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WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE MEN WHO JOINED THE
CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The writer is aware of at least three histories of the Concordia Lutheran Conference (CLC), more if one considers those written about the Orthodox Lutheran Conference (OLC), the name by which the CLC was known before the 1956 split (see the Appendix).

A fourth look at the CLC ought to be different. The premise upon which this paper is based is that *people*, not just events, make history. This is the reason why the writer has bothered to include so much "personal" material.

Every good reporter or historian tries to remain objective. And yet everyone has a bias based on his point of view, which largely comes from what he is taught. And no matter how objective a reporter or an historian tries to remain, his bias will show in one way or another. When the Christian researches and writes history, he has the added objective (and responsibility) to speak the truth in love. It is the writer's sincerest desire to achieve the proper balance between the recording of documentable facts and avoiding biblical false witness, as he has learned from Dr. Luther's Small Catechism.

The writer has tried to record the following pages in a dispassionate, non-polemic way without making too many comments or speculations. The intended result is that the reader will be able to see the events as they unfold in a dispassionate way and then come to his own conclusions.

NAC--SR. CH. HIS. PAP.--3

In the sifting and shifting of reports from various sources, some historical inaccuracies may have crept in. If any reader cares to correct such a mistake, the writer will incorporate any well-documented changes into this record for future reference.

The E.C. Hallstein Story

E.C. Hallstein graduated from the seminary (presumably Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) in 1927. His first marriage produced at least four children.¹ Hallstein's first wife died in 1940 (?). He did re-marry shortly thereafter.

Hallstein's life could be characterized as consisting of five separations (in the generic sense). The first occurred when he was removed from Trinity Lutheran (LC-MS) of Corona, SD by a vote of 31 to 11 on July 1, 1952. The odd thing about this removal is that the reasons were not stated until nine days later when the President and Vice President of the South Dakota District (LC-MS) together with the circuit visitor finally presented them.²

On July 30, 1952, Bethlehem (Raymond, SD) and Peace (Clark, SD), both WELS congregations, extended their call to Hallstein.³ That they were not aware of his removal from the pastorate in Corona is evident from the minutes of the special meeting held on September 8, 1952, by both congregations at Raymond. Pastor Meier (vacancy pastor ?) read a letter to the congregation which "he had written to Hallstein regarding his ineligibility for call." Synodical officials of Wisconsin and Missouri were to hold a meeting at Aberdeen the next week to determine Hallstein's eligibility for this call, which he had already received.

¹ Luther, Margaret, Mary, Stephen.

² Orthodox Lutheran, August, 1952, p. 136.

³ From the minutes of the voters' meeting.

Hallstein must have been declared eligible because he was installed as the pastor of the two WELS congregations.

On November 8, 1953, a special meeting was held at Raymond "to decide whether this congregation should or should not withdraw from the Wisconsin synod." 32 voters were present. The motion was passed to recess for 30 minutes to discuss whether to let President Albrecht (District President of Dakota Montana) sit in on the meeting. "During the recess period Rev. Hallstein presented and explained the Resolution which was adopted at the Milwaukee Convention [1953]." It seems as though Hallstein was trying to move ahead with the matter of leaving WELS. So the Chairman, who had informed Hallstein the day before that he had phoned Albrecht and invited him to attend the meeting (much to Hallstein's displeasure),⁴ "then stated that Pres. Albrecht was in the immediate area, ready to be present at the meeting," however only in an advisory capacity. "At this time Pres Albrecht. . .entered the meeting" along with several members of the Clark congregation. "Motion was made by [a member] that the elders and some members of the congregation take the responsibility for Pres. Albrecht and Rev. Rutz [a District official ?] presents [I believe he means "presence" here]. Rev. Hallstein wished to add to the above motion that their presents [presence] was against his wishes." Discussion ensued. "Pres Albrecht and Rev. Rutz were then excused from

⁴ E.C. Hallstein, Orthodox Lutheran, February, 1954, p. 24-25.

the meeting." Motion to vote on the matter was called: a "yes" vote meant they would "stay" in Wisconsin; a "no" vote meant they would "depart." "Rev. Hallstein stated that if this motion actually carried, the Pastor would be disposed [deposed ?] for unscriptural reasons. On a ballot vote the results were: 22 "yes" votes, 7 "no" votes and 3 blank ballots. The motion carried." On this same page the following note appears: "These Minutes were approved as read at a meeting held November 22, 1953 by the following members of the true Lutheran Church of this vicinity:" Seven signatures follow, the third being Rev. E.C. Hallstein's.

It is the writer's deductive understanding that Hallstein equated a "we're staying with WELS" vote with a "we're removing our pastor" vote. Whether or not the congregation recognized this equation as valid makes little difference. Hallstein's comment could hardly be a binding amendment to the motion since it was not moved, seconded or even voted upon. The congregation merely voted whether or not to remain in the WELS. The fact that Hallstein and his group approved of these minutes is adequate proof of their truthfulness.

In a page-long addition to the official congregational records headed, "A continuation of Nov 8, 1953 meeting," the acting secretary⁵ notes: "After the votes were counted

⁵ The congregation's secretary was among those who left the congregation and remained with Hallstein. His signature accompanies the seven mentioned above.

the secretary left. . . . At this time Rev. E.C. Hallstein stated it was impossible for him to continue as our pastor." A motion was passed to acknowledge that a vacancy existed. Rev. Albrecht, who had been excused before the vote was taken, closed the meeting with a prayer.

According to the letter that E.L. Mehlberg wrote to OJ Naumann on January 1, 1954, announcing his own resignation from WELS, Hallstein "severed" relations with Wisconsin Synod in protest for conscience sake.⁶

Hallstein saw the whole matter differently:

"In a meeting held at Raymond, SD, on November 8, 1953, the undersigned was deposed from his office as pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, by a majority vote of the congregation. The motion contained no charge of misconduct in office. In fact, it was worded in such a way as to leave the impression that the issue involved had no bearing on the pastoral office whatsoever. To all appearances, the members were merely voting on the question whether or not to retain membership in the Wisconsin Synod. So the thing appeared on the surface but the actual fact of the matter was far different."⁷

Hallstein goes on to associate his "deposing" with the removals of other DLC pastors by Missouri Synod officials, implying that Wisconsin was guilty of the same kind of tyranny.

Before we leave this section of Hallstein's story, it may be of some value to take note of the fact that Hallstein

⁶ The rest of the paragraph continues with this line of thought: because the Wisconsin Synod adopted a resolutions at a special session in Milwaukee on October 8 and 9, 1953 continuing fellowship with LC-MS, thereby "disrupting the congregations in Clark and Raymond."

⁷ E.C. Hallstein, Orthodox Lutheran, February, 1954, p. 24-25.

did have a group of members who followed him. Were they merely following the man they recognized as their duly called pastor, or was there also some feeling on their part that Hallstein had been treated fairly? The latter cannot be denied. The secretary noted in the minutes that President Albrecht did not quote any Scripture to prove the points he was making. He merely stated that what he was saying was scriptural. It is unclear what points Albrecht was making.

As a result of his departure from the Wisconsin Synod, Hallstein sought out and found fellowship with the newly formed Orthodox Lutheran Conference (See Appendix). Hallstein had attended the OLC Convention in 1953,⁸ a few months before he left Wisconsin. At the 1954 OLC Convention, Hallstein was "formally received into membership of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference."⁹ His congregation, however, did not join the OLC, choosing rather to remain independent to this day.

The third "separation" occurred in the following year. Hallstein challenged a statement made by Dr. Kretzmann at the seminary in January 1955 as being unionistic. This action and subsequent reactions by both sides resulted in the split of the OLC into OLC and CLC in 1956 (See Appendix).

⁸ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, August 21-24, 1953, Registration, p. 2.
⁹ Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, August 20-23, 1954, p. 55.

The fourth "separation" took place on June 25, 1961, when the CLC voted to expel Hallstein and suspended fellowship with Trinity of Clark, SD,

"because he persistently, without valid reason, refused to be governed by the Scriptural objectives and Christian procedures outlined in the Conference Constitution which all members have mutually agreed to follow by their subscription to the same."¹⁰

According to Hallstein's comments, which the CLC secretary added to the minutes at Hallstein's request, Hallstein felt that he had not been given a fair chance to show that he had "not violated either the Scriptural procedures as set forth in the Constitution or the Word of God."¹¹ But the Convention minutes show that the Conference pastors gave him three opportunities to resolve the matter right then and there at the Convention, according to the procedures set down in the CLC Constitution.

When the motion came to a vote, three people voted not to expel Hallstein. They were Pastor J.E. Shufelt and the two delegates from his two congregations in Iowa. Apparently they also felt Hallstein was not given ample opportunity to defend himself. Consequently, "It was also recognized by the Conference that Pastor J.E. Shufelt of Muscatine, IA, who publicly upheld Pastor Hallstein's disorderly position, thereby also severed his fellowship with the Conference, together with two lay-delegates from

¹⁰ Concordia Lutheran, July, 1961, p. 103.

