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THE ROLE THAT WISCONSIN'S STATE OF CONFESSION
PLAYED IN THE BREAK-UP OF THE ORTHODOX LUTH-
ERAN CONFERENCE

Senior Church History

by Mark Cares

Missouri's mid-century turn to the left produced many waves on the sea of conservative American Lutheranism. These waves were no ordinary ones for they finally destroyed the Synodical Conference. They carried the force of tidal waves. But the dissolution of the Synodical Conference wasn't the only result of Missouri's left turn. There were many more consequences in many different areas of the religious world. One such area was the formation of new church bodies. The Lutheran Church of the Reformation and the Church of the Lutheran Confession are direct results of Missouri's famous turn to the left. Another small body was also formed in reaction to Missouri's new direction. It became known as the Orthodox Lutheran Conference (OLC).

The OLC was formed in Okabena, Minneasota on Sept. 25-26, 1951 by disgruntled Missouri men. Twenty-two men, most of them pastors, met under the leadership of Dr. P. E. Kretzmann of commentary fame. At the end of the two day meeting, ten pastors signed the Articles of Agreement of the newly formed body. (One man soon withdrew his signature.) The OLC started off as a small body and it would remain that throughtout its history. Only a few other dissatisfied Missouri and Wisconsin men ever joined these founders.

But probably the biggest reason the OLC never blossomed was the fact that various divisions quickly surfaced within its own midst. This common trend of small bodies really devastated the OLC. The first and also the worst of these spilts occurred leat than five years after the OLC's formation. A new church body, the Concordia Lutheran Conference (CLC)

resulted from this split. In this paper I would first like to concentrate on the OLC's attitude over against the Wisconsin Synod and especially in regard to Wisconsin's state of confession which it took against Missouri. Then I would like to see how much the conflicting views within the OLC concerning Wisconsin's state of confession contributed to this break-up of the OLC.

The men who met those two days at Okabena had a high opinion of the Wisconsin Synod.

While we are a dissenting group, in conflict with the Missouri Synod organization, we are not and should never become a separatistic group. We should be ever aware of our affiliation and fellowship of faith with the Synodical Conference or that part of it which holds to its historical doctrinal position and rejects the Common Confession. I hold that a most essential resolution of this group should declare that we share the position of the Norwegian Synod and the Wisconsin Synod in their resolutions rejecting the Common Confession, and that we will permanently adhere to the fellowship of that part on the Synodical Conference that takes this position. . . . On the other hand, it cannot be argued that by breaking with the Missouri Synod, with which these sister Synods still remain in fellowship, we are thereby breaking also the tie that binds us to them, since that which divides us from the Missouri Synod is our agreement with them.¹

They thought that only the mere formalities of fellowship had to be worked out.

But the OLC never achieved formal fellowship with Wisconsin. For soon some things happened that somewhat soured the OLC on the Wisconsin Synod. Probably the most sour apple of them all was Wisconsin's state of confession against Missouri. In an article printed in the Nov. 2, 1952 issue of the Norwestern Lutheran Prof Blume remarked, "Not a state of confession. Rather a state of confusion."² The OLC would have responded

for this with a loud Amen. For very soon they had doubts about this state of confession. One of the reasons for these doubts was the common one of the times: they felt that Wisconsin was staying in fellowship with Missouri way too long. But another reason for their dissatisfaction is not so well-known. Let us therefore first look at this second reason.

It all started with a series of articles written in the Northwestern Lutheran during the fall of 1952. These articles dealt with the subject of a state of confession. The OLC took exception to these articles. First, we will see what these articles said and then we will look at the OLC's reaction to them.

The first pertinent article appeared in the Sept. 7, 1952 issue in Prof. Reim's column "As We See It". It is entitled "A State of Confession." In this article Prof. Reim describes the 1952 Synodical Conference convention in St. Paul and gives the reasons why the Wisconsin Synod delegation announced that there they had entered into a state of confession.

Since our delegation was on the one hand determined not to make a decision that must be reserved for our Synod alone, but on the other equally determined that this testimony be upheld in spite of the opposition that had been encountered, such a formal declaration was imperative. 3

The next important article appears in the Nov. 2, 1952 issue of the Northwestern Lutheran. It is entitled, "A State of Confession -- A Study of Its Implications on the basis of II Thess. 3: 14-15." This article, written by Prof. Blume, explains more fully what a state of confession consists of. What is important to our study is this statement.

In its statement the Committee on Church Union was speaking only for itself and for those delegates and guests at St. Paul who had declared

themselves as being in agreement with the sentiments of the Committee. Here the matter must rest until our Joint Synod, in convention assembled, has made a decision.⁴

This statement particularly, seemed to have raised a lot of eyebrows and questions inside and outside the Synod. In the very next issue of the Northwestern Lutheran Prof. Reim devotes his entire column to answering some of these questions. The first question he responds to is, "Is not our entire Synod committed by this declaration which its representatives made after the close of the St. Paul convention?" In his answer Prof. Reim defends Prof. Blume by saying that "a careful reading of the original declaration" shows that the delegates were declaring a state of confession only for themselves. It is interesting here to note that the Wisconsin Synod here seemed to have learned a valuable lesson. For when the important resolutions of the 1953 special convention were printed, an explanation of the resolutions was printed right alongside.

As was stated above, Prof. Blume's article raised many eyebrows and questions. Many of those raised eyebrows were in the OLC. A reaction to Prof. Blume's article appears in the Dec. 1952 issue of The Orthodox Lutheran. In an article entitled, "Is This The Voice of Wisconsin?" Pastor McLaughlin takes exception to Blume's article. He writes,

and those in whose "estimation" this has taken place are not merely "those who joined in the report that appeared last September 7" but those who joined in the unanimous resolution of the Wisconsin Synod at its last convention. That action of the Wisconsin Synod at New Ulm last year placed the Synod as such into a state of confession over against the Missouri Synod. Everyone who knows the significance of the term on the basis of Scripture and in the usage of orthodox Lutheran theology should be aware that the rejection of the confession of a church body by another which has been in fellowship with it is a declaration of a state of confession by the latter body over against the other. That declaration was made by the Wisconsin

Synod in Convention assembled. . .
Every member of the Wisconsin Synod must either maintain this state of confession in word and deed (Titus 3,10; Romans 16,17; 1 Timothy 5,22b) or else disavow the unanimous action of the 1951 convention at New Ulm. This is the inexorable logic of facts.⁵

He then concludes his article by stating, "only an official disclaimer of this article can restore the orthodox position of the Wisconsin Synod which we have been so happy to acclaim."⁶ In this conclusion one of the more prominent characteristics of the OLC was revealed -- the overstatement.

This strong reaction to Prof. Blume's article was answered by Prof. Reim in a letter which was printed in the Feb. 1953 issue of the Orthodox Lutheran. He points out that the declaration at St. Paul was not intended to commit the entire Synod to a state of confession. He further states, "One may argue that our Synod committed itself at its 1951 convention and that your conclusions are inherent in its resolutions."⁷ He concludes his letter by stating,

I hope that you will reconsider not only your unfavorable opinion of Prof. Blume, but particularly also your hasty judgment that "only an official disclaimer of this article can restore the orthodox position of the Wisconsin Synod. . . ." For this really constitutes an ultimatum.⁸

In an paragraph entitled "Our Answer - We Dissent" the editorial staff of the Orthodox Lutheran and the faculty of their seminary make this statement.

The fundamental fallacy is the apparent failure to recognize that the rejection of a confessional statement, accepted by a former sister Synod, constitutes in itself a state of confession.⁹

It is very evident that the OLC was convinced that the Wisconsin Synod had committed itself to a state of confession in its New Ulm convention

of 1951.

They had good reason to think this. In the Jan. 1952 Quartalschrift Prof. Reim had written a news item about the newly formed OLC. In this news item he states,

For while formal recognition of the new group must indeed be held in abeyance for the time being, yet we must recognize even now that the reasons for which this little group has made its grave decisions and taken its difficult stand are the very ones on which we have placed ourselves on record at last summer's convention, and by which we must stand unless we fail in the STATU CONFESSIO^{NIS} into which we have placed ourselves by our New Ulm resolutions.¹⁰

This statement clearly contradicts what Prof. Reim had stated in his letter to the OLC in Feb. 1953. One wonders how these contradictory statements came to be. Had Prof. Reim written this news item in the rush of meeting the deadline and therefore hadn't chosen his words carefully? One also wonders if the OLC ever pointed this contradiction out to Prof. Reim. Whatever the reason is for these contradictory statements, one can begin to see why the OLC was so disheartened over Prof. Blume's article. It was important to the OLC to know exactly when Wisconsin entered their state of confession.

