

*Lutheran News  
&  
Christian News:  
  
Has the Salt  
Lost its Saltiness?*

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March 22, 1993  
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Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library  
11801 N. Dayton Ave., 65W  
Mequon, Wisconsin

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### *Introduction*

No Christian, whom God has graciously brought into the knowledge of the truth, can remain indifferent to false doctrine. A Christian cannot, and dare not, stand idly by as deceptive teaching undermines the saving truth of the gospel. Indeed, it goes against the very nature of a Christian, to let the immutable truths of God's Word be treated like Silly Putty that can be twisted and contorted into any shape that is pleasing to the eye. God has called Christians to be different, to be the watchmen who guard the word of truth and preserve it from the attacks of the devil. From the very beginning, Satan has aimed at leading people away from God's Word and to their own opinions and feelings. Unfortunately, the devil has succeeded, by using so-called "scholarly Biblical research" to deceive and destroy any number of people whom God desired to save. While the devil has a strong ally in the sinful nature of man, his success is also due to the weakness of Christians, who have allowed the devil to make his inroads, often under the thinly-veiled guise of "love." How can Christians be responsible for false doctrine and false practice that have entered into the church? When they fail to be what God has made them — salt.

When Jesus spoke to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, he told them, "You are the salt of the earth." In those days, salt had its primary use not as a seasoning, but as a preservative, to be applied to meat to stop it from spoiling and decaying. Hardly was it an accident that Jesus should use that term to describe those who were his dear children through the faith he had created in their hearts. Jesus' followers *were* different and *were to be* different from everyone else in the world — so radically different that their words and actions might stop the decay of the sinful world in which they lived. That decay would happen not only in matters of practice, where people would follow the dictates of their base desires rather than the direct commands of God. Were that the only spiritual problem that would face the world, Christians would have a challenging task ahead of them. Unfortunately, that isn't the only place where

decay would occur. Christians were also to be salt in stopping the spread of false teaching, teaching that would undermine the gospel, making it into nothing but a new law that must be obeyed in order to procure the lasting pleasure of God. Because God has made them salt, Christians are to endeavor to preserve the world by speaking against any teaching that contradicts God's revealed truth.

If those things are true of the Christian — and they are — then how much more true are they of the Christian pastor, who, by the very nature of his office, is to guard the flock against every attack of the roaring Lion, regardless of the form those temptations take. Because he is salt, he will make it his regular practice to apply salt, to expose all “other gospels” and to carefully and clearly demonstrate that all false teaching is dangerous and potentially soul-destroying, that anything that contradicts God's errorless Word must be refuted. As a shepherd of his flock, the pastor has the eternal welfare of souls in his care. With that privilege, however, comes this huge responsibility: to articulate God's foolish truth over against the “wisdom” of man. He who would serve as an overseer must be ready, in season and out of season, to pour on the salt, so that his congregation does not decay, but rather grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Savior.

Those same responsibilities apply to the pastor as part of the Synodical flock. It would be a contradiction if the pastor would allow any false precepts to stand on the Synodical level without applying salt. When a Synod fails, it is not only the fault of those who have a “different spirit;” part of the blame must fall upon those who have not testified strongly to the truth, who have not found ways to apply salt so that the Synod wouldn't decay. Bowing to leaders whose teaching directly contradicts the inherently clear Word of God is not a matter of respect and love, it is a matter of weakness, of failing to be what God has made the Christian pastor to be — salt. There is the quandary in which the pastor finds himself in times of raging liberalism: “Do I in love allow the false teaching? Or do I publicly delineate the false teaching that has been presented?” But, truth be told, that is a false antithesis, because genuine love dictates that the false teacher be reprovved and the false teaching be rejected. The individual who, under the appearance of love, allows divergent views to have equal footing with the truth, has not shown

Christian love. He has shown a hatred for souls. There can be little doubt that the devil uses such foolish ideas of “love” to cause rapid decay in the church. One need only look at the watered-down teaching that is so prevalent in the churches of our day to see that the gospel has been gutted, (to the great joy of the Liar) all in the name of love.