¹¹ Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, June 24-26, 1961, p. 25.

his congregation."¹² Hallstein and Shufelt remained in fellowship until Shufelt's death in 1971 or '72.

Pastor E.R. Stallings, Jr.¹³ (Holy Scripture of San Antonio, TX), entered into fellowship with Hallstein's congregation, Trinity, in Clark, SD, in 1975. They became acquainted through Stallings' mother who had read some of Hallstein's writings in Christian News. Hallstein experienced the fifth separation when he and Stallings went their separate ways in late 1979.

E.C. Hallstein died in 1988. His widow still lives in Clark, SD. As of May 7, 1989, seven of the remaining ten members of Hallstein's independent congregation joined the WELS church in Raymond, thus ending a separation of fellowship which lasted over 35 years.

¹² Concordia Lutheran, July, 1961, p. 103.

¹³ Now a pastor in the CLC (see below). At that time Stallings was independent.

THE J.E.SHUFELT STORY

The writer knows less about this man than any other of the nine pastors who have left the Concordia Lutheran Conference over the years. His name is J. Ernest Shufelt.

The earliest record I could find on this man was in the 1933 edition of the Statistical Yearbook of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States. According to that record Shufelt served one of the "colored missions" of the Synodical Conference namely St. Luke's of High Point, NC. The 1947 Statistical Yearbook of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod lists St. Luke's as "vacant" and Shufelt at the newly opened "colored mission" at Southern Pines, NC (St. James). By 1951, St. James was vacant.

Here the evidence gets a little confusing. The Lutheran Annual (LC-MS) lists Shufelt's address in Southern Pines until 1951. (1952 and '53 are missing from WLS library.) The 1954 Lutheran Annual has Shufelt retired ("em.") and living in Hudson, NY. He is not listed in 1955.

Shufelt was not one of the original signers of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference confession. But by 1952 he was a member of that fellowship, serving a congregation in Pittsburgh, PA.¹⁴ He stayed in Pennsylvania at least until November of 1953, as the OLC directory lists his home in Verona.¹⁵ By December of 1954, Shufelt had moved to Oskaloosa, IA, to serve the OLC congregation there.

¹⁴ Orthodox Lutheran, November, 1952, p. 20.

¹⁵ Ibid, November, 1953, p. 227.

Eventually that congregation was listed as Sigourney-Muscatine (two cities about 50 miles apart in southeast Iowa).

I have not as yet discovered what was the immediate cause of Shufelt's joining the OLC. It can safely be assumed that he too had difficulties with either Missouri's doctrine or its practice, or both.

He was put out of the Concordia Lutheran Conference for voting against the expulsion of E.C. Hallstein at the 1961 CLC Convention (See Hallstein's story above). His first wife as well as his second wife preceded him in death. I don't know if he had any children.

After Shufelt's death, his two congregations tried to maintain themselves for a few years. A man whom Shufelt had begun to train for the ministry read sermons from Hallstein. When a couple of families moved out of the area, the congregations disbanded. Some of the remaining members joined area WELS and ELS churches.

The A.J. Cordes Story

The reader may notice a similarity between the writer's name and name of the man under consideration in this "chapter." Alvin John Cordes is the writer's father.¹⁶

Cordes was born in Wolf Point, MT on May 1, 1930. Because his father was a pastor in the Missouri Synod, he lived in a number of places in Montana, Minnesota and Canada. After a few years of odd jobs and one year at Bethany College in Mankato, MN, he attended Concordia Seminary in Springfield, IL. He wanted to be a Christian psychologist rather than a minister, even while he was at the seminary. But he took a call into the ministry anyway. He served three LC-MS parishes in Colby, KS, Power/Fairfield, MT, and Murdo, SD, staying about a year and a half in each place and experiencing "a lot of trouble" in all three. Aware of the liberalism in the Missouri Synod, he resigned from the synod in 1961, but not from his congregation in Murdo. They eventually voted him out at the instigation of some of the district officials.

Out of a job and with five children, Cordes set out for Denver to find secular employment. He also began publishing a periodical called The Minor Missourian which he sent to other dissidents. Copies of this paper reached the hands of Pastor M.L. Natterer of Lebanon, OR (CLC), who then invited Cordes to seek fellowship in the Concordia Lutheran

¹⁶ Whatever items are not specifically documented come from (taped) letters or from the writer's personal knowledge.

Conference. Cordes passed colloquy at the 1962 Annual Convention in June, and by August he was installed as pastor of St. Paul's in Empire (Coos Bay), OR. For seven years he served that congregation, wrote a number of articles for the Concordia Lutheran on Evangelism, wrote an Evangelism Handbook, helped instigate a tract ministry, and served on the Committee on Missions.

In the January 1966 issue of the Concordia Lutheran, it was announced that Cordes had resigned from the Tract Committee. There was strife at the Annual Convention that summer. One of the things that bothered Cordes tremendously, because of his great love for mission work, was the fact that the Committee on Missions didn't find it necessary to meet during the whole previous year.¹⁷ Cordes didn't attend the '67 Convention (his wife was eight months pregnant with their seventh child) nor the one in '68 (because he didn't want to). He resigned from the Conference on March 31, 1969.

Here the writer has conflicting information to present. **On the one hand**, Cordes felt that the CLC put obstacles in the way of meeting with other Lutheran church bodies (by setting tough agendas which hashed over old differences). He also felt that the Conference wasn't doing enough Evangelism work, and that it wasn't growing in numbers for this reason. He was discouraged about going to the Conventions because, in his opinion, mission outreach was

¹⁷ Proceedings of the 16th Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, 1966, p. 36.

not enough of a priority. On the other hand, he talks (in the taped "interview" he sent me) about how the CLC pastors pushed their president to "get down to business" with him. He does not state what the "business" was. He put the president off by refusing to discuss anything until the president provided him with an agenda for the meeting. According to Cordes, the problem the president wanted to meet with him had to do with the discipline of two members of St. Paul's (Coos Bay). Since they had recently died, Cordes felt the case was closed. He also felt that the Conference had no business "butting into" congregational affairs. Cordes comments: "So I resigned [from the CLC] when he [the president] said he was going to come to Coos Bay." Later he says: "So I left because they did not have a missionary spirit and because they were getting into congregational affairs."

In the "Presidential Report to the 1969 Convention," the president writes:

"During the past year it became necessary. . .to deal with a brother pastor concerning whom there was evidence of public violations of Holy Scripture in the administration of his pastoral office."¹⁸

Besides the president's overtures, another pastor was also writing to Cordes about doctrinal matters.

"A layman from California, interested in our Conference as one whose doctrine and practice he shared, and, through correspondence with Pastor Cordes, finding him to hold positions in doctrine and practice contrary to Scripture, wrote to [the

¹⁸ Proceedings of the 19th Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, 1969, p. 15.

other pastor] and requested him to contact Pastor Cordes and seek to restore him to the truth."¹⁹

The Convention accepted Cordes' resignation under protest because, "his reasons for resigning do not in fact express but disguise the real situation underlying and culminating in his termination of membership in our Conference."²⁰

Cordes didn't stay long in Coos Bay. The congregation voted him out of office in April of 1969. At the request of Mrs. Cordes, the congregation let the family stay in the parsonage until the end of school.

In the summer of '69, Cordes moved his family to Bend, OR. His father-in-law invited the Cordes family to live on a ranch he had recently purchased. A new WELS church sprang up in Bend as a result of other relatives who had moved to the same ranch. (Bend was also the site of the first WELS Christian Day-school in Oregon.) Cordes, now working as an insurance agent and later as a carpenter, joined the congregation and even served as secretary.

In 1975, Cordes divorced his wife and moved to New Mexico. By 1978 he moved to Sullivan, MO, to be the pastor of the Missouri Synod congregation there.²¹ He is listed as pastor of the LC-MS congregation in Florissant, MO in 1980-81.²² His second marriage also ended in divorce in 1980 after three years. About nine years ago he moved into St.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 44.

²¹ The Lutheran Annual, Concordia Publishing House, 1979.

²² Ibid, 1980 and 1981.

Louis. For a few years he ministered to prisoners at five local jails and prisons, supporting himself by remodeling houses.

Recently he entered city politics. His "Manifesto of Rights" lists as his planks good neighborhood schools, neighborhood safety, more jobs, an impartial mayor, and less government. Cordes presently teaches a Bible class at a Methodist Church. "So far they are tolerating the truth from me. They don't always accept it, especially that we can be sure of heaven through Jesus Christ alone, but there are almost always 20 people there." He plays his guitar for the Full-Gospel's Businessman's Association where they pray for the individual men who need help with their jobs and their families. He would like to serve the Lord in a more formal way, but no calls are coming to him. His goal is to teach English in Asia somewhere and lead the people there to Christ.

