luther speaks of the Scripture as Jesus’ swaddling clothes and cradle, showing that Jesus will be found only in the Word. (LW 52:171) Toward the end of his life Luther was asked if there was a difference between the Word Incarnate and the oral and written Word.

“By all means!” he replied. “The former is the incarnate Word, who was true God from the beginning, and the latter is the Word that’s proclaimed. The former Word is in substance God; the latter Word is in its effect the power of God, but isn’t God in substance, for it has a man’s nature, whether it’s spoken by Christ or by a minister.” (LW 54:395)

3 This proclaimed and written Word is the primary means of grace, the chief thing in both the Sacraments. It is a means of grace in every form in which it reaches man, whether it be preached, printed, meditated upon, or pictured. This Word of God does not lose its saving power even though it is broadcast over radio or television, copied repeatedly, and translated. It is always the same powerful means of grace.

## B. The Written Word is Infallible and Inerrant According to the Scripture and the Fathers

4 The source of the Word, whether proclaimed, pictured, or printed, is the Holy Scripture, the pure clear fountain of Israel. The Scripture is the Word of God because here God has said exactly what He wanted to say in the way He wanted to say it. God the Holy Spirit breathed into the minds of the holy writers the very thoughts they should express and the very words they were to write. Therefore, we know that the Bible is infallible and errorless in every detail. This doctrine which we call “verbal inspiration” is definitely the teaching of the Scripture. St. Paul says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (II Timothy 3:16) Likewise St. Peter writes, “Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (II Peter 1:21; see also John 10:35, John 17:17, I Corinthians 2:13, II Peter 3:15-17)

5 The doctrine of verbal inspiration has always been taught in the Evangelical Lutheran Church despite the contention of some who imply that Luther and the Confessions did not uphold this teaching. The Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century were written under the basic assumption that the Holy Scripture is the infallible and inerrant Word of God. The *Formula* speaks of the Old and New Testaments “as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated.” (FC SD Rule and Norm 3, pp. 503-504) The Lutheran Confessions shared this view with all Christians of their time. Only after the Reformation period was the verbal

inspiration of Scripture questioned. This high view of the Scriptures was also the teaching of Luther. He says, "I am content with the pure meaning and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture." (LW 7:120) "The Word of God is perfect; it is precious and pure; it is truth itself." (LW 23:235) Similarly he quotes approvingly St. Augustine's fine statement, "I have learned to hold the Scriptures alone inerrant. Therefore I read all others, as holy and learned as they may be, with the reservation that I regard their teaching true only if they can prove their statements through Scripture or reason." (LW 41:25; see also LW 37:26)

### **C. The Written Word is Clear and Sufficient for Salvation**

**6** The Bible is clear and sufficient. In telling us about Christ it contains all that we need to know for our redemption. This truth is clearly revealed so that there is no question about the way of salvation. (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:15) Luther says, "There is on earth no clearer book than the Holy Scripture. Among other books, it is like the sun among all lights." (St. L. V, 334) Moreover it tells us everything that we need to know in order to live a God-pleasing life. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) We may not find the answer to every theological question that comes to mind, but all that is needed for salvation is plainly revealed. The holy writers make it clear that Christians ought not look for further divine revelations which would alter what God has proclaimed to us in the Word. St. Paul writes, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8)

### D. The Canon of the Holy Scripture

7 Where we speak of God's inspired and inerrant word we mean those books making up the canon. Canon is a Greek word meaning "rule" or "list." The word is used to denote the collection of inspired books of the Bible. In studying the canon of the Old and New Testaments it is important to note that the canon was not formed by human decision or authority. It is not the church which authorizes the Scripture, but on the contrary, it is the Scripture which validates the church. The books of the Bible authenticate themselves. They declare themselves to be God's Word and that claim is reinforced by their marvelous unity, inerrancy, clarity, and power. The Gospel is not believed because it is authorized by the Church but because it shows itself to be God's life-giving Word. That Word is one great unity and has only one focus which is Christ. "There is no doubt that all the Scripture points to Christ alone." (LW 35:132) The sole and entire content of the Bible is Christ and Him alone. (*Die ganze Schrift treibt Christum*)

8 A distinction is made in the canon between *homologoumena* (commonly confessed) books and *antilegomena* (those spoken against by some) books. The *homologoumena* books are those books recognized by all as verbally inspired by God. The *antilegomena* books are those books whose integrity was questioned by some. These books in the New Testament are II Peter, II and III John, Hebrews, James, Jude, and the Revelation. While some had reservations about these books, believers in general recognized the voice of the Lord in them and they remained a part of the canon. Yet because the *antilegomena* books were questioned in the past, the church does not base any teaching on these writings un-



less that teaching is also found in the *homologoumena* books. Some would say, "Doesn't the debate over the *antilegomena* books prove that the church has authority over the canon, that the church established the canon?" Actually it proves the very opposite. It shows that it was not church councils or scholars who decided which books were part of the Scripture. Rather, the books showed themselves to be God's very Word and were recognized as such by the church which was created through these instruments of God. For that reason even those who had questions could not change the status of a certain book but had to bow to the workings of God. No church council or scholar can declare *antilegomena* to be *homologoumena* or vice versa.

9 In the Luther Bible, between the Old and New Testaments, there is a collection of books called the Apocrypha concerning which Luther says, "These books are not held equal to the Holy Scripture but are useful and good to read." (Apokrypha, das sind Bücher, welche der heiligen Schrift nicht gleich gehalten, aber doch nützlich und gut zu lesen sind. [LW 35:337]) The term "Apocrypha" means "hidden" in the sense that these books were of an obscure and doubtful character and not considered canonical by Old Testament believers. The Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) decreed that these books were equal to the canonical books of the Bible. The Reformed churches went to the opposite extreme and rejected these writings as having no value whatsoever. As a consequence, very few editions of the English Bible contain the Apocrypha. The Lutheran Church, following the lead of Luther, has taken the proper middle course. Although we admit that these writings are not inspired and are not of equal authority with the canonical books of the Holy Scripture, we say with Luther that they

are good and useful reading. In these apocryphal books we have a witness to the faith of the believers who lived in the Intertestamental Period. Because the Lutheran Church has this view of the Apocrypha, passages from the Apocrypha have at times been used as sermon texts and as lections in public worship.

## **II. The Word is the Power of God unto Salvation**

### **A. The Word is an Effective Means of Grace**

**10** The battle for the Bible has been fought in our circles and throughout the American church. In many places it is still being fought. Fine statements concerning verbal inspiration have been formulated. This is a wonderful blessing for which we should thank God. But at the same time we must always emphasize why the battle for the Bible was fought. The Scripture is not just an errorless record of past history. It is not merely an exact account which makes computer age technology look poor in comparison. It is not only a musty source book where one can find the answers to important questions. Rather, it is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) The Word of God is like a fire and like a hammer that shatters the rock (Jeremiah 23:29), and is living, active, sharper than any two-edged sword. (Hebrews 4:12)

**11** The Word of God is the supreme means of grace. This truth Luther emphasizes when he writes, "The Word, I say, and only the Word, is the vehicle of God's grace." (LW 27:249) It is the Word of God which gives power to a sacrament and makes it a sacrament, as he specifically says concerning the Lord's Supper: "It is the Word, I maintain, which distinguishes it from mere bread and wine and constitutes it a sacrament." (LC V 10, p. 448) The

Sacraments are means of grace because of the Word and promise of God connected to them.

**12** There are many today who reject the fact that the Holy Spirit conveys the blessing of salvation through means. Such an attitude destroys the comfort of forgiveness and the certainty of salvation for poor, lost sinners. If there are other revelations or traditions besides the Scripture through which God speaks, how do we know that we have the full life-giving truth? If the Spirit has not tied Himself to means, then we do not find forgiveness, life, and salvation in the words of Absolution, in the waters of Baptism or in the body and blood of the Supper. We are left in the lurch as to where to find forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith. We must scurry from one revival to another hoping to feel the certainty of salvation. When the spiritual high wears off, one must go back to searching again. In times of trial and tribulation we are thrown to and fro in a sea of despair and outrageous fortune, for we can find no place where God's peace is dispensed, and we feel no certainty of salvation within ourselves.

**13** The Spirit, however, has chosen to use a vehicle or outward means to convey to us all the treasures of redemption. The Scripture declares that faith comes from hearing the Word (Romans 10:17), that Baptism saves us (I Peter 3:21), that whenever you forgive sins they are forgiven and whenever you do not forgive sins, they are not forgiven (John 20:23), and that the Lord's Supper gives the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28). The Scriptures clearly state that God works through means, as Luther taught:

For He wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign

instituted by Him, as He says in Luke 16:29, "Let them hear Moses and the prophets." Accordingly Paul can call baptism a "washing of regeneration" wherein God "richly pours out the Holy Spirit." [Titus 3:5] And the oral Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith." [Romans 1:16] (LW 40:146)

14 The Scripture nowhere promises the Spirit and His gift outside of the means of grace. In fact our Confessions quote Luther as saying, "We should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and Sacraments. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacraments is of the devil." (SA III VIII 9, p. 313) It is impossible to receive any saving knowledge apart from the means of grace. Whenever man looks to other revelations, error and heresy begin.