The Christian pastor whose heart is filled with a love for God’s Word and for the souls that Christ redeemed cannot stand for false teaching. Couple his love for God’s Word with his knowledge of that Word, and you have yourself a theologian who will not allow the propagation of impure doctrine. No preacher who bears the name Lutheran can consider a clear doctrine of Scripture of little or no importance, to be brushed aside out of “love” for a fellow Christian. Instead, he will be guided by the same principle as the Great Reformer himself, who said, “It is my own experience that every passage makes the entire world too narrow for me.”<sup>1</sup> When a Lutheran pastor refuses to bow to the errors of the day, when he is unwilling to “live and let live,” he is worthy of praise and honor. Forcefully resisting the onslaught of false teaching and applying salt to prevent the decay of the church is the Lutheran minister’s duty and responsibility — a work that displeases and irritates men but pleases and satisfies God.

Reverend Herman Otten of New Haven, Missouri, is such a Lutheran pastor, whose heart is consumed by a love for the truth. When it comes to fighting for the saving truth of the Word, Otten is tireless. Fighting against and exposing false doctrine in the church-at-large and in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) in particular, has been, and probably always will be, the focus of Otten’s work. There can be no debating the fact that Otten takes seriously the words spoken by his Savior, “You are the salt of the earth.” Fully understanding the responsibility that has been placed on his shoulders, to arrest the decay of this world, Otten has spent just about his entire ministry uncovering false doctrine and demanding space for the truth. Otten’s intangible love for the truth and his desire to be salt took tangible form in the *Lutheran News*, which we know today as the *Christian News*. The *Lutheran News* was Otten’s attempt to “salt” the church, to arrest the false doctrine and improper practice that was beginning to rear its head in the LC-MS. One can only applaud Otten’s desire to be “salt,” to see the truth of the gospel preserved and the thorn of heterodoxy removed. While admiring Otten’s resolve and

his dogged determination to fight the good fight for the faith, we will also have to investigate the early years of the *Lutheran News* to rightly estimate the salt he applied, whether it caused a slow-down in decay or whether it accelerated the decay. Therefore, the question upon which this paper will revolve, the question which we will aim to resolve, is this: *Has the Salt (Lutheran News) Lost its Saltiness?*

A study of the events and circumstances surrounding the somewhat detailed, somewhat sketchy early history of *Lutheran News* will help to clearly portray the importance of the salt that Otten was trying to apply. Though details are sometimes missing, the general sequence of events, of actions and reactions, should be apparent to the reader. But let this be said at the outset: Every good study of history means to accomplish more than assembling and piecing together facts; it means to summarize and draw conclusions, to learn from the past a lesson for the future. This paper, though written by someone who is no true historian, will aim to hit those marks.

### *1. Salt was needed*

Already in 1938 it became apparent that salt was needed to stop the decay. That fateful year saw Missouri issue church union resolutions to find a basis for fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. Missouri opined that a union could be declared if the ALC's confession agreed with the "**Brief Statement**" that the LC-MS had produced in 1932. Unfortunately, that resolution was not in keeping with the stand of the Synodical Conference, nor with the stand of the Wisconsin Synod. Allowing for fellowship on the basis of two different confessions, in so far as they agreed with one another, is using human standards where God has established divine standards. Suddenly, the Missouri Synod, the leader and the backbone of the Synodical Conference because of its size and its doctrinal heritage, had swayed from the truth. This unhappy action of Missouri no doubt caught many off-guard, thinking that Missouri would be the guardians of orthodoxy, as they had been from their inception. From that early date, though it would be some 23 years before Wisconsin would sever fellowship ties with Missouri, there was clearly a need for salt, to stop the decay and preserve Scriptural Lutheranism. Pastors who held

to the truth of the gospel had to apply salt if they were at all desirous of preserving the rich theological heritage of their Synod.