The following are excerpts from his four-page business card:

(Page one) Welcome to "A Special Ministry." This ministry is especially for anyone who has played with drugs, witchcraft, fortune-telling, fornication, hypnosis or for anyone who feels ungodly soul ties or strange compulsions to those who use these mind tampering practices. 'My consuming motto is: All my friends go to heaven with me.' (page three) Available for: Church Revival, Evangelistic Training, Deliverance Training, Bible study, Preaching, Gospel Music leadership with guitar, Camp Meetings. Topic Speaker: Divine Call. End Time Prophecy. Church Government. Denominationalism. Evangelism. Deliverance. Soul Ties. Fractured Souls. Diets, Demons, and Drugs. Salvation for Possessed and Oppressed. Water and Spirit Baptism. Jesus' Lord's Supper. Demonic Mind Control. "Testing

Spirits"--I John 4:1ff. Or any other attack or hindrance to Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24:14. (page four) Still holds unequivocally to Inerrancy, Brief Statement, Book of Concord, Three Ecumenical Creeds.

The E.L. Mehlberg Story

The following gentleman is the only one of the men in this paper who was trained at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. His full name is Elmer Ferdinand Ludwig Mehlberg. He was born on April 3, 1911, in Raymond, SD. In 1936 he graduated from Northwestern College; from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1939. On January 20, 1940, he married Eleanor Lorenz. God blessed their marriage with five children.²³ His first wife divorced him in 1958. Instead of reconciling, she married someone else. That marriage also ended in divorce. She died in 1988. In 1963, Mehlberg married Dinah Luedtke,²⁴ but the marriage produced no children.

In a letter written to O.J. Naumann, dated January 1, 1954, Mehlberg severed relation with the Wisconsin Synod and subsequently entered the OLC. His reasons for leaving included the adoption of a resolution by the Wisconsin Synod at a the Milwaukee Convention (October 8 and 9, 1953) whereby it "continued fellowship with the heterodox Missouri," Furthermore, Mehlberg believed it wrong that the WELS did not enter fellowship with the OLC in the early 1950s.²⁵ Mehlberg also cited poor discipline practice by a

²³ David, Constance, Mary, John, Mark.

²⁴ An aunt to James Luedtke. See below.

²⁵ Wisconsin was still in the Synodical Conference at the time, and therefore still in fellowship with Missouri, albeit under much protest. Declaring fellowship with the OLC would have put Wisconsin into an awkward, triangular fellowship, since the OLC had broken fellowship with Missouri. To avoid confusion, Wisconsin thought it better not to join fellowship with the OLC even though there were no doctrinal differences at that time.

WELS pastor in Minneapolis. Before leaving the Wisconsin Synod, he had served congregations in Faith, SD (St. Paul's), Tappan, ND (St. John's), and Pelican Lake (Buffalo), MN (Immanuel).

When the OLC split into two groups in 1956 (See Appendix), Mehlberg was president at the time. That is one of the reasons why the group which became the CLC insisted that they were the continuation of the true OLC and that the other group was properly called the "Minneapolis Faction."

Mehlberg served as president of the CLC a number of years, and was the sole instructor at the seminary while it remained in Milwaukee. In 1969 "the Milwaukee seminary plan" discontinued. The same year, Christ Lutheran Church of Milwaukee disbanded due to lack of growth.²⁶ Also in that same year, Mehlberg accepted the call to St. Paul's of Coos Bay, OR. He was installed on August 17.²⁷

The issue of birth control caused the next split in the CLC. The pastors were studying the matter privately in their pastoral conferences because their people had a number of questions and the pastors wanted to teach a position consistently throughout the Conference. After studying the matter for quite a while the CLC adopted a document in 1971, "Sex in Marriage," which Mehlberg felt was "scripturally offensive." He responded with a document entitled, "A Critical Examination of the Document, 'Sex in

²⁶ H. David Mensing, "A Popular History of the Concordia Lutheran Conference," 1981, p. 12.

²⁷ Concordia Lutheran, Third and Fourth Quarter, 1969, p. 71.

Marriage,' in the Light of God's Word, Plus Some Testimonies of our Orthodox Lutheran Fathers." Also in 1971, he published a fifteen page document entitled, "What Position Should We Take Regarding the Problem of Birth Control," with updates in 1972 and apparently in 1982. When he sent copies of all these documents to me, he indicated his continued stance on this confession by adding the date "1989" to his subscription. His position is essentially that a woman is commanded by God to bring forth as many children as possible, unless her health is in jeopardy.

Because the congregation (St. Paul's) chose to remain with Mehlberg, the CLC expelled the congregation along with its pastor. Interestingly, the eight reasons cited for no longer recognizing Mehlberg as a member of the Conference mention nothing about the doctrine on birth control. They are essentially details of procedures not followed by Mehlberg in dealing with the controversy.²⁸ In the years that followed this break, all of the members, except one, left the congregation, largely over the issue of birth control. Eventually those that left regrouped, called themselves Trinity Lutheran Church and reapplied for membership in the CLC. Mehlberg, however, was left with the parsonage. (The chapel is in the basement.)

Since leaving the CLC, Mehlberg has remained the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, which is presently now independent. By 1978 there were seven members left. By

²⁸ Concordia Lutheran, August and September, 1972, p. 95.

1980, only three remained. After 1981, only two. But Mehlberg continued to minister to several Christians through the mail in the United States, England, Europe, and Australia.

During his many years in the OLC and CLC, Mehlberg translated a number of German writings (especially Walther's writings) into English. He continued to translate after his break with the CLC. In 1981 he published the second edition of a translation of F. Pieper's "'The Difference between Orthodox and Heterodox Churches' and Supplement." At the present he is in semi-retirement, still ministering to a family of six. He sends out on cassette tape some of Walther's sermons that he has translated. He and his wife are enjoying good health.

The J.W. Luedtke Story

The next two stories are among the more difficult to write because they deal directly with the volatile issue (in the CLC) of Church and Ministry. Both men are part of the same segment of history because their contention against the CLC's position was the occasion of their leaving the Conference within one year's time. (In summarizing the lengthy correspondence between the parties involved, I will paraphrase the words, rather than quoting extensively. In almost every case I have used the same terms as were written in order to present the events as they happened.)

The man under consideration is James William Luedtke. He was born in Duluth, MN on August 10, 1949. He married Ruth Cordelia Mensing on June 12, 1971 at Peace Lutheran Church, Tinley Park, IL. They have six children.²⁹ Luedtke attended the University of Washington for two years but did not graduate. He is a 1975 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary (CLC).

Luedtke entered the CLC in 1952 (See Appendix regarding this date) by way of his parents who moved to Seattle, WA, and began a Lutheran congregation, St. Luke's, in their home.

According to the documents which the writer has in front of him, which include minutes of CLC meetings and a series of letters between Luedtke and the Conference

²⁹ Heidi, Nathan, Holly, Heather, Matthew, Jeremy.

presidents,³⁰ the whole episode began in a Conference committee meeting on August, 1978, where the doctrine of Church and Ministry was under discussion. Luedtke expressed that he had personal "scruples" in his own mind about the CLC position on Church and Ministry, but that he, as a member of the CLC, still accepted their position. Consternation erupted among the committee members. (Let those readers who are not familiar with the CLC understand how much they cherish their fellowship based on complete agreement. Any ripple in this unity is looked upon as a horrible opportunity for the devil to split them.) That meeting ended with Luedtke asking for more time to study the matter and straighten out his own mind.

At the next meeting (February, 1979), Luedtke presented a written summary of his private study on the matter. According to the minutes, Luedtke was trying to show that the CLC position on Church and Ministry is wrong and that the position of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CoLC) is correct. Luedtke had been studying the CoLC position because his parents had sent him the material; Luedtke had not requested it. It is apparent that Luedtke's parents had left the CLC by this time. "The meeting was adjourned with the hope that Pastor Luedtke's reservations about our Scriptural position on the Church and Ministry would be resolved in the forthcoming pastoral conference."³¹

³⁰ The Conference elected a new president during the time when this controversy was raging.

³¹ Minutes of the Committee on Lutheran Union, p. 2.

Apparently they were not resolved. Luedtke didn't reject the theses as false doctrine but could not wholeheartedly endorse them either. He promised not to teach his position to his congregation until his mind was clear on the doctrine and he had informed the rest of the pastors that he was clear on it.

On March 31, 1980, Luedtke informed his fellow pastors by way of a six-page letter to the Conference president that he disagreed with the official CLC position. He did not want to be a trouble-maker or one who disturbs the peace. But he was concerned for the truth and was willing, if necessary, to be expelled from the Conference for upholding his position, if they should decide to proceed in that manner.