It was these very resolutions of the New Ulm convention to which the organizing meeting of our Conference gave its assent, and officially transmitted this expression of agreement to the president of the Wisconsin Synod as an overture of fellowship.¹¹

Now let us go back and look at the first reason why the OLC was critical of the state of confession of Wisconsin. They thought that Wisconsin was remaining in this state much too long. The seeming inaction of Wisconsin irked the OLC. They just couldn't understand why it was taking Wisconsin so long to sever fellowship with Missouri. They disagreed

with Wisconsin's reasons for staying in a state of confession. It is therefore necessary for us to look at both Wisconsin's and the OLC's view of a state of confession. The proper understanding of these views are important to a proper understanding of the issues involved in the OLC's break-up.

Wisconsin's reasons for a state of confession are not the easiest things to find. This is due in part to the fact that they also used the terminology, "protesting fellowship". But even then official statements are hard to come by. One place some of the reasons are laid down are in the minutes of a meeting of the doctrinal committees of the CIC and WELS held July 18-19, 1972. Although this meeting was held in 1972, the discussions are beneficial for us to look at for they accurately reflect Wisconsin's position in the 1950's. In those minutes two reasons for a state of confession are given.

1. In order to offer opportunity for determining what the confessional position of the group for which it must be held responsible really is (this may become necessary because of mutually exclusive statements, pronouncements, resolutions made in such a group; because of conflicting positions contending for mastery in this group, one or the other of which may for good reasons be considered to be only temporarily in control);
2. To offer opportunity to bring Scriptural testimony against the error infecting the group to those brethren who are not themselves advocating and propagandizing the errors -- before treating such brethren as responsible partakers of the error or false practice infecting their group. 12

Another reason that was prominent in Wisconsin's view of a state of confession can be found in the explanations of the resolutions of the 1953 special Synod convention. There we read,

And Point five brings up what is perhaps the most important reason

for deferring a final decision, the need for further and thorough instruction of our congregations concerning the issues and doctrines involved. ¹³

The Wisconsin position, therefore, could be summed up by saying that they were concerned that all parties involved were thoroughly informed before any break in fellowship occurred.

The OLC differed somewhat in their view of a state of confession. Their main emphasis was on action and results. This can be clearly seen in an article entitled, "What Does Being 'In Statu Confessionis' Mean?"

Used in its ^oproper sense, therefore, the expression means that, the confessions no longer being in agreement, the accusing party suspends fellowship. And if this is not mere shadow-boxing, this includes the discontinuance of not only altar and pulpit fellowship, but also of prayer fellowship. . . However, the declaration of being "in statu confessionis" need not mean that the cleavage, complete as it is and openly as it should be declared, is permanent and beyond healing. . . According to Scripture, the state of confession, under such conditions, demands action, definite and quick action. ¹⁴

Another important consideration for the OLC was that a state of confession should have a time-table. Actions should be carried out according to a definite plan. If a time-table was not followed the state of confession probably would be in doubt.

With such a definition, it isn't hard to see why the OLC was very critical of Wisconsin's state of confession. This criticism reached its climax in December 1953. That month's issue of the Orthodox Lutheran is devoted almost entirely to the Wisconsin Synod. In reaction to the resolutions of Wisconsin's 1953 special convention we read,

BECAUSE OF THE OFFICIAL ADOPTION OF SUCH A COMPROMISE, THE WIS. SYNOD HAS BECOME A UNIONISTIC FELLOWSHIP, A PARTAKER OF THE SINS OF MISSOURI, A HETERDOX CHURCH BODY. ¹⁵

This position is reiterated in the July-Aug. 1954 issue of the Orthodox

Lutheran.

Our position is that the Wisconsin Synod as a corporate body has become heterodox through its unionistic association with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and through its tyrannical action in the case of Pastor Hallstein. . . We hold that the Wisconsin Synod as a corporate body is not in a true state of confession because of its continued fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.¹⁶

(These statements will become points of controversy in the ensuing break-up of the OLC.)

Therefore it isn't surprising to see in the same Dec. 1953 issue an official announcement of the OLC's withdrawal of their fellowship overture to the Wisconsin Synod. (appended to this paper) I feel, however, that it is significant that this reason is first cited in the third and last whereas of the resolution. The first two whereas' deal with a completely different matter. They deal with a purely practical matter. (cf appendix) This seems to indicate that, at the time, this matter was a more important reason for the OLC to reconsider their position with Wisconsin. Other things also seem to indicate this. Therefore, in the interest of presenting a complete picture as possible, it is necessary to take a quick look into this matter and see how it also soured Wisconsin to the OLC.

In many ways, Wisconsin's 1953 special synodical convention was a turning point in the OLC's relationship with Wisconsin. This is reflected in the Nov. and Dec. issues of the Orthodox Lutheran. These issues deal almost entirely with the Wisconsin Synod. Before this time there had been various articles about Wisconsin in the Orthodox Lutheran but nothing to compare with these articles. We have already cited their negative reaction to the resolutions passed at Wisconsin's special convention. But there was another incident that happened at that convention which really

cut the OLC to the quick. Dr. Kretzmann gives his report of this incident in the Nov. issue of the Orthodox Lutheran.

There is one fact which, in this connection, is of importance to the ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CONFERENCE. When one man declared that he, for conscience' sake, would have to withdraw from the Wisconsin Synod and give serious consideration to joining the O.L.C., he was told that his conscience could not govern the Synod and that he would be joining a body "with which the Wisconsin Synod is not in fellowship." So we know, at least, where we stand with regard to the chairman."

The fact that this incident is referred to many times in years to come shows how deeply they resented this remark.

This was the straw that broke the camel's back. Previous to this incident the OLC believed that Wisconsin was already snubbing them. They claimed that Wisconsin had never even answered their overture for fellowship. In these Nov. - Dec. issues they present documentation for their hurt feelings. They print correspondence between Presidents Brenner and Naumann of Wisconsin and President McLaughlin of the OLC. (cf appendix) The gist of this documentation is that the Wisconsin Synod never treated the OLC overture "with that care and consideration which such a serious matter deserved." The present writer is not in a position to decide if the OLC was justified or not in their complaint, it is sufficient here to note that they thought they were and therefore they felt snubbed.

So by the end of 1953 the OLC's opinion of the Wisconsin Synod had soured quite a bit. To sum up their feelings, they thought that on the one hand the Wisconsin Synod was scared to break with Missouri, and on the other hand they were rude in their dealings with the OLC. Add to this the fact that they might have had doubts about Wisconsin's honesty and a pretty gloomy picture is painted.

Their attitude towards Wisconsin doesn't seem to have changed much in the next two years either. At least that is how it appeared on the surface. The pages of the Orthodox Lutheran of those years contain various articles dealing with Wisconsin but the great majority of them are critical of Wisconsin for one of the reasons stated above. Below the surface, however, there is trouble brewing. This trouble breaks through in the winter of 1955-56. The main cause of this trouble, I feel, is the differing opinions within the OLC concerning Wisconsin's state of confession.

The immediate cause of the break hints at this but basically the split seems to be caused by a personality clash or clashes. How much personalities actually contributed to the schism is hard to determine. In small bodies personality clashes are inevitable. But it's significant that former members of both sides downplayed the personality side of it.

It all began at their seminary in Minneapolis. (Doesn't everything begin at the seminary?) One day Dr. Kretzmann remarked that "under the circumstances he could preach for" Pastor G. Fisher of Immanuel Lutheran Church (Wis. Synod), Mankato, Minn. (Pastor Fisher was in an unofficial state of confession against the Wisconsin Synod at this time. In 1957 he joined the OLC.) One of the members of Dr. Kretzmann's class was the son of Pastor E.C. Hallstein. In his next letter home, besides asking for money, this young seminarian also quoted Dr. Kretzmann's statement. Thus the controversy started.