15 The scriptural and confessional doctrine of the means of grace is defined in this way by Dr. Pieper:

...[God] ordained the means by which He gives men the infallible assurance of His gracious will toward them; in other words, He both confers on men the remission of sins merited by Christ and works faith in the proffered remission or, where faith already exists, strengthens it. The Church has appropriately called these divine ordinances the means of grace. (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 103)

This doctrine is a wonderful comfort for the believer. We do not have to spend our whole life searching for God's

grace and forgiveness. He freely offers and gives it to us in His objective means of grace. There is nothing we must do or accomplish to receive His grace. Not only does He give us His forgiveness in the means of grace, but through them He also works and strengthens the faith which receives that forgiveness, life, and salvation. This comforting doctrine, which emphasizes that our salvation does not depend on our own efforts, indeed upholds the central article of the faith, justification by faith alone.

### **B. The Word is Creative and Life-giving**

**16** The Word of God is creative. The Psalmist, praising God for the wonders of the creation, says, "He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:9) The whole creation came into being by the mere speaking of God's Word. (Genesis 1:3; II Peter 3:5) Verse 6 of the Psalm points out the activity of the Son and the Spirit in the creation. Both the Son, the Incarnate Word, and the Spirit, the breath of God's mouth, were active. As the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, spoke and the first creation came into being, so His Word, the Scripture, has creative power and effect today. Through the Word, the Spirit of God works faith in our hearts making us a new creation. (II Corinthians 5:17) This same creative power of the Word is evident in the Sacraments. Because the Word is connected to the earthly elements at God's command, the waters of Baptism are the washing of regeneration, the Sacrament of re-creation (Titus 3:5), and the bread and wine of the Supper are the body and blood of Christ, the feast of salvation. (LW 37:117 & 118)

**17** The Word of God is life-giving because through it the Spirit of God is efficacious. It can turn a heart dead in trespasses and sins to a living faith in the Savior. That the

Word has such power is the teaching of the entire Scripture. This life-giving power of the Word is confirmed when God speaks through Isaiah, "For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11) Isaiah compares God's Word to the gentle rains. As water can turn a barren desert wasteland into a lush, green garden, so God's Word can change a parched and dried up heart into a living and vibrant thing. The Word causes faith in the Savior to spring up from a barren heart, producing abundant fruit. The Word will accomplish what God pleases, namely, that faith is worked through hearing that Word (Romans 10:17) or, as St. Peter puts it, that we are born again through the incorruptible seed of God's Word. (I Peter 1:23; see also John 17:19-20; I Corinthians 1:18-21; I Corinthians 2:4-5; Romans 1:16; II Thessalonians 2:14; James 1:18) In his study of I John 5:13 Luther writes, "Scripture must serve the purpose of bringing it about that his (John's) epistle is a means and a vehicle by which one comes to faith and eternal life." (LW 30:321) There is no question that this is the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Before Emperor Charles V the fathers confessed at Augsburg:

In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the

Gospel. (AC V, p. 31)

### **C. The Word Strengthens and Preserves Faith**

**18** This life-giving Word which creates faith in us also strengthens faith and preserves us in that faith. Through the Word, the Holy Spirit is given in all His fullness with all His many gifts. Here the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are offered and bestowed. The Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Psalm 119:105) It gives direction for our life and therefore “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (II Timothy 3:16) The Word of God is the power source of our life through which our faith is strengthened and revived again and again. (Psalm 119:93; Psalm 19:7) Many times in this life we feel that we do not have the strength to go one step further. We feel that we are about to fall under a heavy load. At those times we are revived through the Word. Through the written Word and the visible Word, the Sacraments, the Lord gives us strength in every need and the power to overcome and obtain the victory.

**19** The Word is the nourishment which our faith and new spiritual life need on our earthly journey. St. Peter writes, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow.” (I Peter 2:2; see also Acts 20:28-32) Our new spiritual life is sustained through the milk and nourishment of the Word. Separation from the Word leads to spiritual malnutrition and finally spiritual death. Just as our body needs food to grow, so our spiritual life needs the Word to remain strong and healthy. The Scripture is the feast to which Isaiah invites, “Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is

not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.” (Isaiah 55:1-2)

20 . . . As we continue our earthly pilgrimage, we face trials and tribulations all the way. We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God as St. Paul says. (Acts 14:22) In all the adversity and outrageous fortunes of life God’s Word gives peace, comfort, and joy to the heart. (Psalm 19:8-9; Psalm 119:92; Jeremiah 15:16; John 16:33) As the hearts of the Emmaus disciples burned within them when the Lord opened the Scripture to them so our hearts are filled with joy and peace through the Word. We are comforted with the message that Jesus, who loved us so much that He gave His own life for us, is with us in every need, working all for our good, even turning evil into good in our lives. (Romans 8:28-39; Genesis 50:20) In his commentary on Psalm 23 Luther speaks of the wonderful comfort and blessing derived from the Word of God.

The prophet accordingly applies many kinds of names to the Word of God. He calls it a fine, pleasant, green pasture; fresh water; the path of righteousness; a rod; a staff; a table; a balm, or the oil of gladness (Psalm 45:7); and a cup that is filled to overflowing. This he does quite appropriately, for the power of God is also of many kinds. Think of a sheep that is grazing in a fine, pleasant meadow, in green grass and near a cool body of water, that is, in the presence of its shepherd. He directs it with his rod or staff so that it may not go astray, and guards it with his staff that it may not suffer any harm but graze and rejoice in complete safety. Or think of a man who is



sitting at a table at which there is an abundance of food and drink and all kinds of comfort and joy, and who is lacking nothing at all. And then think of those who are the sheep of this Shepherd about whom our psalm is singing, who abound much more in every good thing and are plentifully supplied not only in soul but also in body; as Christ says (Matthew 6:33): "Seek first the kingdom of God." For whenever God's Word is preached properly and purely, it creates as many good things and results as the prophet here gives it names. (LW 12:148)

### **III. The Central Message of the Word Is Revealed in the Cross**

#### **A. Law/Gospel Distinction**

**21** When we speak of the Word being the power of God unto salvation and giving forgiveness of sins and life, we are specifically speaking of the Gospel in contradistinction to the Law. The Law is never life-giving. The Law can only kill. This proper distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Law is the holy, eternal, unchanging will of God. The Law commands what people are to do and not to do, and always insists on total obedience. While the Law serves as a curb in this sinful world, and also as a guide in that it shows believers how to live as children of God, its primary purpose is to make us conscious of sin. (Romans 3:20) Because it is impossible for sinful human beings to keep the Law perfectly, "the Law is a word of destruction, a word of wrath, a word of sadness, a word of grief, a voice of the judge and the defendant, a word of restless-

ness, a word of curse.” (LW 31:231)

**22** The Gospel, on the other hand, makes no demands but freely grants and offers. It gives the gracious forgiveness of Christ and eternal salvation. Showing God’s undeserved love to sinners and to the unworthy for Christ’s sake alone, the Gospel shines to illuminate human hearts and to make them alive. The Law and the Gospel are very different and distinct. “The Law says ‘do this,’ and it is never done. Grace says ‘believe in this,’ and everything is already done.” (LW 31:41) The Law is to be preached to hardened sinners while the Gospel is to be preached to those who are burdened down by their sins. (C.F.W. Walther, *Law and Gospel*, Thesis VIII, pp. 101-111)

### **B. The Theology of the Cross**

**23** The message of the Gospel is God revealed in the cross. In the Law, God hides Himself in the fire, thunder, and lightning of Mt. Sinai, so that sinful man does not even dare to come near. But in the Gospel God has revealed His grace and mercy to the fallen creation in the person of Jesus Christ. God clothed Himself in flesh so that we could see His love. God hid Himself in the suffering and death of the cross so that we might know Him. In the *Heidelberg Disputation* Luther insists, “He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. ...God can be found only in suffering and the cross.” (LW 31:53) This is the theology of the cross which is the heart and core of the Scripture, as St. Paul writes, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (I Corinthians 2:2) The cross which signifies the suffering of Christ, as His redemptive act, is an event which appears to be a tragedy,

but which is in fact the grandest event God ever performed. The theology of the cross recognizes God precisely where He has hidden Himself, in His suffering and in all which the theology of glory considers to be weakness and foolishness. This is the paradox of the cross.

**24** Jesus became poor and lowly to raise us to His divine glory, to eternal life in heaven. He lived a perfect and harmonious life with God and man which the Father accepted as the perfect life of all people. Then He allowed Himself to be nailed to a Roman cross and to be swallowed up in death so that He might give Himself as the one sufficient redemptive sacrifice for all sin. What appeared to be His end, His defeat, was really His ultimate victory. In His death the Victim becomes the Victor Divine, the Conqueror of the Universe, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, for He broke forth from the grave triumphant, having vanquished His foes, freeing us from the power of sin, death, and the devil. His glorious resurrection is the pronouncement of absolution for the whole world. In Him all are forgiven.