In the president's letter to his colleagues (April 16, 1980) he indicated that Luedtke was hoping that the pastors would help him at the next pastoral conference with the frustrations he still felt in his heart over this whole matter. The president called Luedtke on the phone and read the letter to him before sending it out. Luedtke approved it.

The pastoral conference convened on June 18, 1980. Nearly all the time of the conference was taken up with the discussion of the two positions on Church and Ministry. When the day was over, Luedtke asked for more time, perhaps another year, to consider the discussions of the day. It was agreed that he would have the next day to study, but

that he would have to be ready to give his answer on where he stood when they reconvened.

After studying all the next day, Luedtke acquiesced in accepting the CLC position, and even accepted answers to the six questions he still had. The re-established unity was emotive, to say the least. The Annual Convention, which is always preceded by a pastoral conference, was "marked by loving brotherly co-operation and especially by solid reaffirmation of the true teaching of God's Word."³²

The Conference brethren thought the matter to be completely resolved. Luedtke worked with the other pastors on Conference business, worshiped and communed with them for a year and a half. The unity came to a screeching halt when, in a letter to the CLC president dated January 30, 1982, Luedtke informed the Conference that he had been studying the whole matter privately and for the previous six months he had been working on a 35-page essay detailing his "final" position.³³ He included a copy of the essay for the President's study. In defense of this "surprise" action he stated that the evaluation of the Conference position which he was required to give at the 1980 Pastoral Conference had not been properly prepared and that he had been pressured into expressing agreement with the Conference position. He further stated that the essay did not represent vacillation

³² Concordia Lutheran, July and August, 1980, p. 68.

³³ "Final" in the sense that Luedtke intended this to be a catalyst for discussion. He even stated he would change this position if he could be shown from Scripture that it was incorrect.

on the doctrine but a complete reversal from what he had agreed upon in 1980. He intended to make known to his congregation for the first time the next Sunday that he had sent this essay to the president, and, in a way they agreed upon as best, would begin instructing them on his then settled position.

The president was dismayed. On February 10, he wrote back to Luedtke decrying the "deception" of not indicating to anyone that he had been studying the matter again and that he was coming to his same old conclusions. He accused Luedtke of grave hermeneutical errors and false doctrine.

In Luedtke's response (February 14) he informed the president of his congregation's decision that he refrain for the present from publicly discussing his position with the congregation.³⁴ St. Stephen's also requested that the president submit copies of Luedtke's essay to the other CLC pastors for review and that they draw up a written critique pointing out the specific hermeneutical errors and false doctrine so that Luedtke would have ample time to consider their critique before the next Annual Convention in June. Luedtke himself supplied five copies for the pastors.

In the president's reply to the congregation (March 30) he accused Luedtke of false doctrine six times³⁵ and of acting deceitfully by adopting a position on Church and Ministry other than the one he swore to uphold. Rather than

³⁴ They did not, however, limit the right of the individual members from initiating personal inquiries.

³⁵ The "false doctrine" is the WELS, ELS, and CoLC position on Church and Ministry.

submitting the requested critique, he offered to send CLC representatives to discuss the doctrine of Church and Ministry with the congregation, upon their invitation,³⁶ but "not to debate the matter of false doctrine with your pastor which has already been done in two extended pastoral conferences."

The Board of Elders of St. Stephen's replied on April 6. They expressed disappointment that the president declined to point out Luedtke's errors specifically as they had requested. They declined the suggestion that they invite CLC representatives to discuss the matter with them. In fact they pointed out that they did not want either Pastor Luedtke or the Conference to discuss the issue with them. They wanted Luedtke and the other pastors to discuss it among themselves first. They defended Luedtke against the charge of deception and asked that the Conference not call his personal integrity into question. Regarding the charge of false doctrine they replied: "For us to label him a false teacher without first hearing him is to judge prematurely and contrary to God's Word." They also repeated their request for a written critique of specific errors or misrepresentations.

The president responded on April 30. Again the Conference refused to give the requested critique. Again he offered to send a delegation to present correctly the CLC

³⁶ The Conference always tried very hard not to give even the appearance of meddling.

position. And he pointed to Luedtke's deception in a number of ways.

Luedtke responded on May 24. He reported that the congregation still wished the matter to be resolved among the pastors.

Again the president refused by way of letter on June 7. Furthermore, since Luedtke had supposedly made known to the congregation "at least the basic substance of his false position," he insisted that both Pastor Luedtke and the congregation's delegates to the up-coming Convention "write on their credentials with their signatures that they and the congregation they represent still share our confessional position on the doctrine of the Church and Ministry in order that they be seated at the Convention."

The congregation informed the president on June 20, that they would not be sending delegates to the 1982 Convention. The pastor could not sign that he still held to CLC's position. He didn't. While the congregation still held to the official CLC position, they did not want to imply by their presence at the Convention that they were judging their pastor, since they as yet still had not heard his position. This was not to be understood as a boycott of the Convention nor a despising of their fellowship. In fact this letter was to be considered their excuse for not attending the Convention.

At the Convention the CLC elected a different president. They passed a resolution recognizing that Pastor

Luedtke had forfeited his fellowship with the Conference. The new president offered to send a special delegation to St. Stephen's, not to dialog with the pastor but to discuss the matters with them and "refresh their minds as to the truly Scriptural position." This new president re-issued the charge of Luedtke's dealing deceitfully with the Conference, and charged him to remain faithful to his vow not to teach anything contrary to the congregation's professed position.

In July, 1982, Luedtke informed the new president that the congregation had decided to invite the CLC delegation to discuss with them the doctrine of Church and Ministry.

The meeting took place on August 29 and 30, 1982, and was recorded on tape. Luedtke was given an opportunity by the congregation two weeks later to present his position, which was also taped and sent to the Conference president. The congregation began meeting on Monday evenings for this purpose. This was the first time Luedtke instructed his congregation regarding his position on Church and Ministry.

In a letter from the president dated November 30, he urged that part of the congregation which was still on the side of the Conference to acknowledge a split and not relinquish the church property.

In early 1983, the congregation in Wilmot formally split. One group stayed with the CLC and was served by the Conference president as vacancy pastor. The group that stayed with Luedtke called themselves "Christ Ev. Lutheran

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Church." The new congregation purchased a new parsonage and enough land to build a new church on September 1, 1983. In January of 1984, Luedtke passed colloquy with WELS and was declared to be in fellowship. The congregation did not vote to join WELS until October of 1986. In that same month Jim accepted the call to Our Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church, Crown Point, IN, a mission congregation with 99 communicants and 147 baptized. He and his family still live in Crown Point.

The R.D. Styx Story

As indicated in the last chapter, this man's story is related to the previous one. The seeds for his break with the CLC were planted in the previous controversy. (In order that those readers who are not familiar with this man may pronounce his name correctly as they read this chapter to themselves, please note that his name sounds like "stikes" and not "sticks.") His name, then, is Randall D. Styx.

He was born on November 11, 1947 in Chicago, before all the turmoil from which the OLC sprang. He "entered" the CLC in 1954 (see Appendix on this date) as a second grader in the Christian day-school at Peace, Tinley Park, IL. In June of 1969, Styx graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a Bachelor of Arts in geology and mapmaking. After a lengthy nine-year seminary program (part-time because he was supporting himself), he graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary in June of 1978. Ann Dirksen, a registered nurse, became his wife on August 12, 1979. They have four children.³⁷

After Styx graduated from the seminary, Trinity Lutheran Church of Coos Bay called him to be their pastor. It should be noted, as mentioned above, that this congregation was formed by former members of St. Paul's of Coos Bay, who left that congregation because they disagreed

³⁷ Jonathan, Joshua, Aaron, Katrina.

with their pastor's position on birth control and some of his other pastoral practices.

Styx had a friendship with Luedtke (see previous chapter) because of a number of shared convictions and experiences, including the years they spent studying at the seminary together. When Luedtke was not allowed to discuss his 35-page treatise with the Conference brethren,³⁸ and then did not attend the Convention in 1982, Styx was disappointed. At that Convention the CLC brethren discussed a number of the points of difference between themselves and Luedtke. Styx saw the validity in some of the things that Luedtke had written and he even spoke up for some of them at the Conference meetings. He wanted very much to avoid a break in fellowship between the CLC and Luedtke. But in the end Styx concluded that Luedtke's main points were incorrect and could find no sufficient argument to oppose the decision to oust Luedtke.

In the course of discussion, Styx hesitated to agree with the CLC's restriction of Isaiah 55:10-11 to the local congregation. This resulted in the Conference assigning the next year's pastoral conference essay to Styx. The title was to be: "Isaiah 55:10-11, with particular reference to its Messianic character and its application to the New Testament Church and Ministry."