What followed seems to be nothing more than a personality clash. A case of sour grapes. It seems as if Pastor Hallstein felt that Pastor

Fisher had once snubbed him. Before he joined the OLC Hallstein had been a member of the Wisconsin Synod. Right after he left the Wisconsin Synod he moved to Mankato. There he started attending Immanuel Church. It seems that one Sunday he wanted to take communion but Pastor Fisher refused him attendance on the grounds that they were no longer in fellowship. This infuriated Hallstein. Naturally when he heard from his son that Kretzmann had said that he could preach for G. Fisher, Hallstein immediately cried, "Unionism."

That is what touched the whole thing off. Soon sides were drawn up. Dr. Kretzmann refused to meet with the Committee on Theological Education or any other official representative of the OLC. Instead, reflecting Missouri's view of the church, he said he was answerable only to his home congregation. Finally in Dec. 1955 Dr. Kretzmann issued this ultimatum:

Unless the men (and others) who share Pastor E.C. Hallstein's position will withdraw their sinful charges against me by December 31, 1955, I shall no longer consider them, either individually or collectively as brethren in the faith.¹⁸

Incidentally, note Dr. Kretzmann's use of a time-table. In Jan. 1956 Hallstein and six other pastors met in Tinley Park, Ill. to sever relations with the OLC. They still called themselves the OLC for the whole of 1956 before they finally took their present name, the Concordia Conference. Meanwhile, Kretzmann and six other pastors met in Minneapolis. There they charged Hallstein and Company with causing a schism. They too hung onto the name, the OLC. Therefore in 1956 there were two different Orthodox Lutheran Conferences and two different periodicals called the Orthodox Lutheran. (This becomes very confusing to the researcher.) This also

seems to indicate that all this was only a petty family squabble.

But conflicting opinions concerning Wisconsin's state of confession surfaced so fast after the break that one is led to the conclusion that these differences must have existed also before the break. And not only that. These differences also play such a prominent part after the break that one wonders if they were not the underlying reasons for the split and that they just became crystalized after the rupture. It is also significant to note that when there was a movement under foot in 1963 to reunite the two groups the new OLC wanted to begin the discussions with these differences and the doctrinal questions that they involved. These differences can be summarized by a series of four questions.

1. Was the OLC a separatist body for not respecting Wisconsin's state of confession?
2. Was Wisconsin a heretodox church body?
3. Was Wisconsin, or any other church body not in fellowship with the OLC, members of the true visible church?
4. Could the OLC have confessional fellowship but not church fellowship with Wisconsin?

Some of these points were already in evidence in the declaration made by the Hallstein group at their conference held at Tinley Park. (cf appendix) There we see their ideas on the true visible church, church as compared with confessional fellowship, and a true state of confession. This is just another indication that these differences played a major role in the break. But let us take up each of these questions in order.

1. 1. Was the OLC a separatist body for not respecting Wisconsin's state of confession?

This question really goes back to a peculiar position that the OLC

had developed after they felt that they were rebuffed by Wisconsin. Their position was that people should come to them, the OLC shouldn't make the first move. "If the attempt to establish brotherly relations is to be resumed the first move will have to come from the Wisconsin Synod."¹⁹ This is just an example of one of their more common statements. (cf appendix, "What True Confessional Fellowship Requires" for another example) The impression given by all such statements is that the OLC would begin discussing fellowship only with those who had publically agreed with everything the OLC stood for. This is when the discussions would first start.

It becomes clear that this was an issue in the break from an article printed in the Orthodox Lutheran put out by the Kretzmann side. I will cite some lengthy quotations from this article for a couple of reasons. First, it is typical of the polemics used by both sides, and secondly it accurately reflects the attitudes of both sides. The group that became the Concordia Conf. consistently took the extreme view while the group that remained known as the Orthodox Conference took a somewhat more relaxed and charitable view.

It will not do for any of us to say, for example: "We were forced out of Missouri Synod churches. We had faithful pastors who taught us faithfully according to God's Word and warned us against the sins of our synod. Synodical officials invaded our congregations and by foul means deposed our pastors, leaving only a few of us to continue with our faithful shepherd. We left the Missouri Synod and we will have nothing to do with those who still remain in that hetrodox synod. Furthermore, we will not allow our brethren in the OLC to have a good opinion of anyone still in that synod or to believe that anyone in that synod is still worthy of our encouragement and help." Nor should any of us speak thus if their bad experiences were with another Lutheran synod.

Such an attitude would be separatistic and schismatic. It does not distinguish between the synod as a corporate body and the individuals who are in the synod. It is out of balance, that is, it places

a false, indiscriminate emphasis upon Rom. 16:17 and forgets about Eph. 4:3. It classifies everyone by name or by organizational membership, as Missourian or Wisconsin or Orthodox Lutheran, instead of judging the individual on his own merit in the case. . .

For people to claim the Lutheran name and to neglect or refuse to look about them for others to whom they can extend the hand of brotherhood, or for people to refuse to reach out and clasp an extended hand when they cannot justly find fault with the confessional position behind that hand, that is certainly not an orthodox Lutheran attitude but is a separatistic tendency. . .

There are those today who are suspicious and even accuse brethren of violating the Scriptural doctrine of fellowship because those brethren judge favorably and charitably of men who are not in the OLC but whose confessional position is commendable and whose record of progress in fighting against error may even be far in advance of the record made by those who harbor the suspicions and bring the false accusations. . .

There are those today who claim to be Lutheran but who build walls around themselves and seem to think of nothing but "avoid them" --"avoid them" --and then close the door on opportunities which the Lord places at their door. The test which they apply to others is found in words like these: "We have already forsaken our former brethren who turned heretodox. We have applied Rom. 16:17 to them. Have you done so? If not, you are disobedient to God's Word. We cannot risk the full truth of God's Word by being friendly to you. Come back after you have done your duty and separated yourself from Missouri, etc." Such people are separatistic in word and deed. Their spirit is not Lutheran. . .²⁰

From these quotations it is clear that the differing attitudes concerning people in a state of confession and especially concerning Wisconsin's state of confession contributed to the break-up of the OLC.

2. Was the Wisconsin Synod a heterodox church body?

This question is closely connected with the first one. It's quite evident that it also played a significant role in the split. This can be seen especially from an article written by Prof. McLaughlin. The entire article is in bold black type. It is printed less than a month after the break. Clearly, they want it be known where they stand on this issue.

This article refers back to the statement made in the Dec. 1953 issue of the Orthodox Lutheran and repeated in the July 1954 issue. (cf notes 15 & 16) Prof. McLaughlin says that at the time it was first used, the expression, "Missouri, a heterodox church body" was taken as an appositive to refer to the Missouri Synod. He continues,

We have, however, been informed only recently that the writer of the article did not so understand it, but meant "a heterodox church body," as the third member of a series of predicate nouns (see full quotation above), to refer to the Wisconsin Synod. . . We have no proof that the Wisconsin Synod, as a corporate body, teaches heterodox doctrines.²¹

He then refers to the announcement which appeared in the July 1954 issue. Prof. McLaughlin himself had written this announcement. But now he says,

I regard this phraseology of mine as unfortunate, since of course a body does not become "heterodox" through tyrannical action, but only through teaching and confessing false doctrine. But also this statement does not declare the Wisconsin Synod "heterodox" by reason of any false teaching which it as a corporate body had adopted, but only "through its unionistic association".

The considered position of the undersigned is that the Wisconsin Synod cannot at the present time be stigmatized as a heterodox body, and that such a charge is incapable of proof; but that it has cast suspicion upon its orthodoxy by its dangerous procrastination in severing its bonds with the heterodox Missouri Synod. . .²²

In this very same issue an additional point is made in this regard.

"Of significance is the fact that we in the OLC have never applied Rom.

16:17 either to the Wisconsin Synod or the Norwegian Synod."²³

Hallstein and his backers react to this position by saying,

The article itself lacks the clarity (which its title indicates) and is quite contradictory to the Scriptural position of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. . . The Orthodox Lutheran Conference position is the Scriptural position, namely, that those are heterodox "who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." ...²⁴

The last two issues which caused conflicts deal with more doctrinal

problems. Here again these differences take definite form after the break but they too must have contributed to the break-up. We see this again from the fact that these differences are so soon spelled out after the split. This is true especially in regard to the third question.