**25** It is through the word of the cross that God comes to us and unites us with Christ's death and resurrection. As Law, the cross shows the terrible wrath of God because of sin and destroys every form of self-righteousness. As Gospel, the cross shows the magnitude of God's love. It gives forgiveness, righteousness, and salvation which were guaranteed to us by the resurrection. Thus the cross in the light of Easter becomes God's means for making us alive, for bringing us to faith. As Jesus suffered death to give us life, so sinful man must hear the killing word of the Law so that his heart is prepared for the life-giving word that in Jesus' death and resurrection there is forgiveness for all, a gift of God's grace. He dies to sin and

arises to the new life of faith.

### C. The Joyful Exchange (*Der Fröhliche Wechsel*)

**26** This faith worked through the word of the cross always has as its object the righteousness of Christ. This is not a righteousness within the believer but it is an “alien” righteousness accomplished through Christ’s holy life and death. This is a righteousness reckoned to faith, as was already said of Abraham in the Old Testament, “He believed in the Lord and He (God) reckoned it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) Luther describes the faith relationship to Christ with the beautiful picture of marriage:

Faith unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh. (Ephesians 5:31:32) ... By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride’s. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were His own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. . .

Who then can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her

husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, "If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his," as the bride in the Song of Solomon [2:16] says, "My beloved is mine and I am his." (LW 31:351-352)

This is the "joyful exchange" (*Der fröhliche Wechsel*) of which Luther speaks. Christ takes the rags of our sin and corruption upon Himself and gives us the glorious wedding garment of His righteousness and immortality. Thus we remain at the same time saints and sinners (*Gerecht und Sünder zugleich*).

#### **IV. The Word of the Cross Motivates Us to Live for Him**

##### **A. We will Read, Study, and Meditate on this Life-giving Word**

**27** Since such great blessings come to us through the Holy Scriptures, Luther's logical conclusion is that we will want to be constantly occupied with the Word, reading it, hearing it, remembering it, and meditating upon it. "Nothing is so effectual against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts as to occupy oneself with the Word of God, talk about it, and meditate on it... This indeed is the true holy water, the sign which routs the devil and puts him to flight." (LC Preface 10, p. 359-360) In other words, there is nothing more important for the Christian life than making use of the Scripture as our Lord says, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth

shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32) Likewise St. Paul writes, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Colossians 3:16)

**28** The Word of God is the strengthening and the nourishment for our faith-life in all the conflicts and troubles of this present existence. Therefore we will have our own personal devotional life where we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word. Our household will have its family altar so that our children realize that Jesus and His cross are not just for Sunday. Here our family will gather around the Word to be nourished daily by the Savior so that we can face the difficulties of day-to-day living.

**29** In a time when many Americans believe that they can be Christians without any connection to a congregation and the means of grace, we will desire to gather regularly as the body of Christ around the Word and the Sacraments. Here are found the Word, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper, which are the efficacious instruments or means through which the Spirit brings sinners to faith, sanctifies, and preserves them in faith and thus builds the church. Through these means the Lamb once slain is in the midst of His congregation as He shall be for all eternity. The Christian will take every opportunity to grow through participation in the various Bible classes of the congregation. He will consider Christian education by means of the Sunday school, the youth group, and the Christian day school a high priority for his church. Considering the benefit that the Christian day school has been for the Confessional Lutheran Church in this country, we should not underestimate its value, for the Proverb says, “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

## **B. We will Desire to Share that Word with All Those Around Us**

**30** We who have the Word of Christ in its truth and purity, a Word which gives all the blessings of salvation and which creates the faith to receive these blessings, will never be selfish with that treasure. All around us there are souls going headlong to destruction, and we have the only antidote which can save them. We will want to share that saving Gospel with all people. In our work and at our leisure we talk about many things - the political situations, financial worries, and our family problems. If we can discuss such things with those around us, then we can also talk about the most important thing - Jesus and His cross for our salvation.

**31** The home mission and foreign mission programs of our Synod are indispensable for our faith-life, for hereby we are able to bring the Gospel to people we would not normally reach with our personal evangelism. Concerning the early church it is stated, "Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word." (Acts 8:4) Even in the face of persecution, the early Christians continued to witness concerning Christ. So faithful were they in this proclamation that by 150 A.D. the Gospel had been heard throughout much of the Mediterranean world. What an example for us who have had the Word in its truth and purity for nearly 140 years! In all our proclamation and outreach we will always remember that the only instruments through which God builds His church are His means of grace, namely, the Holy Word and Blessed Sacraments.

## **C. Our Whole Life is a High Doxology**

32 This treasure won on the cross and given to us in the word of the cross will motivate us to live our whole life for Him who died for us and rose again. Out of thanks for salvation full and free we will offer our life as a living sacrifice to the Lord. (Romans 12:1) We will allow His love to shine through us to all those around us. In this way we will be epistles of Christ not written with ink but by the Spirit, (II Corinthians 3:3) living epistles, and witnesses for Christ in these last days, as Martin Franzmann states in his great hymn:

*O Spirit, who didst once restore  
Thy Church that it may be again  
The bringer of good news to men,  
Breathe on thy cloven Church once more,  
That in these gray and latter days  
There may be men whose life is praise,  
Each life a high doxology  
To Father, Son, and unto thee. Amen  
(Worship Supplement, Hymn 758)*

### ***Bibliography***

- Althaus, Paul. *The Theology Of Martin Luther*. Translator, Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *The Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II. Translator, Fred Kramer. St. Louis: CPH, 1978.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *The Lord's Supper*. Translator, J.A.O. Preus. St. Louis: CPH, 1979.



Chemnitz, Martin. *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments, An Enchiridion*. Translator, Luther Poellot. St. Louis: CPH, 1981.

Elert, Werner. *The Structure of Lutheranism*. Translator, Walter Hansen. St. Louis: CPH, 1962.

Hoenecke, A. *Dogmatik*. Vol. IV. Milwaukee: NPH, 1912.

Kolb, Robert, and David A. Lumppp. *Martin Luther Companion to the Contemporary Christian*. St. Louis: CPH, 1982.

Loewenich, Walther von. *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. Translator, Herbert J. A. Bouman. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982.

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 7-8, 22-23, 27, 30-31, 35-41, 51-54. St. Louis: CPH.

Luther, Martin. *Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*. Vol. II, XII, XIII, XIX, XX, XXIb. St. Louis: CPH.

Pieper, Frances. *Christian Dogmatics*. Vol. III. St. Louis: CPH, 1953.

Preus, Herman A. *A Theology to Live By*. St. Louis: CPH, 1977.

Rohnert, W. *Gnadenmittel*. Leipzig: Verlag von Georg Böhme, 1886.

Tappert, Theodore G. *The Book of Concord*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.

*Triglot Concordia, The Symbolical Books of the Ev.  
Lutheran Church.* St. Louis: CPH, 1921.

Walther, C.F.W. *Law and Gospel.* Translator, W. H. T.  
Dau. St. Louis: CPH, 1928.

Walther, C.F.W. *Pastorale.* St. Louis: CPH, 1872.

Ylvisaker, Johannes. *The Gospels.* Minneapolis:  
Augsburg Publishing House, 1932.

### Abbreviations

Lutheran Confessions (all quotes are from the Tappert  
Translation unless otherwise indicated):

AC - Augsburg Confession

Ap - Apology of the Augsburg Confession

FC - Formula of Concord

LC - Large Catechism

SA - Smalcald Articles

SD - Solid Declaration of the Formula of Con-  
cord

Luther's Works:

LW - American Edition

St. L. - St. Louis Edition

WA - Weimar Edition

Writings of Chemnitz:

MWS - Ministry, Word, and Sacrament

TNC - Two Natures in Christ

Ex - Examination of the Council of Trent

LS - Lord's Supper

# **The Dissolution of the Synodical Conference Revisited: An ELS Perspective, 1957-1962**

*by Mark Marozick*

ELS General Pastoral Conference  
January 5-7, 1993

In 1972, which would have been the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Synodical Conference, the Rev. Joseph Petersen opened his essay to the ELS convention by saying:

“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word” (Is. 66:2). These words of the prophet Isaiah could suitably serve as the epitaph inscribed on the tombs of the founding fathers of the Lutheran Synodical Conference. That the Synodical Conference proved to be such “a blessing in the midst of the land” for so many decades is attributed in a great degree to the fact that these men of God, under God, undertook the work of forming a genuine confessional federation in our beloved land with true repentance and in awe of God’s inspired and inerrant Word. The spirit of the psalmist truly permeated their thoughts and actions: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth’s sake” (Ps. 115:1). We of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod would be guilty of ingratitude toward our gracious Lord and to the memory of many dedicated servants of the Lord, if we did not

pause to commemorate the founding of an alliance, which proved to be a unique blessing for 90 years. Not only were the four constituent synods recipients of the blessings of a truly confessional federation, but also other Lutheran groups beyond the shores of North America. What shall we say on such an occasion, which would do justice to the principles and goals on which the Conference came into being? (SR 1972, p. 29)

It was not his purpose to present a detailed historical account of the Conference, nor a detailed account of the steps which led to the dissolution of the Conference, but rather to bring out as clearly as possible the principles upon which the Lutheran Synodical Conference was founded, what it stood for, and the multiple blessings which came from it. We quote from his essay in an effort to show the strong ties which existed between the ELS and the Synodical Conference. Later in his essay he speaks about the Norwegians' close ties with the Missouri Synod:

When in 1918 the Norwegian Lutheran Church entered into the so-called "merger," the small group that did not join the United Norwegian Lutheran Church formed its own synod under the name "The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church," and officially joined the Synodical Conference in 1920.