³⁸ Generally speaking, no one who holds to a position different from the CLC is allowed to discuss such a position with others on the grounds that a "false prophet" must never be allowed to "spread his lies."

At the 1983 pastoral conference, the other CLC pastors were not pleased with Styx's conclusions. Essentially his paper concluded that the CLC's exegesis of Isaiah 55:10-11 is wrong because it misses the *tertium* of the illustration. The point is that the passage does not say, "In the same manner that the rain and snow come down, namely locally and regularly, the Word of God is preached (regularly in the local congregation), and only where that happens can you say that God guarantees believers are present." Because that is not the point of comparison in the passage, the conclusion in quotation marks above cannot be drawn from this passage. Styx further concluded that, since there was no other Scripture passage which limited "the church" to the local congregation, the CLC had been teaching erroneously and therefore needed to retract parts of what they had previously printed as their official position on Church and Ministry. The CLC pastors stood by their exegesis; Styx stood by his. Because of the impasse they recognized a break in fellowship. The CLC later billed the break as a "defection from the fellowship" of the CLC because of persistent adherence to a false doctrine of the Church and Ministry.³⁹

Styx stayed for the Annual Convention (which follows the annual pastoral conference) because it was unclear what the Conference would do about his congregation. It was considered "taboo" in the CLC to teach one's congregation a

³⁹ Concordia Lutheran, July-August, 1983, p. 52.

position different from the official position without first consulting the other CLC pastors.⁴⁰ So, previous to the Convention, Styx had only prepared his congregation for a potential break in fellowship. A Convention resolution requested the Coos Bay congregation to inform the Conference whether it was still in fellowship with them and to show that by accepting a pastor who shared the CLC position in doctrine and practice.⁴¹ When the congregation requested scriptural proof for the claim that their pastor had erred from the truth, they received only repeated accusations against Styx. They concluded that their pastor was not a false prophet and recognized a break in fellowship with the CLC in September of 1983. This also was billed as a defection by the CLC.⁴²

Styx had limited his study for the conference paper to the assigned passage and writings specifically about that passage. After the break in fellowship, he studied the whole doctrine of Church and Ministry all the way back to Walther and concluded that the CLC had changed from the historic Missouri position. Styx studied the confessional stance of ELS and WELS first in regard to Church and Ministry and then all the rest of the doctrines from November of 1983 to June of 1984. Simultaneous colloquy applications to both Synods resulted in recognition of

⁴⁰ Some of the pastors who had previously left the Conference had done this, which left a bad taste in the mouths of the pastors who remained.

⁴¹ Concordia Lutheran, July-August, 1983, p. 55.

⁴² Concordia Lutheran, January-February, 1984, p. 5.

fellowship with both church bodies in 1984. But the congregation remained independent until May of 1986. The pastor and congregation applied for membership in the WELS and were received as members at the following District Convention of the Pacific Northwest.

At the time of the break, Trinity was being subsidized by the CLC. The 24 souls maintained the pastor's salary and, at first rented (June, 1984) then later, purchased and began repairing a building for use as a church. Membership dwindled down to 14, inducing the pastor and his wife to seek outside employment.⁴³ Along with the move into WELS came a deepened awareness about the importance of evangelism. Since then three adults and three children have joined the congregation. One WELS family has transferred in. The membership is presently 24 (15 communicants).

⁴³ Styx "drew on" his schooling as a map maker for the county, and his wife taught some classes at a hospital.

The O.W. Schaefer Story

The following account is different in that it does not involve the man in a controversy. It is one of the few cases where the man was not under scrutiny by the CLC for false doctrine. The Conference was not trying to discipline him nor vice versa. He left the CLC without trying to change it. His name is Otto W. Schaefer.

Schaefer came into the Orthodox Lutheran Conference after he resigned from the associate pastorate of Zion, Milwaukee (LC-MS) on January 17, 1955.⁴⁴ Since St. Stephen's of Wilmot SD, was experiencing a vacancy at that time, they immediately called Schaefer to be their pastor. He was installed March 13, 1955, and remained the pastor of St. Stephen's until 1969.

At that time the CLC was undergoing some changes. The pertinent ones here are that the Seminary was moved from Milwaukee, WI to Tinley Park, IL. The former seminary professor had taken the call to Coos Bay, OR. So the Conference congregations called Schaefer to be the Professor-President of the seminary. Schaefer received a peaceful release from St. Stephen's, Wilmot, SD, in order to accept the call to the seminary.⁴⁵

The Conference congregations also called H. David Mensing to be Associate Professor. Recognizing that their

⁴⁴ H.D. Mensing, "A Popular History of the Concordia Lutheran Conference," 1981, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Concordia Lutheran, Third and Fourth Quarter, 1969, p. 58.

pastor could not effectively serve as both pastor and associate professor, Peace (Tinley Park) extended a call to Schaefer to become an assistant pastor to Mensing. Schaefer was installed into both offices on August 24, 1969.⁴⁶

Schaefer kept busy teaching as many students as came to the seminary and helping with Sunday Services at Peace. In 1985, after a period of three years or so where there were no seminary students for either professor to train, Peace decided that their pastor did not need the help of their assistant pastor any longer. And so they decided to terminate Schaefer's call as Assistant Pastor.

Pastor Schaefer indicated in one of the two short letters he wrote to me that, in his opinion, his call was "terminated in an arbitrary and loveless manner."⁴⁷ The way he worded the sentence might indicate that he saw his call to the seminary and his call to the congregation as one call. Here is the sentence: "Since I am no longer in the CLC (as of November, 1985, when my call was terminated...)."

On Sunday, November 10, 1985, a few days before his call was to end, Schaefer handed the pastor, who was also president of the CLC that year, a letter of resignation from membership in the congregation. Schaefer delivered the letter right after the Sunday service, which he had taken part in. Because Schaefer cited no doctrinal reason for resigning, the Conference president billed this as an act of

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ He mentions this as a parenthetical thought.

sinful separation in the official announcement in the Concordia Lutheran.⁴⁸

Since then Schaefer has been serving an independent Lutheran congregation in the Orland Park, IL, "and here I will minister as long as the Lord grants me grace." Schaefer's congregation consists of at least his own family and the families of his sons.

⁴⁸ Concordia Lutheran, November and December, 1985, p. 112.

THE H. DAVID MENSING STORY

The following is one of the saddest stories to tell because it involves father and son. Note carefully the name **H. David**, reader, so that you don't confuse this man with his son David T., whose story is told below.

H. David Mensing was born in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia on February 25, 1914. After graduating from from Concordia College, Fort Wayne, IN, in 1933, he continued studying for the ministry at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO and graduated in 1937. He married Cordelia M. Bloedel on June 14, 1939, and together they had four children.⁴⁹ Mensing served the following congregations: Immanuel, East Boston, MA, as Assistant Pastor (1937-38); St. Paul, Cortland, NY, as Pastor (1938-44); Bethel, Glenshaw (Pittsburgh), PA, as Pastor (1944-48); Trinity, Tinley Park, IL, as Pastor (1948-51); Peace, Tinley Park, IL, as Pastor (1951-86). He retired voluntarily at the age of 72. From all the congregations except Trinity, Tinley Park, he received a peaceful release.

In 1951, H. David Mensing left the Missouri Synod for their persistent, undisciplined and growing unionism. The final decision to sever fellowship came after a Missouri VP told him, "We know Missouri is rotten. But I beg you, don't tell this to your people--if you know what's good for you and your family." So after fourteen years of ministry,

⁴⁹ *David T., H. Daniel, (deceased), John P., and *Ruth C.
*Mentioned elsewhere in this paper.

Mensing resigned from the LC-MS, but not from his parish. For six years previous to this he had been speaking out against "A Statement" of 1945.⁵⁰ He spoke out further when the Common Confession of 1950 was adopted. Mensing was never reproved by the synodical officials for all his protests during those six years of speaking out.⁵¹

Meanwhile the congregation began studying the Common Confession in order to be informed before taking official action.⁵² There were members of Mensing's congregation who wanted to follow a policy of letting the Synod decide what is right or wrong for them. When these members, in two consecutive quarterly voter's meetings (Oct. 50 and Jan 51), moved to have the Synodical Circuit Visitor come in and mediate the growing tension, the majority rejected the motion.⁵³ One day the Visitor notified Mensing that he had met with some of Trinity's members in a garage near the church. But after conferring with Mensing regarding Matthew 18, the Visitor agreed he was in the wrong and even wrote a statement for Pastor Mensing to read to the congregation to that effect. Later the Visitor changed his mind and met with the District President, Two Vice-Presidents and men from the congregation, again without informing Mensing.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ From a document entitled, "The Truth about Tinley Park," written by H. David Mensing in April, 1952, p. 1.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 2

⁵² From "A Popular History of the Concordia Lutheran Conference," by H. David Mensing, Faculty Committee, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1981.