3. Was Wisconsin, or any other church body not in fellowship with the OLC, members of the true visible church?

In the declaration made at Tinley Park Hallstein and the six pastors allied with him made this statement:

We declare that the congregations of our Conference. . .comprise the true visible church on earth, Matt. 28:20; John 8:31,32. We do not deny that there MAY BE others, unknown to us, who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice. We hold those to be in error who apply to this doctrine of the true visible church Scripture passages which pertain only to the invisible Church, such as John 4:22; Luke 17:16; 10:33 --thus confusing the two.²⁵ (cf appendix)

Clearly this last sentence refers to Kretzmann and his followers, or as Hallstein and Co. called them, the "Minneapolis faction".

Unfortunately the "Minneapolis faction" never published their view of these particular passages. In fact they had hardly anything to say on this entire subject. But in a conversation with a former member of the "Minneapolis faction" the impression was given that this view of the true visible church espoused by the Concordia Conference was especially distasteful to them. The Minneapolis group seemed to have especially choked on the phrase, "there MAY BE others, unknown to us." Possibly they didn't even want to honor such statements with a reply.

But it is clear that Kretzmann and his followers would never have agreed with such an extreme position. They included themselves and all truly confessional Lutheran bodies, such as Wisconsin, in the true visible

church. We can see how this was all tied up with the way one viewed Wisconsin's state of confession.

Although the controversy brought about by this position can't be traced any farther, it is somewhat interesting to follow this position as it developed within the Concordia Conference. When, in Jan. 1957, the Hallstein group officially took the name the Concordia Conference they also changed the name and the statement of purpose of their periodical. The name was cleverly changed to the "Concordia Lutheran". The fourth paragraph of its new statement of purpose is of special interest to us.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our Concordia Lutheran Conference is not a sect or a false church body but that the congregations which form our Conference comprise the true visible church on earth, not denying, however, that there may be others unknown to us who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice and who also rightly belong to the true visible church of Christ.²⁶

So their view of the true visible church is not shoved under the rug as things are that are said in the heat of controversy, rather it is put on the forepiece of their official publication.

That is where it stayed for well over a decade. But after Wisconsin's break with Missouri a change takes place. They change the wording of this particular paragraph. (cf appendix) The new wording allows other confessional Lutheran bodies to be included in the true visible church. This is just another proof that they never thought Wisconsin was in a true state of confession.

The above three questions are all closely related. Kretzmann and his followers reasoned thus: Wisconsin was in a true state of confession

therefore it would not be heterodox and it would also be a part of the true visible church. Therefore they could be friendly towards Wisconsin and not be totally separated from them. The Concordia Conf. view was just the opposite. The Wisconsin Synod wasn't in a true state of confession therefore it was a heterodox church body and not a part of the true visible church. Therefore they thought that they had to separate themselves from Wisconsin.

The last issue is also connected to the first three, but it is somewhat more complicated. It revolves around some terms and distinctions that most people are not too familiar with. The terms are confessional fellowship as distinguished from church fellowship. This time it was the Minneapolis group which took the somewhat unfamiliar road. A former member of that group insisted that they didn't originate this distinction between church and confessional fellowship. But I couldn't find it used any other place and especially not in the sense they used it. Let us therefore now look at this final question.

4. Could the OLC have confessional but not church fellowship with Wisconsin?

As I stated above, this issue is somewhat confusing. Therefore I have appended some of the more important articles so that I won't misrepresent anybody in the event that I have misunderstood them.

That this also contributed to the split is again evident from the declaration made at Tinley Park. There we see their definitions of confessional and church fellowship.

We recognize those only as true brethren in the faith who openly and

publicly acknowledge our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, I Cor. 1:10. This we designate by the human term: confessional fellowship. It is the Scriptural duty of such heartily to support our work and endeavors and thus to practice church fellowship with us, otherwise they are separatistic, 2 Tim. 1:8; 3 John 9.²⁷

Already in the Dec. 1955 issue of the Orthodox Lutheran an article appears on this subject. (cf appendix) It is written by Pastor Bloedel who sided with Hallstein. The whole point of the article is that if anyone was in confessional fellowship with the OLC he would also naturally soon be in church fellowship. If it didn't result in this it must not be true confessional fellowship. The article doesn't leave much room or time for a state of confession. To sum his position up, church fellowship must quickly follow confessional fellowship.

The Minneapolis group, however, disagreed. This is seen in an article entitled, "The Necessary Distinction between Confessional Fellowship and Church Fellowship" written by Prof. McLaughlin. In it he first defines confessional fellowship.

Confessional fellowship is the actual discoverable fact that two or more individuals, congregations, or church bodies are teaching the same doctrine in conformity with the same confession.²⁸

He then defines church fellowship. "Church fellowship is joint worship and work in the religious sphere, or the practice of altar fellowship, pulpit fellowship, and prayer fellowship."²⁹ He then says,

That the discovery of confessional fellowship does not automatically establish church fellowship is due only to the requirements of good order and due consideration for our brethren in the faith...³⁰

Here he seems to leave some room for a state of confession on the part of at least one of the parties involved.

Here it might be well to add how a former member of the OIC explained this distinction. He said that confessional fellowship was just the opposite of a state of confession. In a state of confession confessional fellowship is broken while church fellowship remains intact. But when church bodies are only in confessional fellowship their confessional fellowship is intact but there is no church fellowship.

In the next issue of the Orthodox Lutheran Prof. McLaughlin bases this distinction on two passages from Luke. (cf appendix) I feel that I can't accurately reproduce his line of thought in summary fashion, therefore I direct the reader to the appendix to read this article in its entirety. It is entitled, "The Implication Of Luke 9:49,50 and Luke 11:23 With Regard to Christian Fellowship."

The Concordia Conference does not leave this interpretation go unchallenged. In their July 1956 issue of the Orthodox Lutheran they briefly give their own view of Luke 9:49,50. This article states,

Never before, in any of our old Lutheran writings on Christian doctrine, can we recall that this text has been applied in such a manner to confessional fellowship. . .The requirements for true confessional fellowship are clearly set forth in I Cor. 1:10. The text quoted above, therefore, cannot be interpreted to conflict with this plain passage. ³¹

The article continues by citing traditional interpretations of this passage.

In the Nov. 1956 issue they also use Dr. Kretzmann's own commentary as a weapon against him. They cite the two interpretations that he gives in his commentary of Mt. 18:17. (Evidently the Minneapolis group also used this as a proof passage for their view.) Neither of the interpretations he gives in his commentary mentions anything about confessional

fellowship.

It is interesting here to note a statement made in 1961 by the second Orthodox Conference. It occurs in an article dealing with Wisconsin's break with Missouri. There we read,

We understand full well that the confessional fellowship (as distinguished from Church fellowship), which remained unbroken. . .³²

Here they clearly state that they thought that their confessional fellowship with Wisconsin had never been broken.

These four questions seem to have been the major causes of the break-up of the OIC. They all have one thing in common -- they all somehow relate to Wisconsin's state of confession. If the break-up of the OIC was more than a personality clash, and all the evidence seems to indicate that, then the chief cause of the split, in my opinion, was the conflicting views within the OIC concerning this state of confession. I have not tried to show which side was right, or whose fault it was. I have only tried to show that the state of confession that Wisconsin entered affected other people and groups outside the immediate synods involved.

END - NOTES

1. Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, p. 18ff.
2. F. Blume, "A State of Confession -- A Study of Its Implications on the basis of II Thess. 3:14-15" The Northwestern Lutheran (Nov. 2, 1952) p. 345
3. E. Reim, "A State of Confession" The Northwestern Lutheran (Sept. 7, 1952) p. 282.
4. F. Blume, op. cit.
5. W. McLaughlin, "Is This the Voice of Wisconsin?" The Orthodox Lutheran (Dec. 1952) p. 25f.
6. Ibid.
7. E. Reim, "The Voice of Wisconsin" The Orthodox Lutheran (Feb. 1953) p. 57.
8. Ibid.
9. "Our Answer -- We Dissent," The Orthodox Lutheran (Feb. 1953) p. 57.
10. E. Reim. News Item. The Orthodox Lutheran (Nov. 1953) p. 211.
11. W. McLaughlin, "Romans 16,17 in Reverse" The Orthodox Lutheran (Nov. 1953) p. 211.
12. O. Siegler, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Doctrinal Committees of the CIC and the WELS, July 18,19 1972"
13. E. Reim, "Explanation of the Resolutions" The Northwestern Lutheran (Nov. 1, 1953)
14. P. Kretzmann, "What Does Being 'In Statu Confessionis' Mean?" The Orthodox Lutheran (Nov. 1953) p. 218.
15. P. Bloedel, "Where Does the Wisconsin Synod Stand Since Its Special Convention at Milwaukee?" The Orthodox Lutheran (Dec. 1953) p. 247.
16. W. McLaughlin, "Our Position Over Against the Wisconsin Synod" The Orthodox Lutheran (July-Aug. 1954) p. 126.
17. P. Kretzmann, "Synodolatry" The Orthodox Lutheran (Nov. 1953) p. 224.
18. P. Kretzmann, quoted in "Our Declaration" The Orthodox Lutheran (Feb. 1956) p. 18f.