Since a goodly number of us are of Norwegian extraction and since the Norwegians were affiliated with the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference to a great extent for many years, this might be the place for a few comments on the relationship with the Missouri Synod. The late Dr. Sigurd

Ylvisaker, in an article captioned "The Missouri Synod and the Norwegians," (Ebenezer, p. 264ff.) brings out some interesting observations. There was always an affinity between the Missourians and the Norwegians, because from the beginning the Norwegians were determined to abide by the Scriptures and to identify themselves only with those who had the same determined purpose. It was only natural, then, that they felt at home with the Missourians. The leaders of both synods had mutual respect for each other. Both in personal contact and through correspondence an atmosphere of ease, trust, and good will manifested itself. Dr. Ylvisaker points out that the men of the Norwegian Synod were sometimes accused of a blind acceptance of everything theological which came from St. Louis. The implication was that the Norwegians could not think for themselves nor study the Scriptures independently of others. He shows the injustice of this charge by quoting Rev. Otteson in one of his writings in 1863 (cf. Ebenezer, p. 270). The Missourians were recognized as true brethren both in deed as well as in word, for they did all in their power to hold up the hands of the Norwegians, especially during the 80's and then in the 1917-1918 struggles.

Time and time again the Norwegians showed their appreciation for Missouri's loving and fraternal concern for them. An example: In a greeting to the Missouri Synod on the occasion of its Centennial, the late Dr. Norman Madson said among other things: "The debt we owe our dear brethren of the Missouri Synod, while it is both physical and spiritual, is nevertheless chiefly of a doctrinal

nature. Had not our sainted fathers come into contact with the Missourians when they did (in the fifties), God only knows what would have become of our Norwegian Synod." (*Preaching to Preachers*, p. 187) When in the 1940's and 50's the Ev. Lutheran Synod, together with the Wisconsin Synod, were called upon to warn and to admonish the Missouri Synod for actions which threatened the unity of the Synodical Conference, their spirit was a continuation of repaying the debt owed to them. (SR 1972, pp. 37-38)

Ties like these were not easy ones to break.

One point of origin for the beginning of the break might be traced to 1938 and 1939 when Missouri issued its church union resolutions. From our vantage point over 50 years later it may seem easy to see that Missouri was on a unionistic track, but at the time the view was not that clear. Just six years before Missouri had accepted the Brief Statement, a doctrinal statement which everyone in the Synodical Conference accepted wholeheartedly. In the 1930s Missouri was viewed as the champion of the Synodical Conference's Lutheran orthodoxy. But before long there were a half dozen or more individual issues that began to disturb the peace of the Synodical Conference.

One of these issues was Missouri's effort to find doctrinal unity with the American Lutheran Church. In 1938 the American Lutheran Church declared at its Sandusky convention: "We are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines (doctrines revealed in Scripture but not absolutely necessary for saving faith)." Earlier that year, the Missouri convention had resolved that its 1932 doctrinal position paper, the Brief Statement, "together with

the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church fellowship.”

By 1944 the two synods had produced one joint doctrinal statement. This Doctrinal Affirmation was soon replaced by the better known Common Confession. Until new and different merger efforts by the American Lutheran Church put the Common Confession in a non-functioning status in 1956, the document was a major bone of contention between Missouri on the one hand and the ELS and WELS on the other. The ELS contended that a “common” confession had been achieved only by ignoring real points of controversy and soft-pedaling important doctrinal positions of the Synodical Conference.

Other issues arose to complicate the situation such as having pastors serve in the country’s military chaplaincy and letting individual congregations decide for themselves whether or not to have Boy Scout troops in their midst. Missouri sought to justify a growing practice of premature prayer fellowship by assuming without Biblical warrant that so-called “joint prayer” with those not in doctrinal agreement was under certain conditions proper and God-pleasing. A synodical resolution claimed that “joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for his guidance and blessing upon the deliberations and discussions of His Word” did not militate against its previous stand of no prayer fellowship with errorists, “provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error.”

There would be serious repercussions from this obvious departure from a long-standing Synodical Conference position. It became a sharply debated issue in the next years and finally provided the “impasse” that halted Synodical Conference doctrinal discussions and paved the way

for the body's dissolution. (*The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 198-201)

"Cooperation in externals" was another issue that arose. There were any number of instances that one side viewed as legitimate cooperation in externals and the other as unionism.

By the year 1955 the ELS had officially suspended fellowship ties with the Missouri Synod. In an effort to restore doctrinal unity in the Synodical Conference, its 1956 Convention set up a Joint Committee to draw up a common doctrinal statement. At its first meeting it agreed on the following three areas of study:

1. Atonement, Justification, and the dynamic, or motivating power, for the Christian life, with practical application to the question of Scouting.
2. Scripture (Revelation, Principles of Interpretation, Open Questions) and the practical application to the question of fulfillment of Biblical prophecy in history, as, for example, in the doctrine of Antichrist.
3. Grace, Conversion, Election, and Church and Ministry, with practical application to questions of fellowship, unionism, separatism, church discipline, and the military chaplaincy.  
(SR 1956, p. 41)

In his President's Message to the 1957 ELS convention M.H. Otto said: "It cannot be denied that we in recent years have had to spend no little time and effort in contending for the preservation of an unconditioned Gospel, a matter that has brought on some added complications on the local as well as on the synodical level; and,



the end is not yet. Nor must we let that heritage be taken from us for which our stout-hearted fathers and brethren so valiantly strove forty years ago.” (p. 9) In his report on Inter-Synodical Matters he says:

With respect to our relations in the Synodical Conference - we believe that our Suspension Resolutions of 1955 were an emphatic way of informing our sister-synods in the Conference that we were taking the differences that had arisen between us and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod very seriously. On the other hand, our sending delegates to the December, 1956, meeting of the Conference in Chicago also indicated that we were willing to extend ourselves as far as possible in seeking the re-establishment of the unity that once prevailed in the Conference. While our Union Committee will be rendering a more detailed report on this matter, we would here state that we feel we at this time cannot conclusively declare that we and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are in doctrinal agreement. (Cp. assignment to Union Committee, 1956 Report pp. 46f)

The more we review and study the official resolutions and the general teaching and practice of that body, the more we are convinced that we are here confronted with a rather incongruous situation - pastors and congregations, at least those with whom our people come into contact, are, for the most part, as orthodox as we want to be; it is their Synod's resolutions which, as it were, cast a cloud over the matter, inasmuch as the official interpretation of the same is not always too clear as to what was actually meant or implied.

For example, *Common Confession I* was in 1950 adopted by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as a settlement of the doctrinal differences that had obtained between the American Lutheran Church and the Synodical Conference. From the very beginning our Synod objected to some of the features of this confession. Then *Part II* of the *Common Confession* was later formulated, concerning which we were told that it took care of the objections we had raised. However, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod never adopted *Part II* as a part of the settlement of the doctrinal differences with the American Lutheran Church, but only as a doctrinal statement in harmony with the Scriptures. (Cp. 1956 Report p. 40)

So we still are compelled to ask, Just how does *Part II* of the *Common Confession* fit into the picture? To say it is a confusing situation is not at all a misrepresentation of the historic facts before us. We, therefore, hope that also the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod will see the inconsistency here. While it may not be in order to lift our suspension of fellowship at this time, neither is it at this point in order to say that all our testimony is fruitless. Within another year the course we must take should become quite clear and well-defined. May we meanwhile exercise the necessary patience and forbearance so that we will not veer too far to the right in our attempt to avoid the dangers on the left. The essay to be read before this convention will have a direct bearing on these matters. It is a translation of the work of the sainted Dr. Francis Pieper, entitled, "the Difference between Orthodox and Heterodox Churches." (SR 1957, pp. 13-14)

The essay pointed out that we must practice what we preach. "Therefore a Christian can and must distinguish between orthodox and heterodox churches, and he should then also *act* according to this knowledge. Avoiding all fellowship with the heterodox, he should adhere to the true church. God's Word declares this in all passages which admonish us not to hear false teachers, but to flee from them." (SR 1957, p. 26)

Concerning the "when to separate issue," the essay stated:

You say, "I want to remain in the heterodox fellowship in order to prevent it from losing the truth altogether." If you should find yourself in a heterodox fellowship, then first of all bear witness to the truth, clearly and definitely. If you are heard, good. Under circumstances you may also *wait* a while to see whether the truth is received. But as soon as it is *clear* that the truth will not be accepted, you must leave that body. If you remain in it, you are no longer supporting the *truth*, but *error*. It is blindness if you suppose that you are still a witness-bearer for the truth when you continue in fellowship with openly known errorists. As Luther says: You "cannot remain in the same stall with others who spread false doctrine or are attached to it or always speak good words to the devil and his crowd." ([St. L. XVII, 1180]; SR 1957, p. 39)