⁵³ H. David Mensing, "Truth," p. 3.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 4

At the October 1951 voters' meeting five Northern Illinois District officials appeared.

"The record shows that these men told the congregation to discontinue the pastor's office apparently for exposing Missouri's false position and for his confession at Okabena [see Appendix]. However, not even one of the three scriptural reasons for ousting a Christian pastor was cited."⁵⁵

Mensing was given 30 days to vacate the parsonage.

A minority of nine families remained with Mensing; these members formed a new congregation, Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, which joined the Orthodox Lutheran Conference.⁵⁶ According to the Orthodox Lutheran⁵⁷ the congregation enjoyed an average Sunday attendance of about 60 shortly after the split.

During the time when Mensing was studying the Common Confession with his congregation (Trinity), he attended the Okabena meeting to discuss with his brothers the doctrinal errors being taught and practiced in the Missouri Synod. Because of the discussions at Okabena, he felt compelled to help draw up a confession of faith, leave Missouri and join the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. But he signed the OLC confession only as an "interim signer," since his congregation had not as yet broken with the Missouri Synod⁵⁸ and he did not want to push the congregation into a premature, unstudied decision. After the congregation split, Mensing and his newly formed congregation joined the

⁵⁵ H. David Mensing, "History," p. 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Orthodox Lutheran, December, 1951, p. 60.

⁵⁸ Mensing, "Truth," p. 6.

Orthodox Lutheran Conference, along with four other congregations, by signing the "Confession of Faith" at the January 30-31, 1952 DLC Convention.⁵⁹

Because Peace Ev. Lutheran Church was interested in Christian education, they began a Christian day school in 1952. Pastor Mensing and his wife taught all the classes⁶⁰ at no expense to the congregation. Peace never called any other teacher, and in fact, the school had to close because there wasn't even enough support to update textbooks. Incidentally, the school was recognized by the public school system as one with excellent academic standards.

The teaching experience came in handy later on when the Concordia Lutheran Conference reopened their seminary in Tinley Park in 1969. H. David Mensing was called as *Associate Professor. The seminary opened with four students that fall.⁶¹

In February of 1986, at the age of 72, Mensing proposed to the congregation (Peace) that he retire, not because of current ill health or lack of ability, but so as not to become a "drag" on the congregation because of his advancing age. He had served the congregation for 38 years and received a commemorative plaque from them as a token of appreciation for his "diligence and faithful service." The retirement would take place as soon as a pastor could be

⁵⁹ Orthodox Lutheran, March, 1952, p. 53.

⁶⁰ Orthodox Lutheran, August, 1953, p. 167

⁶¹ Mensing, "Popular History," p. 12.

called to replace H. David Mensing.⁶² In the following month the congregation called David T. Mensing (H. David's oldest son) to be their pastor. David T., who had graduated from the CLC seminary in 1980, was then serving a congregation in Australia. Installation took place on April 27, 1986. H. David Mensing took his place in the congregation as a layman and did his best to keep his nose out of official pastoral business. At the new pastor's request, the former pastor taught the upper grades of the Sunday School.⁶³

Then came another sad event in this man's life. The writer has not checked out every last document on the matter as of yet.⁶⁴ But it seems that over the years, as the CLC position on Church and Ministry "grew and developed" into the more defined position which they now hold, H. David's position did not "grow and develop" along with it but stayed the same as it had been. For instance, in "This Scriptural Position We Still Hold," the CLC writes:

The *pastoral office* of the local congregation is the only divinely ordained office in the Church. When the Holy Spirit has made the minister an overseer of all the flock, He has made him overseer also of the work of any of the officers whom the congregation may elect, of the various societies in the congregation, and of their officers, of the Sunday School, Christian Day-school, Bible Classes, and their teachers, as well as assistant pastor. All other offices in the

⁶² H. David Mensing and Cordelia Mensing, "Open Letter to the Rev. David T. Mensing," June 5, 1988, p. 1.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 1-2.

⁶⁴ In fact, it would make an excellent study to examine the position of the CLC on Church and Ministry and note the metamorphosis it has undergone.

Church, besides that of pastor, are auxiliary, or offices of help, to the Office of the Ministry.⁶⁵

H. David was pastor of one of the ratifying congregations. Therefore this was his position on Church and Ministry. He also held that the calls given to assistant pastors and professors by the congregation(s) are divine calls. This seems to be the position set forth in the document cited above; at least nothing to the contrary is plainly stated.

But in 1986, the official Concordia Lutheran Conference position went further in stating that there is only one divine office in the church and that all other workers (i.e. auxiliary offices, e.g. Christian Day-school teachers, assistant pastors) are not called but may be hired and fired at the will of the the pastor, which decision is then to be ratified by the congregation at its next voters' meeting. The official wording is as follows:

"If a person is removed from an auxiliary office for a proven Scriptural reason, a congregation must agree unanimously to this. If a person be removed from an auxiliary office for other than Scriptural reason, such a decision does not require unanimity, but the person must always be dealt with evangelically by the pastor and congregation."⁶⁶

The rest of the position (stated in the second paragraphs above) comes from a Convention essay.

. . . Such an incumbent of an auxiliary office may be dismissed by a simple majority vote or the pastor himself [may] dismiss such and officer and

⁶⁵ Ratified by the member congregations of the Concordia Lutheran Conference in 1968.

⁶⁶ Concordia Lutheran, September-December, 1986, p. 90.

the pastor's action ratified later by the congregation in its Voters' Assembly.⁶⁷

The whole matter came to a head when Pastor David T. Mensing, in an updating of Peace's constitution, began to include the "more defined" CLC position in that congregation's confessional documents. H. David protested. Discussions ensued, resulting in the Pastor's forbidding of his member (H. David) to discuss the matter in the Voters' Assembly of Peace or with his wife in their home.

There was also this matter of the (cassette) taping of a portion of a voters' meeting by H. David in order to have a record of what was said to aid his memory. Apparently the assembly was not aware that the recording was made until after the meeting. The Board of Elders sent H. David a letter accusing him of misconduct and demanding the destruction or erasure of the tape with the assurance that no copies were made, no notes or transcripts had been made from the tape, and no one had been permitted to listen to the tape.⁶⁸ H. David responded by letter that if the charges were not dropped, he and his wife would withdraw from the congregation on March 7, 1987.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Bloedel, Rev. Paul R., Convention Essay, 1987 CLC Proceedings, p. 17. These two quotations are cited only as documentation of the reason for which H.D. Mensing separated from the CLC.

⁶⁸ Letter dated February 10, 1987. The criteria for such a demand amounts to the Pastor insisting that it had been a long time understanding that no taping of congregational meetings be done. H. David maintains that this was a Conference policy but not a congregational understanding.

⁶⁹ Letter dated February 25, 1987.

Sometime during the lengthy episode, presumably after March 7, there was a joyful reunion between the elder Mensings and their son-in-law and daughter, Pastor James and Ruth Luedtke. In 1982, when Luedtke left the CLC, Mensing discontinued fellowship between his household and his son-in-law's. Mensing called his son-in-law on the phone to discuss the situation in Tinley Park. You see, when Mensing retired, Peace had decided to allow them to dwell in the parsonage as long as they lived. This arrangement would not work any longer. So Jim and Ruth offered to find an apartment near to their home in Crown Point, IN, and even came to help them move. The Mensings also prepared an open letter to their son David T., which attempted to set the record straight on information that had been distributed throughout the CLC against them. This open letter is dated June 5, 1988 and was sent to all the CLC pastors and a number of the CLC laymen.

At first Mensing was cautious of the WELS church where his son-in-law was pastor (Our Shepherd Ev. Luth., Crown Point, IN). For years he had preached and taught that WELS was heterodox, especially because of its position on Church and Ministry. So the Mensings attended Our Shepherd regularly, but for observation only. In the meantime, H. David and Cordelia began studying the position of WELS carefully. In November, 1988, they joined Our Shepherd as communicant members by profession of faith. In February 1989, Mensing met with the South Eastern Wisconsin District

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President and two Vice-President of WELS in an informal colloquy. He now has the authority to do substitute preaching as Pastor emeritus. The Mensings reside in Merrillville, IN.

THE X.X.Xxxxxx STORY

There is one more pastor who joined the Concordia Lutheran Conference and left only recently. When I called him for information, he instructed me not to mention him by name in this paper. He even forbade me to list the dates of his entrance and exit. He is presently retired and has joined the Missouri Synod because he is convinced that Missouri is still swinging back in the right direction and that the conservatives are in control.

The J.A. Schmitt Story

The next man is in a category all by himself. He is the only former CLC pastor who is still a communicant member of the Conference. His name is Julius A. Schmitt.