19. W. McLaughlin, "Romans in Reverse" (op. cit.)
20. A. Schupmann, "Keeping the Balance Between Rom. 16:17 and Eph. 4:3" The Orthodox Lutheran (June, 1956) p. 83ff.
21. W. McLaughlin, "A Clarification: Wisconsin Synod 'Heterodox'" The Orthodox Lutheran (Feb. 1956) p.20f.
22. Ibid.
23. "Take Heed" The Orthodox Lutheran (Feb. 1956) p. 27.
24. P. Bloedel, "An Unclear Clarification" The Orthodox Lutheran (March 1956) p. 37.
25. "Our Declaration" The Orthodox Lutheran (Feb. 1956) p. 18ff.
26. "Statement of Purpose" The Concordia Lutheran (Jan. 1957) p. 2.
27. "Our Declaration" op, cit.
28. W. McLaughlin, "The Necessary Distinction between Confessional Fellowship and Church Fellowship" The Orthodox Lutheran (March 1956) p. 36f.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. P. Bloedel, "Our Attitude Toward Those Who 'Follow Not With Us'" The Orthodox Lutheran (July, 1956) p. 102f.
32. "New Pattern" The Orthodox Lutheran (Nov. - Dec. 1961) p. 167.

I have not added a bibliography because almost all the issues of The Orthodox Lutheran were used. This was necessary to get the flavor of the writings of both sides. I also used the Proceedings of both the OLC and the Wisconsin Synod.

DEC 1953

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To Make known the teachings, treasures, and history of the true Lutheran Church;

To Offer evidences that the Lutheran Church is Not a sect, and Not a New church, but rather a continuation of the Church of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior;

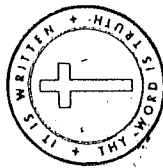
To Show what True Lutherans Must believe, how they are to Live a Christian life, suffer in patience, and die in peace; and

To Uncover the current false doctrines, to Oppose them, and to Warn against them, especially to unmask False Lutherans and their Aberrations from Scriptures and the pure Lutheran Confessions, including the Book of Concord of 1580, the Brief Statement of 1932, and our Confession of Faith.

The Orthodox Lutheran

Volume II December, 1953 No. 14

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Fellowship Overture Withdrawn

"WHEREAS the Orthodox Lutheran Conference extended the hand of fellowship to the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, and

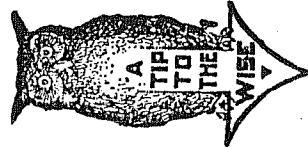
WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States has not acknowledged this hand of fellowship or made overtures for its consideration, and

WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States in a special convention held October 8-9, 1953, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, refused to accept or abide by clear words of Scripture to "mark and avoid" the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a heterodox church body, as commanded in Romans 16:17,

BE IT RESOLVED, THEREFORE, that Trinity Lutheran Church of Chesterfield, Missouri, ask the Board of Directors of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference to conduct a referendum among its constituency to immediately withdraw the hand of fellowship or overtures of fellowship until such time as the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States can adhere to clear precept of Scripture."

The above resolution has been studied and unanimously endorsed and subscribed to by the constituency of the ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CONFERENCE.

(Signed) W. H. McLAUGHLIN, Pres.



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Thanksgiving Echo

"Come, ye thankful people, come"
 unto the Lord your God with praise
 and thanksgiving. He is our Maker
 and the Giver of all our wealth and
 joy and peace. Praise His holy
 Name! He hath dealt bountifully
 with us. He hath done great things
 unto us, whereof we are glad and re-
 joice!

Gratitude to God is a fruit of the
 Spirit. It is a joyfully given fruit
 of the Christian's faith in God as
 the Father and Lover of all men.
 Sincere gratitude to our God is an
 outward manifestation of our honor,
 trust, love and appreciation of mercy
 unearned. As Christians we know
 that God hath richly blessed us only
 for His Son's sake. Having given
 unto us the greatest gift of all, name-
 ly, the forgiveness of all sins, which
 is ours by simple child-like faith in
 the redemptive work of Jesus, God
 has with the gift of His Son also
 given us all things. Neither will He
 withhold from us any good thing.
 That assurance we find in His in-
 fallible Word.

In particular do we glorify our
 Maker and Redeemer for our spiritual
 benefits and blessings which we en-
 joy constantly in blessed communion
 with God as believers. Day after day
 our God ministers grace unto His
 hearers through His Word and Sac-
 raments. Not once hath our Father
 in heaven rejected our pleas for
 mercy and forgiveness. The Spirit
 hath not failed to quicken us in the
 hour of spiritual need or weakness.
 Again and again He hath directed our
 attention to the flowing wounds of
 the Savior, Jesus Christ, through
 whom God loves us. As God has so
 graciously guided and directed our ef-
 forts toward growth in grace and
 knowledge of salvation, so He hath
 richly blessed our efforts to confess
 His name among men in truth and
 purity and placed His eternal and
 promised benediction upon our labors
 done in His name, i. e., according to
 His Holy Word. For this we are
 grateful indeed, but also encouraged

thereby to continue in the fight of
 faith, knowing that our rest is in
 heaven, and that He will be with us
 from day to day.

As Christian church people or as
 Christian citizens of the nation we
 join together with the Psalmist in
 saying, "Lord, I am not worthy of
 the least of all the mercy and truth
 which Thou hast showed unto Thy
 servant." God forbid that we should
 have failed in any manner to Thank
 and Praise Him. God forgive us for
 any ingratitude whereby we may ever
 have grieved and offended Him. (Cf.
 Is.1). God help us by His Word to
 know who is our God and to consider
 that He doeth all things well, yea,
 that He will, for Christ's sake, bless
 us and keep us. May every blessing,
 given and promised, be fully acknowl-
 edged and devoutly appreciated, al-
 ways, as gifts of divine grace, and
 hence be used by us to profit withal,
 without selfishness or the evil lust
 of greed.

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IN THE INTEREST OF THE TRUTH

Some Official Correspondence

2811 Irving Ave. N.
 Minneapolis 11, Minn.
 October 24, 1953

The Rev. Oscar J. Naumann, President
 The Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin
 727 Margaret St., St. Paul 6, Minn.
 Dear President Naumann:

Earlier this week I received a very surprising letter from President H. C. Nitz of the Western Wisconsin District in which he refers to a recent letter I wrote to him in which I stated that our "official overture for establishing fellowship relations with the Wisconsin Synod has remained unheeded by that body for more than two years." He states that he brought this "allegation of mine to the attention of the Conference of Presidents, and that "no one could recall ever having received such an official overture. President John Brenner stated he had never received any." Most surprising of all, he refers to a telephone conversation between Mr. Strumpfer and President Brenner which took place a little over a year ago, but says no one construed such a casual letter as an "official overture." We would certainly have been beyond measure astonished if anyone had so construed it. He asks that I direct my reply to you.

To keep the record straight I shall give you a little documentary history of this overture, and shall then await an acknowledgment from you or from those more directly concerned in this history, which took place prior to your incumbency, that our expression of desire for fellowship relations with your body has not been treated with that care and consideration which such a serious matter deserved. Your statement addressed to Rev. Hansen on the floor of your recent convention designating our body as "a body with which we are not in fellow-ship," as well as the convention's endorsement of the floor committee's recommendation to remain in fellowship with the Missouri Synod for another year, places our overture for all practical purposes in abeyance, as neither our conscience nor our self-respect would allow us to maintain or renew it under the present circumstances. A proper acknowledgment would, however, remove any imputation of doubt concerning the truth of statements printed in our official organ, lacking which acknowledgment we may feel obliged to make the facts of this matter more extensively known for our own defense in the eyes of the Lutheran public.