The ELS Union Committee, in its report to the 1957 ELS Convention, presented the resolutions of the 1956 Synodical Conference Convention and a survey of the work which had been done in the two meetings of the

Joint Committee up to that time. The Committee noted that nothing definite had been done as yet in regard to the conclave of theologians and recommended that the Synod "send an overture to the next Synodical Conference Convention with regard to this international conference, urging positive action." (SR 1957, p. 52) As for the joint Committee meetings between the constituent synods, the Union Committee believed that "the discussions which have begun between the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference should be continued until it becomes clear that they are bearing no good fruit." (p. 52) In regard to the situation of suspension with Missouri and continued membership in the Synodical Conference, the Union Committee said:

We believe also that we should once more bring our case to the Synodical Conference as the organization which is historically and officially committed to the stand which we have taken. If we find no remedy for "the hurt of Zion" there, it will then be the time for us to consider breaking the ties that have bound us to that organization. In the meantime we can do no better than to maintain, and try to live up to, all the resolutions of our 1955 and 1956 Conventions on our relations with other synods; that is - in brief - continue the "suspension of fraternal relations" with the Missouri Synod, and at the same time continue discussions within the framework of the Synodical Conference, which we have begun (pp. 52-53).

The ELS had another recommendation before it in 1957 regarding its Synodical Conference membership in a memorial from Pastor Arthur E. Schulz. In this memorial

Pastor Schulz quoted Article 4 of the constitution of the Synodical Conference:

The purpose of the Synodical Conference of North America shall be: to give outward expression to the unity of spirit existing among the constituent synods; to encourage and strengthen one another in faith and confession; to further unity in doctrine and practice and to remove whatever might threaten to disturb this unity; to co-operate in matters of mutual interest; to strive for true unity in doctrine and practice among Lutheran church bodies. (p. 53)

Pastor Schulz reviewed these five purposes in “the light of present-day conditions,” and, concluding that none of the five purposes of the Synodical Conference was being fulfilled in 1957, asked that the ELS withdraw from the Synodical Conference. In coming to this conclusion, Pastor Schulz did not evaluate or even mention the resolutions of the 1956 Synodical Conference Convention and the task it had set for itself through the Joint Committee meetings. (T. Aaberg, *A City Set On A Hill*, p. 213-214)

The Synod declined this memorial and accepted instead the Union Committee’s recommendation that it continue to participate in the Joint Committee meetings. On the basis that it had said in 1955 that it desired to maintain and establish fraternal relations with those who stood with the Synod, and that it was convinced that it still stood for the avowed purposes of the Synodical Conference, the ELS resolved:

That our Synod take no steps at this convention to sever connection with the Synodical Conference, but rather continue to

support vigorously those brethren in the Synodical Conference who still adhere to its original platform in the hope that the Synodical Conference may still be preserved as a bulwark of sound Lutheranism in America and may also spread its influence throughout the world....

That our Synod express its appreciation of the action of the Synodical Conference at its convention in Chicago in December, 1956, in providing machinery for supporting our Synod's resolution of 1956 to meet with the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference to determine whether or not we are now in doctrinal agreement. (SR 1957, p. 56).

Since the ELS Union Committee had not been able to complete that assignment, the Synod resolved "that our synod ask the Union Committee to complete its task using every possible means to speed up the procedure." (p. 56)

This resolution definitely set the stage for continued ELS participation in the Joint Committee meetings of the Synodical Conference. This action in 1957, however, did not settle the disagreement which was coming more and more to the fore in the Synod itself. (*A City Set On A Hill*, p. 214)

In his report on Inter-Synodical Matters to the 1958 convention, President M.E. Tweit counseled the Synod with these words: "In these troubled, confused and unionistic times it is often difficult to know what is the right thing to do - when to separate and avoid, and when to join with others not now in our fellowship. Therefore we ask the Lord to guide us with His Holy Spirit so that we may all be of one mind, speaking the same thing and doing the

same thing. (SR 1958, p. 16) When the ELS again voted to continue to participate in the Joint Committee meetings of the Synodical Conference, eight pastors and one layman recorded their negative votes. (SR 1958, p. 46)

The situation within the ELS became even more tense in 1959. The Union Committee's report to the convention that year included a section entitled "Our Own Problem," in which it stated:

On the one hand, we must be ever so careful that in seeking to help the Missouri Synod back on the old paths where we walked together for so long, we ourselves do not go astray. In all meekness and earnest supplication we must ask our heavenly Father to keep us in the old paths...

On the other hand, we must also be on guard that we do not become possessed of a false zeal for the Word of God which causes us to have a spirit like that of Jonah outside of Nineveh. Jonah's example is also given in Scripture for our warning. (SR 1959, p. 27)

In regard to the Joint Committee meetings, the Union Committee recalled the four premises on which this committee was doing its work, and stated that "to date the committee members of the respective synods have faithfully abided by those Scripturally correct principles. And since our testimony has been heard and the discussions have borne fruit, our Synod has only been true to itself and to the resolutions it adopted in the fear of God when it continued to participate in these doctrinal discussions which are aimed at restoring the harmony and unity that once prevailed in the Synodical Conference." (p. 28) On

this basis the Committee recommended that the Synod continue to participate in the Joint Committee meetings. (A City Set On A Hill, p. 215)

The ELS was faced at its 1959 Convention with two memorials calling on it to withdraw from the Synodical Conference, one from Pastor C.M. Gullerud and Mr. Orville Fruechte, and the other from the Pinehurst congregation, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Unlike the Schulz memorial in 1957, which called for the ELS to withdraw from the Synodical Conference because the Conference was not fulfilling its purposes, these memorials, in particular the one from Pastor Gullerud and Mr. Fruechte, raised the issue of ELS membership in the Synodical Conference involving it in joint mission work and prayer with those who cause divisions and offenses, and called upon the ELS to leave the Synodical Conference "in obedience to God's Word." (p. 34)

Inasmuch as the ELS, on the basis of its essay on "Unity, Union, and Unionism," had been characterized in the Lutheran Witness (LXII, 17 [Aug. 17, 1943], 282) as refusing to meet with anyone except those with whom it was already in doctrinal agreement, it was significant that a speaker at the convention used this essay in support of the resolution that the ELS should continue to participate in the Joint Committee meetings. The section quoted as applying to the ELS discussing doctrine with the Missouri Synod in the Joint Committee meetings of the Synodical Conference was the following:

If it should appear today that any group or synod which may err in some points sincerely seeks to know the truth and is willing to listen to the doctrine, reproof, and correction of the Word of God and stands ever ready to renounce what the Word denounces, God



forbid that we should ever lay a straw in the way of negotiations with them. In such cases, committees may accomplish much good. (SR 1936, p. 41)

The Synod resolved to continue to participate in the Joint Committee meetings, basing its decision on the report of the Doctrinal Committee that its testimony had been heard and that the discussions had borne fruit, and that the discussions had taken place in a spirit of frankness and willingness to abide by the Scriptures. (SR 1959, p. 35) Noting, however, the increasing alarm of its own people over the distressing conditions in the Synodical Conference, and that these conditions were a serious threat to fellowship within the Synod itself, the ELS called on the Doctrine Committee to complete its work in the Joint Committee during the coming year and to present a finished report to the next ELS Convention. (p. 35) Despite this attempt to look to the needs of the ELS as well as of the Synodical Conference, two pastors left the convention and shortly thereafter tendered their resignations from the ELS. Two congregations served by these pastors also resigned. (SR 1960, pp. 51-54) Six pastors and four laymen registered their negative votes in 1959 to the resolution to continue to participate in the Joint Committee meetings. ([SR 1959, p. 36] *A City Set On A Hill* p. 216)

ELS President M.E. Tweit called a special meeting of the General Pastoral Conference in an effort to settle the Synod's internal strife over the question of its continued membership in the Synodical Conference. The conference met at Mankato, November 9-11, 1959. Four papers were presented at the meeting: "Towards a Truly Evangelical Practice," by Pastor Julian G. Anderson; "Have We Sinned by Remaining as Members of the Syn-

odical Conference?" by Prof. G.O. Lillegard; "Have the Union Committee Members Practiced Prayer Fellowship in a Unionistic Manner?" by Pastor Theo. A. Aaberg; and "When is the Charge of Unionism to Be Applied to Brethren?" by Prof. M.H. Otto.