Schmitt was the only CLC pastor trained under the professorship of E.L. Mehlberg, while the latter was still serving Christ Lutheran Church in Milwaukee as pastor and the Conference as seminary professor. When Schmitt graduated from the seminary in 1965, there were no vacancies in the Conference and the congregations were not financially capable to support a missionary. So Schmitt worked among the blacks in Milwaukee, doing as much evangelism as he could.

During the many changes that took place in the CLC in 1969, Schmitt was called to St. Stephen's, Wilmot, SD, to replace O.W. Schaefer, who had left to teach at the seminary. Schmitt was installed on August 17, 1969.⁷⁰

In 1975 Schmitt stepped down from the pastoral office. He felt the burdens of the work were more than he could handle and decided he could serve the Lord better as a layman.

The last report I have on him, which is a few years old,⁷¹ places Schmitt in St. Luke's, the Seattle congregation. Mrs. Schmitt's name is Ruth.

⁷⁰ Concordia Lutheran, Third and Fourth Quarter, 1969, p. 70.

⁷¹ Either Mr. Schmitt did not receive my letter or he chose not to answer it.

Current CLC Pastors

The following material concerns itself with those pastors who are presently serving congregations in the Concordia Lutheran Conference. There are only two pastors left in the CLC who may be called "original members." They are Paul R. Bloedel, and M.L. Natterer.

We'll look at Natterer's life first. His full name is Melvin Louis Natterer. He was born in Cleveland, OH, September 3, 1926, and graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, IL in 1949. His wife's name is Waltraut Elizabeth (nee Koenig); they were married on June 11, 1949 in Chicago, IL, and have ten children.⁷²

Before entering the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, Natterer served a Missouri Synod congregation in Lansing (Oak Glen), IL. But he "was declared by the officials of the Northern Illinois District, LC-MS to be out of the Gospel ministry" because he had not signed the constitution.⁷³

Meanwhile a Pastor H.F. Koehlinger, of Empire, OR, was experiencing some negative repercussions from teaching his congregation about Missouri's false doctrine and practice. He ended up leaving Missouri and joining the OLC along with a number of LC-MS members from surrounding congregations. A group of Christians in nearby Lebanon, OR, formed a congregation (St. John's) which called Natterer to be their

⁷² Linda, Mira, Karen, Ruth, Mary, Paul, Lois, Irene, Nora, and Mark.

⁷³ Orthodox Lutheran, December, 1951, p. 18.

pastor. His new address in Lebanon was listed in the August, 1952 issue of the Orthodox Lutheran,⁷⁴ although he lists 1951 as the year he entered the CLC. Natterer has served St. John's as their pastor up to the present. Currently he is the president of the Conference.

One of Natterer's unique contributions to the CLC is the column which he writes for the Concordia Lutheran called "Around the World" in which he reviews news articles from various periodicals and then gives a commentary using Scripture to show how he as a Christian views world events. He has written for this column at least since the early 60's. A similar review appears in the January 15, 1989 Sunday bulletin which Pastor Natterer sent me along with the packet of other information I requested. This leads me to think he writes such a review regularly (every week?) for his congregation.

Paul R. Bloedel is the other CLC original. He never found the time to send me any biographical information, although I did have a lengthy conversation with him on the phone. He has eleven children (four from the first wife, seven from the second). His first wife died a number of years ago. He married again.

Before entering the CLC, Bloedel was pastor of two Missouri Synod congregations in and near to Wilmot, SD. His ouster is presented in the second issue of the Orthodox Lutheran.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ p. 133.

⁷⁵ Orthodox Lutheran, December 1951, p. 18.

"The Officials of the South Dakota District, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, through the Visitor of the Circuit, arranged to hold special meetings, with the members of Christ and Centennial congregation on two consecutive evenings. These meetings were instigated behind the pastor's back and without his knowledge."

Bloedel had refused to sign the constitution of the Missouri Synod and had signed the Articles of Agreement of the OLC. The officials advanced no scriptural reasons for ousting him. So some members from both Missouri Synod congregations left them and formed a new congregation, St. Stephen's. They were able to provide their pastor with a home shortly after their formation.

St. Stephen's dedicated a new building for worship on November 2, 1952. It was erected within one year after the congregation had organized, and was paid for by the summer of 1953.⁷⁶

In 1954, Bloedel accepted the call to St. Paul's of Empire, OR. After a few years he resigned from his ministry there and moved to Seattle because his deaf daughter could not get adequate education without being away from home. While Bloedel was in Seattle, a newly formed CLC congregation in that city (St. Luke's) called him to be their pastor. He has served this congregation up to the present.

Bloedel's unique contribution to the CLC has been his editorship of the Concordia Lutheran, including a few issues of the Orthodox Lutheran before the OLC split, and the 76 Orthodox Lutheran, August 1953, p. 157.

issues of the Orthodox Lutheran during the period of rivalry between the OLC and the "Minneapolis Faction." Bloedel, along with one other pastor, may be credited for defining the CLC position on Church and Ministry which they hold today.

Bloedel spends most of his week teaching various topics to as many as 24 small groups of his congregation. For instance his young men's group has studied through the Triglot and the accompanying historical introduction. He also serves a small group of Christians in Victoria, British Columbia.

David T. Mensing, son of H. David Mensing, was born June 9, 1940 in Courtland, NY. He graduated from the CLC seminary on June 8, 1980. Before and while he studied at the seminary at Tinley Park, young Mensing was a high school teacher and Rich East High School. His wife's name is Allison.⁷⁷

Because there were no calls available when he graduated, Mensing remained Candidate Mensing until 1983. During these years of waiting and during the years of his study at the seminary, Mensing contributed to the CLC greatly by serving on a number of Conference committees and as a delegate to the Annual Conventions. At the 1983 Annual Convention, he received his first call to Zion Ev. Lutheran Church of Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.⁷⁸ He served this congregation until March, 1986, when Peace, Tinley Park

⁷⁷ Concordia Lutheran, July and August, 1980, p. 75.

⁷⁸ Concordia Lutheran, July-August, 1983, p. 56.

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called him upon the retirement of his father, H. David Mensing. David T. still serves Peace and has served the Conference as its president (among other offices) more than once. Mensing is the other pastor who may receive much of the credit for the position of the CLC on Church and Ministry.

The CLC gained two pastors in 1983 who had been independent up till then. One is E.R. Stallings, Jr. Upon graduating from one of the LC-MS seminaries, Stallings was called to a Missouri Synod church in San Antonio. He withdrew from Missouri in late 1974, and the members who followed him formed Holy Scripture Ev. Lutheran Church in May, 1975.

Stallings' mother was somehow instrumental in introducing her son to Pastor Hallstein in Clark, SD. These two joined fellowship in 1975 and remained in fellowship until late 1979. During this time of fellowship the two pastors helped to serve a congregation in Victoria, British Columbia, and one in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia beginning in 1977. Unfortunately they broke fellowship over a disagreement in practice. The two missions remained with Stallings.

In 1982 Stallings and Dierking (see below) attended a free conference in Decatur, IN, where they met some of the pastors from the CLC who were also in attendance. Because they were so impressed with the CLC men and because of the unity of doctrine between the two groups (CLC and

Stallings'), especially regarding the "old Missouri" position on Church and Ministry they decided to investigate each other more fully. This culminated in a mutual colloquy in January, 1983. Stallings and Dierking were officially recognized to be in fellowship at the 1983 Annual Convention of the CLC and also became voting members. Stallings still serves Holy Scripture, San Antonio.

The other pastor who joined the CLC in 1983 is Mark W. Dierking. He was born in Leavenworth, KS, on July 9, 1950. He married Linda Bushacker on August 6, 1971; they have five children.⁷⁹ Over the years, Dierking has attended the following colleges: Wright State University (Dayton, OH) one year, Concordia Lutheran College (Ann Arbor, MI) two years, San Antonio College (San Antonio, TX) one year, and Incarnate Word College (San Antonio, TX) two years.

During his two years at Ann Arbor, Dierking was bothered tremendously by things going on in the Missouri Synod. So he left Concordia and joined the army in April, 1970. The army transferred him down to San Antonio in October of the same year. As a matter of course, Dierking looked for a church to attend in the phone book. He recognized the street name where Stallings' church was located, and, on that basis, decided to check that congregation out. He and Stallings became close friends in a short time especially because of the unity of doctrine the two shared and their mutual concerns over the Missouri

⁷⁹ The four oldest are Aaron, Rebekah, Luke and Stephen.

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Synod. By the way, Dierking received a medical discharge from the army in December, 1970.

In late 1974, while Dierking was finishing his last year of college and was thinking about studying for the ministry, Pastor Stallings (and a number of his parishioners including Dierking) withdrew from the Missouri Synod. Consequently Dierking couldn't attend either of the LC-MS seminaries. So Stallings decided to train Dierking himself. In spring of 1978 the training was complete.