On October 23, 1951, less than a month after the organization of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, I addressed a letter to our Secretary, Rev. A. M. Schuppmann, in which I quoted our Resolutions of assent to the action of the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods from the Proceedings which were then in my hands for checking, so that he might transmit them officially to the respective presidents before the Proceedings became available in print. The full text of these Resolutions is printed on page 47 of the Proceedings of our first convention at Okabena, Minnesota, September 25 and 26, 1951, a complimentary copy of which Proceedings was supplied to President Brenner subsequent to his receiving a copy of the Resolutions in question. Particularly Point 3 of these Resolutions may be quoted here to show that they were definitely intended as an overture of fellowship—and, we may add, they were so understood.

"3. That we consider this assent to be expressive of the continued unity of doctrine and practice between our Orthodox Lutheran Conference and the afore-mentioned Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods in the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America."

On November 14, 1951, Secretary Schuppmann, having sent the Resolutions some weeks before, inquires in a letter to me: "Have you heard any reaction from the Wisconsin and Norwegian officials on our resolution that we consider ourselves in fellowship with them? Our resolution is an invitation for them to express themselves, as I understand it."

Finally in a letter of December 12, Secretary Schuppmann sent me the following letter dated December 6 over President Brenner's signature, which I copied and then returned to the Secretary's files.

December 6, 1951

Rev. Albert M. Schuppmann, Secretary
 Plymouth, Nebraska

Dear Pastor Schuppmann:

The resolutions of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference on our action on the Common Confession have been received and will be given serious attention.

It will not be necessary to assure you that we thank God for your declaration that you are in full harmony with their position, held by the Norwegian Synod and by our Convention at New Ulm for we are of the firm conviction that it should be passed on the Holy Scriptures.

But I have not yet had the opportunity to present our letter to the Committee on Church Union, and you will readily agree that this committee can do no more than make recom- mendations to our Synod, which will, after all, have to determine its stand in the matter. You cannot but be aware of the fact that your Conference has already taken action, while we are still maintaining fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by way of brotherly administration, and that this greatly complicates the question of declaring fellowship, or the continuation of fellowship, with your body.

May the Lord strengthen your group to maintain its testimony to the truth and bless our efforts to gain the complete assent of our sister synod.

Sincerely yours,
 The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod
 of Wisconsin and Other States,
 (Signed) By John Brenner, Pres.

After he had received a copy of our printed Proceedings from our Secretary, President Brenner addressed the following letter to me on February 4, shortly before an editorial change of my residence which with other circumstances delayed my reply until the end of April. This final exchange of correspondence I will insert in full, especially because of the conference with the Thiensville Faculty which is here mentioned.

February 4, 1952

Rev. W. H. McLaughlin
984 Lilac Street
Pittsburgh 17, Pennsylvania
Dear President McLaughlin:

Yes, I did receive a copy of the Proceedings of your convention. Thank you.

Secretary A. Schupmann has undoubtedly informed you of the contents of my reply. There is nothing else that I could add at the present time.

Your action in separating from corporate Missouri now was, we have no doubt, based on your conscientious conviction that this was your duty and the best way to achieve the desired results, and we can only respect your group for its fearless confession by deed.

Meanwhile, I would suggest that you keep in touch with our men on the issues on which some of those who are protesting (together with us) against the errors of the Missouri Synod are not in full agreement with us.

May the Lord graciously rule our hearts to do His will. Sincerely yours,
(Signed) John Brenner

R. I. Elberfeld, Indiana
April 30, 1952

The Rev. John Brenner, President, etc.
Dear President Brenner:

This is a belated acknowledgment both of your kind letter of February 4, in which you acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Proceedings of our convention, and honor the sincerity of the convictions which moved our group to separate from corporate Missouri, also of your sending me a complimentary copy of the Proceedings of the thirty-first convention of your Synod, the same being held in its first setting, out on recent invitation of your own staff to various destinations in four States, among others to Thiensville for a meeting of our O.L.C. Board of Directors with the Faculty there.

Our proposal of such a meeting was quite in line with your suggestion that we keep in touch with your men on the issues on which some of those who are protesting (together with you) against the errors of the Missouri Synod are not in full agreement with you. In this very frank and fraternal, though informal, meeting, however, our discussion of the Church Ministry truthfully open and unreserved as it was, did not bring to light any separating line the full truth of God's Word on either side. It did show our agreement in repudiating the theoretically congregational but actually hierarchical polity now being produced by the Missouri Synod, and in rejecting any idea of a Synod as a super-church, a rejection very emphatically and repeatedly voiced by members of the learned Faculty, and very heartily appreciated by the members of our Board. While the informal nature of the meeting precluded the passing of resolutions or the blessing of a document, all who were present seemed convinced that it was fruitful, under the blessing of a firm witness, of the truth which we serve, in the brotherly expression of godly unity in the one true faith.

We feel that, after the experience of this meeting, we can confidently give the lie to our adversaries who claim that our O.L.C., strongly opposed to unionism as we are, is still seeking an unscriptural selective fellowship with those not in doctrinal agreement with us when we seek to maintain and strengthen our ties with the Wisconsin Synod.

Very cordially and fraternally yours,
(Signed) Wallace H. McLaughlin

I believe the above correspondence will be enough evidence of my "allegation" that an overt act of fellowship, truthfully sent and received which, although graciously acknowledged by the President of the Wisconsin Synod at that time, was apparently not recognized by the Synod as such. I should be very interested to know what recommendations, if cogent, the Committee on Church Union made to the Wisconsin Synod on this matter (cf. Professor Berner's letter of December 6, 1951). Apparently one member of the committee, Professor Reim, would have been inclined to make favorable recommendations, judging by his article in the Quartalschrift at about this time (January, 1952).

You will understand my surprise that in the recent Conference of Presidents "no one could recall ever having received such an official overture. President John Brenner stated he had never received any."

Sincerely yours,
Wallace H. McLaughlin, President
Orthodox Lutheran Conference

Note: No reply to above letter has been received as of today, Dec. 3, 1953.

WANTED: Copies of the Concordia Triglotta, The Book of Concord production, in English-German-Latin edition with the Historical Introduction. Please correspond with Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, Pres. of the Orthodox Lutheran Seminary, Highland Station, Box 2604, Minneapolis 11, Minnesota.

American Lutheran Church's Error

A well-known error of the American Lutheran Church, which is now held mutually with it by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod through its adoption of the "Common Confession," is the error which calls for "human cooperation in salvation."

A few years ago one Dr. Fr. Pieper, for many years the leader of the Missouri Synod, remarked about this teaching: "We are ashamed to say it, that a Synod, even one which carries the LUTHERAN NAME, adopts and holds that miserable sentence known by every Christian to be erroneous: Man's conversion and salvation do not depend entirely upon the grace of God but to some extent upon the disposition of man." We quote in the mother tongue of Dr. Pieper: "So entsetzlich bitter vorecht es sich, wenn man sich hat hinreissen lassen, wider die klar bezeugte Wahrheit zu streiten."

Aside from being basically a heresy, such thinking (as still prevails in the A.L.C. and in Neo-Missouri) is "the result of a complete intellectual confusion." Dr. Pieper never minced words.

It has always irritated the Ohio Synod when the true Missourians labelled their denial of "by grace alone" an admission of human cooperation. To this day Ohio denies the sola Gratia, sola Fides, sola Scriptura. Now, one either teaches right or wrong about the precious Gospel of salvation. There is no middle road; there is no wholesome latitude of opinion allowable concerning ANY teaching of Scripture. We teach and speak as oracles of God or we do not. TERTIUM NON DATUR!

And where today does Missouri as a body publicly or privately reject the age-old errors of Ohio, or Iowa, or a Buffalo Synod, etc? Rather she boasts to the world that "doctrinal agreement has been achieved." How? By means of a simple capitulation to plain heresy. The worst of all is the fact that many men, clergymen and laymen, know this to be true and keep silent, thus becoming guilty of denying their Lord and their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Church and Politics

The recent encyclical of the GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH reads very much like the "representatives of the people" without consultation or agreement, and what they say is definitely a public shame, because in the first place churches should stay out of politics and secondly it is a disgrace when church people oppose honest efforts of the government to ferret out subversives against the freedoms of our great nation. We are definitely NOT in agreement with their policy of constantly covering up their unlawful activities with a show of religion. Surely we all are aware of the attitude of the majority of churches of today against the Holy Bible, and it is with sincere regret that we observe how a once conservative Presbyterian church body is now casting its lot with political and ecclesiastical radicalism.