The most significant paper at this meeting was, undoubtedly, that of Prof. Lillegard. He called attention to the fact that the resolutions of the 1956 St. Paul convention of the Missouri Synod had brought about a changed situation from 1955, and that the ELS, in continuing its membership in the Synodical Conference after having suspended fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod, was doing so for the express purpose of working towards a restoration of unity in the Synodical Conference. Concerning this, Prof. Lillegard said:

...We have felt justified in retaining membership in the Syn[odical] Con[ference], so long as this organization enables us to mend the "doctrinal fences" where they have been broken down in our circles. We have a duty to perform over towards those who so long have been our brethren, and as long as we are free to work at the task of restoring unity in the S.C. (Synodical Conference), we should not shirk it. As for the alleged unionism involved in this, we follow the principle laid down at the Convention of the Syn. Conf. in 1875 which states:

In this way, someone may be a member of such a synod (which tolerates false doctrine) under protest for a while, so long as his testimony is not prohibited, and he may still hope that it will bear fruit. - There is a great difference between entering a unionistic body

and being forced to leave it. The first is not permissible under any circumstances; in the latter case it may be necessary to remain for a shorter or longer period of time for the purpose of testifying against error. (S.C. Proceedings 1875, p. 24 f.)

When the time comes that the S.C. no longer strives to hold fast the true doctrine of God's Word; when it lays obstacles in the way of reformation rather than helping the cause of conservative Lutheranism; when the Wis. Synod ceases testifying against the errors which have crept into sister churches; when it becomes evident that our Synod stands alone in its defence of the unconditioned Gospel, then will be the time for us to break off all relations with those who have become manifest as errorists and false brethren. So long as we have such staunch Lutherans as the Wis. Synod and its leaders on our side, we should not give up the battle for the restoration of the Mo. Synod to full fellowship with us, and for the preservation of the Synodical Conference.

Prof. Lillegard maintained that conditions actually were a great deal worse in the Synodical Conference from 1938-1950 than they were in 1959. When the Missouri Synod in 1947, however, reaffirmed the "Brief Statement," the ELS in its 1948 overture to the Synodical Conference expressed its joy, and specifically declared that it was not ready to break fellowship relations, but felt that not everything had been done by way of doctrinal discussions to remove the differences which had come in among the brethren. Prof. Lillegard concluded:

Thus we should rejoice that the "Brief Statement" was so definitely reaffirmed in San Francisco; that doctrinal discipline has been exercised in a number of cases; that the Mo. Syn. has again declared the Common Confession to be no more a "functioning union document;" that promises have been made to investigate and take proper action against cases of unionistic practice. We should in charity accept these promises at face value and not impugn the honesty and sincerity of the men who have obviously been trying to keep the Mo. Syn. in the "old paths." Still less should we attack the Wis. Syn. for its delay in declaring fraternal relations with the Mo. Syn. broken. It has given good reasons for the delay, namely, the evidences that the Mo. Syn. would reconsider its course and was anxious to preserve the Syn. Conf., not merely as an organization but as a defender and champion of the cause of conservative Lutheranism in every part of the world. Granted that there are problems aplenty as the result of our incomplete "suspension of relations" with Mo. and of the Wis. Synod's continuance of fellowship relations while protesting loudly and frankly against various aberrations in the Mo. Syn., those problems are very minor compared with the problems we would face if we were to stand entirely alone, with fraternal relations broken with all other churches.

By the time of the 1960 ELS Convention, the situation had deteriorated in the Synodical Conference Joint Committee, due to Missouri's announced intention of meeting with the NLC and its position on church fellowship as expressed in "The Theology of Fellowship." In view of

this, the ELS Doctrinal Committee recommended that it discontinue meeting with the Joint Committee, and that the Synod present the reasons for this discontinuance to the 1960 Synodical Conference Convention. The Synod resolved to do this, and to hold a recessed convention in the fall to consider the reply of the Synodical Conference and to "determine whether or not we can continue in the Synodical Conference." (SR 1960, p. 50) Two more pastors, however, resigned at this convention. (*A City Set On A Hill*, p. 217-218)

The fact that strife had been building in recent years was apparent from President Tweit's message to the convention that year:

In more recent years, though our essays, our devotions and services have still shown a marvelous unity of faith, strife has entered our ranks and caused serious rifts in our membership. During the past year several pastors and congregations have left our fellowship, bringing a serious hurt to our Synod and causing both heartache and sorrow. Strangely enough, opposite reasons have been given for such action.

Apparently there is still a division among us. This is not good for our Synod nor for our work in the Kingdom of our Lord. Who shall say that we have not deserved this chastening of the Lord? ...We earnestly beseech Him to lead and direct us in our difficult problems so that we do that which is right and pleasing in His sight. God grant that the former unity of faith and confession, action and thought, be restored to us, a unity firmly grounded upon

God's everlasting Word.

...We must seek a God-pleasing settlement of the strife which has overtaken us in regard to our membership in the Synodical Conference and our relationship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, so that we can with one mind, faith and zeal go about doing the work which our gracious Lord assigns to us - the work of bearing witness to Him by our Christian missions, Christian education, Christian charity and the like. May God have mercy upon us for Jesus' sake! Amen. (SR 1960, pp. 8-9)

The 1960 recessed convention, meeting in Jerico, Iowa, Nov. 1-3, 1960, did not resolve the issue of the Synod's continued membership in the Synodical Conference, due to the fact that the 1960 Synodical Conference Convention itself had been recessed and had not yet given an answer to the ELS memorial. The ELS did, however, meet the charges of unionism raised against it by those from within the Synod by adopting the following resolution at Jerico:

That we reject any interpretation of our suspension resolutions of 1955 which implies:

a) that we are at present in church fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod;

b) that our continued membership in the Synodical Conference, under present circumstances is in violation of Romans 16:17.

(SR Rec. Conv., 1960, p. 33)

While this resolution did not settle the issue, nor prevent four more pastors from leaving, it did put the Synod itself on record as to what its position was in the matter. Following this, the situation in the Synodical Conference itself, and especially in the Joint Committee, became such that the ELS became convinced it could do no more in its efforts to restore the unity of the Conference, and so it began the steps which eventually led to its withdrawal in 1963. (*A City Set On A Hill* pp. 218-219)

The ELS Committee recommended to the 1960 ELS Convention the discontinuance of ELS participation in the Joint Committee meetings, and based its recommendation in part on the Missouri Committee's participation in the NLC meetings, stating:

The very committee with whom we meet to discuss the whole area of fellowship and cooperation in externals (which is part of such fellowship) is having discussions on that same point with heterodox Lutherans before we in the Synodical Conference have come to an agreement on it amongst ourselves. We feel this move is contrary to the second premise of the bases on which we have been carrying on our current doctrinal discussions and which the Missouri Synod's Doctrinal Committee helped to draw up and agreed to follow, viz., "that we declare our willingness without equivocation and evasion to come to grips with all the issues that have arisen between us." (SR 1960, p. 41)

It recommended further that the ELS ask the Synodical Conference to pass judgment on the Synod's action in withdrawing from the joint meetings, and, if upholding its action, to plead with the Missouri Committee "to re-

move the obstacles it has placed in the path of continued joint Doctrinal Committee meetings.” (p. 42)

The ELS presented this report, together with its own resolutions, to the 1960 Synodical Conference Convention. (Proc.... Syn. Conf., 1960, pp. 47-49) The matter did not reach the convention floor until the 1961 Recessed Convention, May 17-19, 1961. The floor committee in twelve “whereases” sought to exonerate the Missouri *Praesidium* and Committee, but concluded, nevertheless, with this resolution:

That we urge the following recommendations, made in all brotherly love to both the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, for their consideration and adoption: That the Evangelical Lutheran Synod be asked to suspend the action indicated in its unprinted memorial and that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod be asked to suspend the activities objected to in the unprinted memorial. (Proc ... Syn. Conf., 1961, p. 20)

While lack of time prevented debate on the individual whereases leading to the resolution itself, the ELS delegation did present its case to the convention, and the convention adopted the resolution by a resounding majority. In view of the fact that the Missouri Synod comprised eighty-five percent of the membership of the Synodical Conference, the significance of the adoption of this resolution can hardly be overestimated.

The Missouri *Praesidium* and Doctrinal Unity Committee chose, however, to disregard also the wishes of the Synodical Conference in the NLC matter. In writing to ELS Vice-President Julian G. Anderson three weeks after



the convention, the President of the Missouri Synod dismissed the resolution of the Synodical Conference with the words: "You will recall that at the recent recessed meeting of the Synodical Conference, mention was made about a meeting with the NLC. There were those who held that we should not meet with them at this time." (SR 1961, p. 49) President Behnken then went on to disclose that the Missouri Committee intended to meet again with the NLC.

The roadblock to further progress in the Joint Committee's work, raised by the Missouri Committee's meeting with the NLC, remained in spite of efforts by all the others to have the Missouri officials and committee remove it. The Missouri Synod not only brought in most, if not all, of the offenses troubling the Synodical Conference, but its *Praesidium* and Doctrinal Unity Committee also wrecked the machinery which the Synodical Conference had set up in a valiant effort to restore unity, machinery which up to that point had been functioning rather well. (*A City Set On A Hill*, p. 225-226)

While the Joint Committee did not complete its study of one doctrine before beginning the study of another, there was a logical progression to its work. Beginning with the doctrine concerning the Scripture, and then testing the agreement reached by a study of the doctrine of the Antichrist, the Joint Committee proceeded to a study of the doctrine of justification, and then to that of church fellowship, recognizing, as its secretary reported to the 1960 Synodical Conference Convention, that "here lay the single most formidable obstacle to a restoration of proper intersynodical relations." (Proc.... Syn. Conf., 1960, p. 35)

The Missouri Committee's presentation on church fellowship constituted a roadblock to further progress for the Joint Committee because of its theological substance.