In 1977 a small group of Christians in Australia contacted Stallings' group regarding fellowship and pastoral service. Stallings served them for several years by flying down about twice a year and by sending them taped services the rest of the time. In 1981 Holy Scripture (San Antonio) called Dierking as Missionary-at-large with the specific area of responsibility to be the Australian congregation. Dierking was able to obtain temporary visas but never a permanent one. The government prevented Dierking from obtaining a permanent visa because of the same health problem which caused his medical discharge from the army. Before Dierking left the Australian congregation, they called Dierking directly as their pastor.

In June, 1983, six months after the mutual colloquy, Dierking resigned his call. The congregation immediately called David T. Mensing, as they had planned, through Dierking, then their Vacancy Pastor. At present there is only one family left in that Australian congregation; they

are served by Pastor D.T. Mensing as members of his congregation.

Two months after the 1983 Annual Convention where Dierking was officially received into CLC membership, the congregation at Wilmot, SD (the part which remained with the CLC after its split), called Dierking to be their pastor. Installation was on September 4.80 He has served them since.

Another prospective pastor, Terry G. Falkenberg, formerly a student at Concordia Theological Seminary (LC-MS), Fort Wayne, IN, submitted to a colloquy examination on August 22 and 23, 1986. He passed. The Conference required him to serve two semesters vicaring and to take a few more classes at the seminary. Mr. Falkenberg is married and has two children.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Concordia Lutheran, September-October, 1983, p. 78.

⁸¹ Concordia Lutheran, September-December, 1986, p. 97.

EVALUATION. .

. . of the controversies which caused breaks in the fellowship of the CLC.

It is interesting to note that almost all the departures of men from the CLC had something to do with the doctrine, practice or application of Church and Ministry.

--Kretzmann's pastor claimed he alone had jurisdiction in the matter of disciplining the seminary professor, who was also his member, allowing Kretzmann to hide behind the doctrine of Church and Ministry and precipitating the reorganization of the OLC.

--Hallstein had a disagreement with another pastor over the exegesis and use of Luke 14:28-32.82 He was expelled for refusing to follow the procedures as set down in the constitution of the CLC.

--Shufelt was expelled for his dissenting vote to discipline Hallstein.

--Cordes claimed he owed no answer to the CLC because he was the highest authority in his locale and then resigned because he felt the CLC was meddling.

--Mehlberg was upset over the issue of birth control and was expelled for not following constitutional procedures, especially for disseminating materials to the members of other pastor's congregations (a form of meddling).

--Luedtke pointed to extremism in the doctrine and practice of the CLC in the area of Church and Ministry.

--Styx, before leaving, tried to show the CLC that Is 55:10-11 does not apply to Church and Ministry in the way they assert.

--Schaefer resigned because he felt the practice of the CLC's position on Church and Ministry was loveless.

--Mensing, although retired (therefore, having no vote to dissent with), objected to the new CLC position on auxiliary offices in the church and left pointing to extremism in the application of Church and Ministry.

82 Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, June 24-26, 1961, p. 23. Incidentally, a quick perusal will show that these verses do not include the *tertium comparationis*. Was this a part of the dispute?

--The un-named pastor mentioned a strong accusation of meddling in his congregation on the part of the CLC pastors.

. .of this paper.

This paper has sought to be a reporting of the facts, to answer the questions: who were these PEOPLE who lived through the sad, sad experience of having to mark and avoid loved ones with differing doctrine and practice? Where are they now--those who left the Concordia Lutheran Conference? How did these pastors get into the CLC?

Now that the work is completed (for the present), what has this paper actually accomplished? If it has done nothing else, it has given this student an opportunity to delve into some of the history that has shaped his own life. It has allowed him to meet a number of interesting people, some of whom he can now add to his list of friends and acquaintances, others who "mark and avoid" him as a member of "that heterodox WELS." It has taught him the importance of truthfulness, especially in this: one must not bring accusations of any kind 1) without having proper documentation and 2) unless it is with the intent of restoring someone to the truth of God's Word. It has shown him how horribly strong the sinful nature can be in Christians. It has caused him to treasure true fellowship even more than before.

During the process of gathering information, the writer received a number of suggestions: concentrate on the present status of the Concordia Lutheran Conference and try

to see where it is headed next; skip the people's biographical sketches and study the doctrine; a study of people's lives won't do anyone any good. At first I resented these sometime strong suggestions. After all, whose paper is this? Besides, this is a history paper, not a dogmatics study. But in retrospect, I appreciate what these men were trying to show me. And I do wonder how this humble work will benefit anyone else besides myself. This paper sets down a lot of facts that not too many people are interested in. It doesn't encourage anyone to go back and make up for the wrongs they've done against someone else, probably because it does not evaluate the policies and the doctrines from which the controversies sprang (except for a point here and there). It merely reports them while trying not to point fingers.

On the other hand what good would it do to evaluate the policies and doctrines? No one asked for such an evaluation. Such a work might be praised by those it exonerated. Maybe not. One can be sure that it would not be well received by those it condemned.

Perhaps the greatest benefit from this study will be the opportunity to study the Scriptures in reference to the doctrine of Church and Ministry and, after thorough exegesis, to read what the learned fathers and more recent Lutherans have written and to evaluate them. That will be an interesting study!

APPENDIX

According to "A Brief History of the Concordia Lutheran Conference" by O. W. Schaefer written in the early 1960s, the name "Concordia Lutheran Conference" came into use on January 1, 1957 by resolution of all the member congregations of which it consisted.⁸³ Previously the fellowship was called the Orthodox Lutheran Conference.

It was in the fall of 1951, after long, patient, but fruitless protest against the [Missouri] Synod's laxity in doctrine and practice, that a group of professors, pastors, a laymen from the Missouri Synod met in Okabena, Minnesota, for the purpose of taking a firm stand against doctrinal errors which had arisen within the Synod during previous years. As a result a church body was organized which originally bore the name: Orthodox Lutheran Conference.⁸⁴

One ought not think that the Orthodox Lutheran Conference merely changed its name to the Concordia Lutheran Conference for the sake of a change. Unfortunately the little church body was again split when a question about the application of the doctrine of fellowship turned into a doctrinal dispute and personality conflict with proud ultimatums.

...a series of sad event occurred which . . . were climaxed by the development of a controversy in January, 1955. Dr. P.E. Kretzmann, a professor at the Orthodox Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis, made a statement in a class that he could preach for a pastor who was at the time a member of the then heterodox Wisconsin Synod and with whom he considered himself to be in doctrinal, confessional fellowship, although the former was not in a true state of confession over against his Synod. . . . The professor's statement was

⁸³ O. W. Schaefer, "A Brief History of the Concordia Lutheran Conference," 1959, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

challenged by Pastor E.C. Hallstein of Clark, SD as being unionistic.⁸⁵

Despite earnest requests to retract the statement, Prof. Kretzmann refused to do so and declined to discuss the matter, either with the Committee on Theological Education, which was intrusted with the supervision of the Seminary, or in pastoral and delegate conferences. . .he considered himself answerable only to the congregation in Minneapolis of which he was a member.⁸⁶

Finally, Dr. Kretzmann set a date (December 31, 1955) beyond which he declared he would regard no one his brother in the faith who did not withdraw his "sinful charges" against him. Those who regarded his original statement as unionistic then met in a special Pastoral Conference in Tinley Park, Illinois, in January, 1956, and drew up a document called "Our Declaration," repudiating the action of Dr. Kretzmann and denouncing charges brought by him and his adherents as false. It was clearly stated that Dr. Kretzmann, with his adherents, had terminated the fellowship and that we, for our part, reaffirm our loyalty to the principles of the original Orthodox Lutheran Conference.⁸⁷

As it turned out, both groups tried to hang onto the name "Orthodox Lutheran Conference," even going so far as to publish rival issues of the Orthodox Lutheran with the same volume and issue numbers. So the one group changed their name to the Concordia Lutheran Conference and the other group, called "the Minneapolis faction" by those in the CLC, retained the name Orthodox Lutheran Conference. Those who remained the OLC experienced further splintering. But after the Wisconsin Synod suspended fellowship with Missouri in 1961, the OLC began talks with Wisconsin. The final meeting was held on February 28, 1962. The four remaining

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 4-5.

congregations disbanded the OLC and applied for membership in the WELS individually.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Peter Panitzke, "The Orthodox Lutheran Conference and its Relationship with the Wisconsin Synod" (WLS Senior Church History Paper), April 23, 1982, p. 23, see also Lyle Lange, "The Doctrinal Differences between WELS and CoLC, CLC, and LCR" (Minnesota District Pastoral Conference Paper, WELS, St. James, MN), April 17, 1985, p. 15.

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