A Good Defense

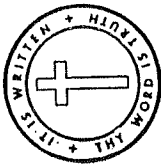
The Lutheran SENTINEL of the Norwegian Synod has joined us in a well-written defense of "Our DOGMATICS" by Dr. Fr. Pieper. Though originally written in splendid and beautiful German, the three volumes are now available in English entitled CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS.

Let's have more of such open and forthright defense of the TRUTH and bold attacks against the enemies of the truth who corrupt and even blaspheme the Word of God. It is a shame that more Lutherans have not condemned the recent bitter attacks against the sacred, clear, infallible Word of our God.

The reviewer in the SENTINEL points out clearly that in the review criticized we have the proof that the declared "doctrinal agreement" between the Missouri Synod and the A.L.C. is a public farce.

THE ORTHODOX LUTHERAN

Vol. V February, 1956 No. 2
OFFICIAL ORGAN



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Empire, Oregon

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Your subscription expires in the month designated with your address.

Our Declaration

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

I.

We acknowledge and declare that Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, by his declaration in his undated release received by our President and Vice-president on December 5 and 6, 1955, has terminated his fellowship with us as of December 31, 1955. Those who share this declaration of his, namely, "Unless the men (and others) who share Pastor E. C. Hallstein's position will withdraw their sinful charges against me by December 31, 1955, I SHALL NO LONGER CONSIDER

THEM, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY AS BRETHREN IN THE FAITH", have also terminated their fellowship with us. They have compelled us, therefore, in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, 1 Cor. 1:10, 1 John 2:19; Rom. 16:17,18, no longer to regard them as brethren in the faith.

We have been charged with the causing of this break. This cannot be the cause since our fellowship was cut off at the very time when we were striving to meet together as brethren to discuss differences which had arisen between us. The fact that we charged Dr. Kretzmann with error gave him no Scriptural reason for refusing to meet with us as his acknowledged brethren to discuss the charges, Eph. 4:2,3. Neither does the fact that we charged Dr. Kretzmann with error give him any Scriptural reason to refuse to consider us "either individually or collectively as brethren in the faith." Even though Dr. Kretzmann should hold us to be in error, yet Romans 16:17 (to which he appeals against us) does not call for such hasty action, but the Lord requires much patience and long-suffering among acknowledged brethren, John 13:34; 1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26. This action is sinful separatism forbidden by the Word of God, Heb. 10:25; 1 John 2:19.

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

II.

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

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

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

III.

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

Any who found it difficult to attend, or to send a statement of their position to, the Special Pastoral Conference, Tinley Park, January 18-19, 1956, as well as others, are here-with cordially invited still to join us in our *Declaration* and thus continue in their original status with the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of

the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. 4:3. Their subscription to our *Declaration* is to be sent to our President, and an announcement of their subscription will then be made promptly in the *Orthodox Lutheran*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Dec 1955)

What True Confessional Fellowship Requires

"If someone holds protesting membership in a heterodox Lutheran body, that does not necessarily mean anything to us of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference; but if he protests against the same errors which we oppose, and shares our *Confession of Faith*," then we can justly expect that he inform us of this agreement and declare fellowship of faith with us, though he may not immediately join us. Then—and only then—we should be in duty bound to acknowledge him as a brother. . . .

"From the time that a protesting member of a heterodox body tells us of his agreement with us, however, we expect that he will publicly acknowledge us in the face of our adversaries, make common cause with us, support our work to the extent of his ability, and show evidence that he is either making progress in bringing his associates to the acceptance of the truth or sever his connection with them." O.L. vol. 1, p. 121.

"It therefore behooves every Christian to unite with an orthodox body, a congregation in which the doctrine of Christ is preached and professed in all its purity and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's ordinance. (Hebr. 10:25). It is his duty to extend the hand of fellowship to all other orthodox bodies within his reach or to accept such hand when it is offered. All this, because it is his duty to bear testimony to the truth of Christ in word and deed and to promote the cause of truth in every way consistent therewith, and because of the unity of the Spirit and of faith which we should endeavor to keep. (Eph. 4:3)." O.L.T. vol. 2, p. 54.

What about those, then, who declare: "My sympathy is still with your cause, but for the sake of avoiding confusion, I had to stand aside, etc. etc.?" We answer: "St. Paul was deeply hurt when he had to stand alone at his first trial. He wrote to Timothy: 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.' 2 Tim. 4:16. Paul was justified in his complaint. Brethren must stand by the brethren, not just stand by. Remembering, no doubt, the fact that no one stood by him at his first court hearing, Paul

also warned Timothy—and all of us: 'Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel.' 2 Tim. 1:8. Luther comments on this as follows, in part: 'I see that it is necessary to speak a good word of admonition to those whom Satan is now beginning to persecute. Among them are those who want to escape danger, when they are attacked, by saying: *I do not stand with Luther nor with anyone else; I stand with the holy Gospel*; and so they are left in peace. Still in their hearts they regard my doctrine as evangelical and adhere to it. Surely, such a confession does them no good, but it is the same as denying Christ. . . . If Timothy had said: *I do not stand with Paul or Peter but with Christ*, and yet knew that Peter and Paul taught Christ, he would have denied Christ.' (*Kirche u. Amt*, p. 147f.) Is it possible to say that we stand by Christ and then refuse to stand by those who preach and defend His truth?" O.L. vol. 2, p. 187. —B.

ANOTHER PASTOR OUSTED BY MISSOURI SYNOD OFFICIALS

Recently another pastor, the Rev. Paul Koch of La Crosse, Indiana, was ousted from the pastorate to which he had been called by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20, 28). As a result of intervention into the congregation by officials of the Synod, a resolution was adopted by the members to terminate his office in their midst. The reason given was: "Whereas St. John's Lutheran Church of La Crosse, Indiana, is a member of the Missouri Synod and wishes to remain so, and whereas our present pastor, the Rev. Paul G. Koch is creating dissension, and giving offense by constantly accusing the Synod of false doctrine." It is clear to all our readers that the Missouri Synod still is not willing to heed the admonitions which its members bring to it from the Word of God? Pastor Koch subsequently terminated his membership in the Synod, stating his reason as obedience to God's Word, Romans 16, 17. Twenty-six communicants and their families held with Pastor Koch, and this congregation is already now constructing a church building. It is a frame structure, seating 130, with an added wing for Sunday school classes and meetings. Mr. K. J. Lohrmann of Berwyn, Ill., is serving the congregation as architect without remuneration. The congregation's name is "Our Savior's Lutheran Church." It is our desire to study further the confessional position of this congregation and we hope that finding it fully Scriptural, we may be able to acknowledge and practice with it the true church fellowship which is based alone on full agreement in Bible doctrine. (1 Cor. 1, 10). —H.D.M.



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



—Our Statement aimed to build!— 1947-1953

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A CLARIFICATION

On the inside cover page our readers will note that the language in some of the paragraphs has been somewhat altered in the column *Statement of Purpose*. In the 4th paragraph from the top, for example, where it previously read, "To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, etc." There the following substitution has been made. "To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our Concordia Lutheran Conference is not a sect, or a false church body but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible church on earth."

The other substitution is found in the 5th paragraph which formerly read, "To urge all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice to acknowledge our position openly and publicly etc." This paragraph now reads, "To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing church fellowship with them."

These substitutions are not a change in the doctrinal position of our Concordia Lutheran Conference, but have merely been made for the sake of clarity and thus to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of our readers and friends. Moreover, this is also in accord with the last paragraph of our *Statement of Purpose*, "... Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression."

—THE EDITORIAL STAFF

April, 1956 (O.L.C.)

THE IMPLICATION OF LUKE 9:49,50 AND LUKE 11:23 WITH REGARD TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

A summary of an essay accepted by the Northern District
Pastoral Conference of the O.L.C., February 2, 1956

Luke 9:49,50: "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." Parallel passage: Mark 9:38-40.

Luke 11:23: "He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." Parallel passage: Matthew 12:30.