The ELS and the Wisconsin Committees raised strong objections to Part II, which dealt with the principles governing the exercise of church fellowship.

The ELS Committee fastened its attention on a particularly fine statement in the Missouri presentation, namely, "On the basis of a confession which expresses a common total submission of faith to the whole revealed counsel of God, Christians unite to exercise, extend, and guard the fellowship which the grace of God has bestowed upon them," and accepted this as Missouri's basic principle in regard to the exercise of church fellowship, and the standard by which all expressions of church fellowship were to be judged. The ELS Committee noted that Missouri's basic principle was "rigidly orthodox" but that in condoning in the same presentation joint prayer with those not in confessional agreement, as well as prayer at civic functions, the Missouri Committee was not even applying its own stated principle to the practical difficulties in the area of church fellowship. The ELS Committee brought this to the attention also of the 1960 ELS Convention and recommended that the Synod make it a part of its basis for declining to participate further in the Joint Committee meetings. (SR 1960, p. 42) The Missouri Committee apparently saw the point, for they revised Part II of "Theology of Fellowship" and presented it to the November, 1960, ELS Recessed Convention. The revision, unfortunately, consisted not in the elimination of the contradictory applications but in the removal of the excellent statement of principle quoted earlier.

The ELS Committee, in a critique of the revised version of Part II of "Theology of Fellowship," called the Missouri Committee's attention to the lack of any clear statement emphasizing one's confession as the basis for the exercise of fellowship, as well as to its faulty exegesis of Matt. 7:15 which all but ruled out any application of

the passage today, and several matters regarding joint prayer and prayer on civic occasions. After asking a number of questions aimed at clarifying the issues, the ELS Committee concluded its critique by saying:

The thought comes to us that instead of determining doctrinal principles from what the Scripture says, the presentation before us has its origin also in the realm of Christian experience or the pious "self-consciousness of the theologizing subject." As pious as the new man may otherwise be, it still is one of the marks of the regenerate man to look to Scripture alone as the source and norm of doctrine, which just does not seem to be the case in Fellowship II (rev.).

These are some of the observations which cause us no little concern, and we are looking for some assurance that what we fear is in no way implied, or even allowed, in this second edition of Fellowship II. (SR 1961, pp. 45-47)

The Missouri Committee never replied to this critique on Part II of "Theology of Fellowship" offered by the ELS Committee. (*A City Set On A Hill*, p. 227-228)

In Part II of "Theology of Fellowship" the Missouri Committee abandoned in principle, even as the Missouri Synod itself earlier had abandoned in practice, the Scriptural teaching and its own former confession and that of the Synodical Conference on church fellowship.

The Wisconsin Committee, on the basis of synodical instructions given in 1959, felt constrained to declare at the Joint Committee meeting in May, 1960, that an impasse had been reached in the discussions on church fel-

lowship. (Proc... Syn. Conf., 1960, p. 46) The declaration of the impasse meant that the Wisconsin Committee would no longer participate in Joint Committee discussions, and this, together with the ELS Committee's recommendation to the 1960 ELS Convention that it no longer participate, meant the end of the Joint Committee meetings. (*A City Set On A Hill*, p. 230)

The Overseas Brethren in 1960 constituted the one remaining hope for the removal of the roadblock which the Missouri Committee had raised in the path of the Joint Committee by its position on church fellowship. The Overseas Brethren were representatives of comparatively small church bodies in foreign countries which, while not formally members of the Synodical Conference, were brethren by virtue of a common confession of faith. The Overseas Brethren included representatives from churches in Germany, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, England, Canada, India, Japan, and other places, although a few of these actually were districts of the LC-MS.

The meetings with the Overseas Brethren were very helpful to the ELS Doctrinal Committee, and the ELS generally, in that they helped to broaden horizons which can so easily become narrowed, especially in a small synod. The presence and testimony of the Overseas Brethren, especially during these critical years, made the ELS more conscious of how much the stalwart confession of the Synodical Conference meant to others throughout the world, and of how serious the effect of the break-up of the Conference would be to these brethren beyond the borders of North America. The conclaves, therefore, were a great blessing to the ELS.

The ELS Committee was favorably impressed with the presentation on church fellowship by the Overseas Brethren. In a preliminary evaluation, the Committee stated:

As especially pertinent we throughout all of the theses note the emphasis placed on the *notae ecclesiae* (marks of the church, i.e., Word and sacraments) as bestowing faith, bringing the Church into existence, and as being the standard by which all the doctrine and practice in the church are to be regulated.

Equally important is the attempt in these theses to eliminate the subjective element for recognizing the presence of the true Church and for setting up principles for Church Fellowship.

We also find it particularly gratifying to note the importance of making the actual confession of a church (i.e., what is taught, written, practiced, or officially resolved by it) the basis upon which church fellowship can be established and maintained. (SR 1961, p. 43)

The ELS Committee expressed some concern as to whether or not the Overseas Brethren made a distinction between pulpit and altar fellowship on the one hand, and prayer fellowship on the other.

The ELS Committee frankly acknowledged that the presentation of the Overseas Brethren had helped it to see several weaknesses in its own presentation, namely, a lack of emphasis on the pure marks of the church, Word and Sacraments, and an undue emphasis on the subjective element in setting forth the doctrine of church fellowship. Their presentation had also given depth to its understanding of the Scriptural principles involved. Regarding future Joint Committee discussions on church fellowship, the ELS Committee, in evaluating the Overseas presenta-

tion, said: "We also believe that if all concerned will wholeheartedly subscribe to the principle, and bring their practice into conformity therewith, that 'the marks of the Church are all-decisive' (Thesis 11), the specific problem regarding Church Fellowship is on the way to solution and this will surely help solve the other difficulties in the Synodical Conference." (p. 44)

The Missouri Committee did not make public any evaluation it might have made of the presentation on church fellowship by the Overseas Brethren. It heard the reports of the ELS and the Wisconsin Committees.

The Overseas delegation reported to the recessed convention of the Synodical Conference, held in Milwaukee, May 17-19, 1961. The Synodical Conference passed a resolution urging that the four synods hold their presentations on church fellowship in abeyance, form one Committee on Doctrine for the Synodical Conference, with Overseas Theologians serving on a consultative basis, and proceed to a restudy and formulation of the doctrine of the Church and, on the basis of this, to the formulation of theses on church fellowship. (Proc... Syn. Conf., 1961, p. 17)

Neither the ELS nor the Wisconsin Synod saw its way clear to accept the resolution of the Synodical Conference and thereby embark on a new study in a new forum, but the ELS in 1962 stated the basis on which it would be willing to resume discussions in the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference. This position contained a significant proposal in regard to the statement on fellowship by the Overseas Brethren, namely:

...B) The Missouri Synod must disavow the present position of its theological faculties and Doctrinal Committee as expressed in "The Theology of Fellowship, Part II," and reaffirm

its historic position on fellowship. We feel this could be done by acceptance of the theses on Fellowship presented by the Overseas Brethren, especially theses 11 and 12: "The marks of the Church are all-decisive. Everything must be referred to them....In whatever way the fellowship created by Word and Sacraments shows itself, all visible manifestations of fellowship must be truthful and in accordance with the supreme demands of the marks of the Church..." (SR 1961, p. 54)

While the Overseas Brethren were working frantically to save the Synodical Conference, new obstacles to a restoration of unity appeared on the horizon. In addition to the roadblocks of the NLC meetings and "Theology of Fellowship," there was now the added difficulty of the St. Louis faculty's presentation of "A Statement on the Form and Function of Scripture." The ELS said that this statement gave them "great concern regarding the position of that seminary faculty towards Scripture." (SR 1961, p. 61)

Still to come at the 1962 Cleveland Convention was the fading of any hope that proper doctrinal discipline would be restored in the Missouri Synod. The famous "Resolution 9," adopted at San Francisco in 1959, requiring pastors, teachers, and professors to uphold the "Brief Statement," would be rescinded on constitutional grounds. Dr. Martin H. Scharlemann, who in his four essays had attacked the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, would apologize to the convention for causing unrest in the church, and the Missouri Synod would graciously forgive him for this. The Cleveland Convention at the same time would sidestep the real issue, the charge of false doctrine, by permitting Professor Scharlemann to withdraw his es-

says. (*A City Set On A Hill*, pp. 231-236)

By 1961 things were coming to a head. President Tweit, in his message submitted to the Synod Convention through Vice-President Anderson, said:

Our Synod has passed through many months of serious trouble and affliction. Most of this has come about through problems that have arisen in connection with our relationship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. For several years, ever since the late 30's and early 40's, we have witnessed a change taking place in the Missouri Synod, whose fellowship our fathers cherished and which we also have enjoyed. We have sought earnestly and patiently to remind them of this change on the basis of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and even their own good confession, the Brief Statement. Our testimony seems to have been of little benefit and the results very few. Our Doctrinal Committee, which has carried on this admonition and earnestly sought to bring the Missouri Synod back to the stand it once took, now comes with the recommendation that the Synodical Conference be dissolved. Another memorial recommends that we withdraw our membership in the Synodical Conference. Another memorial recognizes the serious differences which exist, and, while it does not go as far as the others, yet this memorial also points up the problem that exists. We need to come to a firm and clear decision in this matter. Not only because our ranks may be shattered yet further by more withdrawals and separations, but because we may lose our moorings and become indifferent to the danger of false doctrine and practice by exposing



ourselves to situations where our testimony is neither heard nor heeded. As indicated, brethren have left us with the earnest testimony that we are guilty of living in sin because we still remain in the Synodical Conference and have continued to meet with other members under fellowship conditions. Sharp personal accusations have at times arisen in the course of the discussions. Behind all this lies the basic idea that our Synod does not hold to its former position in matters of doctrine and practice. We maintain that we have not changed. (SR 1961, pp. 8-9)

The 1961 ELS Convention, after noting the situation which prevailed in the Synodical Conference, declared: "It is evident that the Lutheran Synodical Conference is no longer functioning according to the prime purposes stated in its constitution, and its existence, as its membership is presently constituted, is no longer truthful." The ELS then resolved to "direct a memorial to the 1962 convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference to institute measures to dissolve the Lutheran Synodical Conference." (SR 1961, p. 62)

The ELS in this resolution of 1961 was not taking a new position in union matters, but rather continuing the program it had undertaken in 1956, the difference being that in 1961 it was just that much farther down the road. The Synodical Conference had made a valiant effort in 1956 and the years following to remove the offenses which threatened its unity, and the ELS had been a part of that effort. In 1961, however, on the basis of the situation which prevailed, the ELS concluded that the Synodical Conference was not able "to remove whatever might threaten to disturb" its unity in doctrine and practice, and that therefore "its existence, as its membership is pres-

ently constituted, is no longer truthful.” The ELS would make an effort to dissolve the Synodical Conference, rather than simply to resign from membership, because it believed that the Synodical Conference, with its noble confession through the years, deserved an honorable burial. The closing section of the ELS Doctrinal Committee report for 1961 indicates the spirit in which the ELS should take this drastic action:

We would close this report with a word of warning to our Synod. We would warn against pride. We have nothing of which to be proud. How much of the evil that has come to pass in the Synodical Conference is due to our lack of faithfulness, lack of prayer, and lack of Christian love? We would warn against a false sense of security. If any think that now we are free from all danger of error, let him remember that there will always be the devil, the world and the Old Adam to contend with, and we are fair game. That which plagues other church bodies today may well come to plague us tomorrow.

We would close this report with a word of comfort to our Synod. Deuteronomy 33:27, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (p. 55)

The Synodical Conference met in convention November 13-15, 1962, at St. James Lutheran Church, Chicago. The ELS and Wisconsin Synod delegations held their own opening service with holy communion at the ELS St. Paul’s Church on W. North Ave. This was in keeping with the 1961 ELS resolution that the Synod’s official representatives should not meet in a fellowship frame-

work in Synodical Conference meetings where the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod took part. (p. 63)

At the request of Dr. John Daniel, who had succeeded Dr. John S. Bradac as president of the Synodical Conference in 1960, the presidents of the constituent synods addressed the convention, explaining the present positions of their respective synods.

The president of the ELS, in his address to the convention, pointed out that not only was there a gap between the ELS and the Missouri Synod, but that the gap was widening. The widening gap, he declared, consisted of 1) the fact that public error in Missouri was not publicly repudiated, as evidenced in the case of such men as Dr. Martin Marty, Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, Dr. Carl H. Krekeler, and Dr. Martin H. Scharlemann, 2) that there was real doubt as to the position of the Missouri Synod on the doctrine concerning Scripture, due to the theological faculty's presentation: "A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures," as well as the Missouri Synod's handling of the Scharlemann case, 3) that "Theology of Fellowship" represented a new and false position, and 4) that in a general way Missouri's position was much the same as that of the General Council in the days when the Synodical Conference was formed, in that while one could find good doctrinal statements as to its position, they were not carried out in synodical life. The ELS therefore held, he said, "that even as doctrinal unity brought the Synodical Conference into being, so our present disunity ought to cause us to take it out of existence, if we are still to be true to its principles.... We of the ELS believe that in dissolving the Synodical Conference for reason of lack of doctrinal unity, we can honor God and hallow His name" (*Lutheran Sentinel*, 45, 22 [Nov. 22, 1962], 348-349).

The Floor Committee on Doctrine (by a 5-4 vote strictly

along synodical lines, with the Missouri and Slovak delegates on one side, and the ELS and Wisconsin delegates on the other) recommended that the Synodical Conference be continued. The report noted that the ELS and Wisconsin delegates on the committee refrained from supporting the resolution "because of their conviction that it assumes a degree of fellowship which does not exist at present." (Proc.... Syn. Conf., 1962, p. 71) The convention adopted the report. The Synodical Conference was not to be dissolved.

On the basis of the report and recommendation of the Doctrinal Committee and delegates to the 1962 Synodical Conference Convention, the ELS, in 1963, resolved to withdraw from membership in the Synodical Conference. (SR 1963, p. 48) This brought an end to an historic membership in an historic organization. The old Norwegian Synod, and then the ELS, received much good from the Synodical Conference, and the ELS sought to do it good in return by remaining true to the Scriptural principles of the Conference, even when it meant leaving the organization itself.

The Wisconsin Synod also withdrew in 1963, and the Missouri Synod and the Slovak Synod remained as members of the Synodical Conference until 1967, when the Missouri Synod contended that its continuation served "no useful purpose." (Proc...LC-MS, 1967, p. 99) The Slovak Synod concurred in this resolution at its 1967 convention. (*A City Set On A Hill*, p. 236-240)

From 1938 to 1963 is a long time to carry through brotherly admonition. It was a quarter century that brought its share of frustration and heartache. But it was worth it because it was an endeavor to keep the unity of faith alive in the Synodical Conference.

Because the effort lasted a quarter century, another painful separation occurred. There were a number of with-

drawals from both the ELS and Wisconsin Synod. These were the men who for conscience' sake resigned their synodical membership and then formed a new fellowship in 1960, the *Church of the Lutheran Confession*. The 1962 statistics of the National Lutheran Council supply these numbers for the new church body: 62 pastors, 60 congregations, 8992 souls. (*The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 207)

After the ELS and Wisconsin Synod separated from the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, what kept them separate from the CLC? Most of it revolves around the issue of admonishing an erring church body. The CLC contended that this can only be done, once the error is marked, outside the framework of fellowship. Wisconsin and the ELS have always contended for the duty to admonish the brother that is erring as a weak brother while that is possible.

In the CLC's own words here is what stands between us now:

Regardless of how or why or when they did it, the WELS and the ELS have finally separated from Missouri. They have done what the CLC says the Word of God demanded much sooner. Is it now just a matter of the CLC saying the WELS and the ELS should have acted sooner, and of the WELS and the ELS saying that the CLC acted "too hastily"? ... We consider it a token of divine grace that both the WELS and the ELS have finally separated from heterodox Missouri. But the question that still must be faced is this: Did they suspend fellowship for the right reason? The CLC charges, and that regretfully, that in the twenty-plus-year period following 1938 the initial response of testifying against the

errors of Missouri was gradually changed into a process of admonishing Missouri as weak brethren.... We hold that "the treatment due a weak brother is entirely out of place when dealing with responsible leaders." ("Mark...Avoid" Origin of the CLC, p. 11,13)

According to the CLC "doctrine is involved, not just human judgment," (p. 12) therefore they remain separated from us.

Was the withdrawal from the Synodical Conference a proper decision? Perhaps other evidence to show that it was might be to look at what happened to the Slovak Synod, the only Synod to remain in the Synodical Conference with Missouri. Time did not allow me to research its ending. To my knowledge it was incorporated into the Missouri Synod in a non-geographical district.

"By their withdrawal from the Synodical Conference, the ELS and WELS have been charged by some of acting hastily, impatiently, prematurely, even in a loveless manner. But anyone conversant with the history leading up to the rupture and final withdrawal will determine that such charges do not square with the facts. In fact, the more one peruses the historical developments, the more must one be constrained to marvel at the patience, forbearance, even fraternal love, exercised by the two synods in all the laborious negotiations." Thus writes Pastor Joseph Petersen in the same synodical essay we quoted at the beginning of this paper. (SR 1972, pp.40-41)

In closing we quote the words of Pastor Theo. A. Aaberg as he writes about the reactions to our withdrawal from the Synodical Conference: "Our testimony apparently has fallen on deaf ears, at least in Missouri's official family. Such expressions as 'vehemently deny,' 'flatly

rejected,' 'herewith denied and rejected' do not hold out much hope for any future reconciliation. We are genuinely sorry. We do not claim that our admonition has been perfect. Far from it. The Lord knows how fraught our Synod is with the frailties of man. But we do know that the basic content of our testimony has been truly Scriptural and it grieves us deeply that it should be so forthrightly rejected. What will the end be?" (ELS archives, Synodical Conference file)