Two preliminary considerations may be presumed to be axiomatic among those who reverence God's Word. The first is that all Scripture is written for our learning, Rom. 15:4. These two texts are not mere records of historical incidents, but offer divine guidance for our conduct. The second principle is that Scripture cannot contradict itself. Titus 1:2. The first passage uses the personal pronoun "us," and shows that a positive relation to Christ and His disciples is not contingent upon a recognized outward fellowship with them as a group of true confessors externally practicing fellowship. The second passage uses the personal pronoun "Me," and shows that any exercise of true fellowship with those who are Christ's in the confession of His truth and in His victory over the evil one is excluded by a negative relation to Him and to His truth.

Clearly Luke 9:49,50 refers to acknowledgment of confessional fellowship in spite of "followeth not with us." Jesus does not refer to a fact which is clear to His omniscience, but which cannot be expected to influence the conduct of His disciples. The true discipleship and confessional fellowship of that unknown man who was casting out devils in Jesus' name could have been ascertained, in so far as the faith of the heart is manifest by the confession of the mouth, if, instead of impeding the man's use of Jesus' name, they had inquired as to his confession of faith. But they had regarded the fact that "he followeth not with us" as enough to prevent his recognition as a servant of their Lord. They regarded outward connection with their group of true confessors as paramount in determining the stranger's relation to their Lord. And for this the Lord rebukes them. They should bear in mind that He knows who are their true brethren better than they (cf. I Kings 18:13; also 19:18), and that He may well have produced by His Spirit, operative through His Word, a confession of His pure truth in most unexpected quarters, previously unknown to them. Suspicion, negative judgment not based on known facts but on ignorance, is a transgression of the Savior's explicit command, and a contradiction to His entire spirit, as He says a few verses further on in rebuke to these same disciples (the sons of thunder) for a similar exhibition of zealotry: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." (v. 55).

If it is the Lord who establishes the invisible fellowship in the Spirit, it is also He who gives its expression in an accordant confession of His full truth. Therefore organizational externalism is so exceedingly dangerous. The Missouri Synod in the days of its orthodoxy was careful not to define the true visible church in terms of an organization, but in terms of a confession, therefore "Lutheran," not "Missouri Synod" or "Synodical Conference." And may we never presume to make the true visible church coextensive with the Orthodox Lutheran Conference! If we should ever do so we would in that day be neither orthodox nor Lutheran but a sect. When we know that someone outside our fellowship is a confessor of the full truth, since this is definitely ascertainable in many cases to anyone who has the good will to inquire and the willingness to acknowledge God's work in our fellowmen, then it is our duty to acknowledge

this, and not by a negative attitude to "impede" (more literal translation of the Greek word rendered: "forbid") his finding his way into fellowship with us and feeling at home in our fellowship. The requirements rightly made of those who are in confessional fellowship with us in the articles quoted on pages 176 and 177 of last December's O.L.C. are reciprocal. To hold that because we are a church-body confessing God's full truth, and some other confessor of the truth may be an individual or a single congregation which "followeth not with us," that therefore he has an obligation to acknowledge us, but we have no corresponding obligation to acknowledge him, is the very emphasis on organizational externalism which our Lord here disallows. Secondly, such an attitude would be a refusal to carry out the objective specified under Article III, 3, of our Constitution. Even those who seem to confess the truth but negate such confession by unionistic fellowship should not be "brushed off," but urgently invited to exchange false fellowship for the fellowship of their true brethren.

Clearly Luke 11:23 refers to denial of church fellowship on the basis of "not with Me." "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth." This is one who "causes divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned" (Rom. 16:17). As orthodox doctrine, Scriptural practice, brotherly love, and Christian conduct, open the heart, enlarge the sympathies; so the rejection of Christ in His Word, both of doctrine and of precept, makes sectarians, here-tics, schismatics, fanatics, breaks bonds knit by the Savior, scatters, and thus makes it evident that he that is not with Christ is against Him, and then necessarily also against His true followers. And this must also be openly acknowledged. With such there can be no pulpit, altar, and prayer fellowship.

—Wallace H. McLaughlin



THE WEDDING IS READY

*The wedding is ready, the wedding above,
And we are invited by heavenly love
To share in the blessings of grace,
Rich blessings for us, earned on Calvary's hill,
Which now through the Gospel are brought to us still
With beams from His fatherly face.*

*The wedding is ready, the food is prepared,
For He with His children His glory has shared
'Ere yet earth's foundation was laid,
And He in Baptism has made us His own,
We are not forsaken, we stand not alone,
No longer we shall be afraid.*

*The wedding is ready, the garment supplied,
The portals of heaven, they stand open wide
To call us to enter our Home.*

*And we shall there stand at the heavenly throne,
For we have salvation by mercy alone,
To Him we with confidence come.*

P. E. K.

MAR 1956 (O.L.C.)

THE NECESSARY DISTINCTION

between

CONFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP AND CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

(A condensation of an article published in the Sept. '55 O.L.T.)

While the terms with which this article deals are not Biblical, and the correct understanding of them is therefore not necessary for spiritual life, any confusion as to the meaning which has been historically attached to them by orthodox Lutheran writers might easily lead to errors in practice.

The Brief Statement of 1932, which our Orthodox Lutheran Conference accepts as an important part of its creedal basis, declares: "The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications." An indiscriminate practice of fellowship with all who bear the name "Lutheran" would therefore involve definitely unionistic practice. Confessional fellowship requires much more than a mere common name and formal acceptance of the same creeds. And confessional fellowship is a prerequisite for any practice of church fellowship.

Confessional fellowship is the actual discoverable fact that two or more individuals, congregations, or church bodies are teaching the same doctrine in conformity with the same confession. Confessional fellowship is not, like the inner faith of the heart which unites all Christians in the communion of saints, a fact of faith, but it is a fact of experience. Confessional fellowship, however, like the spiritual fellowship of faith in the

heart, is, when sincere and orthodox, a gift of God. This very fact makes it a sacred duty for all confessors of the truth to seek out and recognize each other. To ignore or deny the evidence of such doctrinal unity is a sin which, in the Scriptures as well as in the usage of the Church, is well known as schism. True Lutherans have always desired and sought church fellowship with those who agreed with them in doctrine, and it is therefore impossible to unite the schismatic tendency with true Lutheranism.

Church fellowship is joint worship and work in the religious sphere, or the practice of altar fellowship, pulpit fellowship, and prayer fellowship. Such fellowship between those not united in doctrine is unionism. God's Word plainly requires us to practice fellowship with those whom we know to be one with us in doctrine: 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3. God's Word just as plainly forbids us to practice fellowship with those who "cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned": Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17. Those who are already bound together in church fellowship thereby obligate themselves to arrange all matters pertaining to church fellowship together.

Confessional fellowship is a necessary prerequisite for church fellowship, as the Scripture passages just quoted demonstrate. That the discovery of confessional fellowship does not automatically establish church fellowship is due only to the require-

ments of good order and due consideration for our brethren in the faith, and the necessity of allowing time for mutual conference and mature deliberation in order to assure all concerned that the confessional unity is actually existent and not merely apparent, and that it controls the church practice of those who profess it. But the basic principle is confessional unity, and where that exists an orthodox Lutheran will always desire and seek its expression in the practice of God-pleasing church fellowship.

—W. H. McLaughlin

Attention

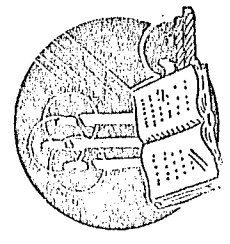
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—Editor and Bus. Mgr.

The Church Fellowship Committee of the O.L.C. is composed of the President, Vice President, and Secretary of the Conference, and the Faculty of the Seminary. This committee stands ready to discuss matters of church unity at any time with such who may be in any way interested in negotiations toward true Lutheran union on the basis of unity in all doctrines of Holy Writ.



Be of Good Cheer!

Thou sayest, Lord: "Be of good cheer. Let fears not overcome thee! My words of consolation hear, Cast them not ever from thee, For enemies in number rise And oft thy heart, despairing, cries For help and for protection."

When Thy Word sounds: "Be of good cheer, Though all the world forsake thee: All sorrow thou shalt overcome, They shall not overtake thee. Look unto Me," Thou sayest, Lord, "Be ever guided by My Word, In life and death thy comfort."

At last we hear: "Be of good cheer. I shall to heaven lead thee; I shall there through eternity With heav'nly manna feed thee. There milk and honey shall be found With which My own I will surround. To joys supernal lead thee."

P.E.N.