The WELS and ELS were quick to apply salt, openly stating their disagreement with Missouri's overture to the ALC. In love, Wisconsin urged Missouri to find basis for fellowship with the ALC only by means of a common confession, a joint declaration of faith. Missouri heeded the warning and sought said common confession. But the "Common Confession" which resulted about ten years later was hardly a strong doctrinal statement. Instead of settling areas of disagreement, Missouri glossed over them and emphasized the points of doctrine which they shared. Wisconsin and the ELS continued their admonition, lovingly and patiently calling on their brethren to return to the fold, to the doctrinal stance that once characterized Missouri more than anyone else.

At the same time, the LC-MS was going soft on Scouting. Historically (and correctly!) Missouri had recognized that taking part in Scouting would be a violation of Scriptural principles, because it would signal a common faith, where no such faith had been established. But that wasn't the only fellowship problem that faced Missouri. Already in the early 1940's, Missouri was espousing the idea of "levels of fellowship" (though they weren't using that phrase yet), meaning that while it could be improper to share a pulpit with someone, it would not necessarily be sinful to pray with him. Again, Wisconsin recognized that a human distinction was being made, under the guise of love and charity, where a divine distinction was already in force. In true Christian love for their sister Synod, Wisconsin admonished Missouri to retract the statements that could be misunderstood and replace them with statements that reflected their doctrinal heritage.

Wisconsin naturally took their concerns to the Synodical Conference, in hopes that the brethren might be able to point out to Missouri the error of her ways, with this ultimate goal: that Missouri come back to the truth. Though it was a noble attempt, and though Wisconsin was simply applying salt where it was needed, the Synodical Conference was unable to change the direction that the LC-MS was taking. That's not too hard to understand, really, since, in the main, the members of the Conference were adamant supporters of their own Synod. When

various committees addressed the concerns that the WELS and the ELS had brought to the attention of the Synodical Conference, the committees often divided along “party” lines. Missouri’s size and her leadership role in the Conference pushed the salt off the table and the LC-MS refused to see the error of her ways, to hear the warning being sounded by Wisconsin, that her doctrine was beginning to decay.

Though Missouri, as a Synod, was disregarding the concerns voiced by their sisters in the Synodical Conference, it would be wrong to say that there was no concern among individual pastors. In fact, some pastors felt that the best way to voice their opinions concerning the road that their beloved Synod was taking was to begin publishing a monthly paper called *The Confessional Lutheran*, which first appeared in 1940, just two years after the aforementioned union resolutions. The subtitle of the paper indicates that it was written in the interest of unity before union, saying “Published In The Interest Of ECUMENICAL LUTHERANISM”<sup>2</sup> At the time of the Wisconsin-Missouri split, the subtitle, though changed, emphasized the same thing: “Published in the Interest of The Church’s Mission, THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT, And Christian Stewardship.”<sup>3</sup> These faithful Missouri Synod pastors (several of whom later joined FAL or WELS) were seeking to demonstrate to the members of the Synod that there could be union only where there was unity. Knowing that there were differences in doctrine between Missouri and the ALC, these men delineated the differences that existed and urged their readers, both pastors and laymen, to express their uneasiness at the idea of fellowshipping with a church body who stood on different ground doctrinally. This paper, which continued to be published until the late 1960’s, was an early endeavor to administer salt. A limited readership, however, was unable to change the path of the Synod. One could say that this paper, though never published in a tabloid format and though rarely as controversial, was a forerunner of the *Lutheran News*. The goals were much the same, the type of information was similar but the manner of reporting was different.

By the time that Wisconsin met for its crucial 1955 convention, the ELS had done what their consciences dictated — they had severed fellowship ties with Missouri. Though the ELS was a small body, yet they were applying quite a bit of salt with this courageous move. Out of



love for Missouri, the ELS was sounding a warning, that the LC-MS was no longer holding to the doctrine of their fathers. Missouri would have to recognize that something had changed, that something had caused their Synodical Conference partner to cease all fellowship activities. But this salt did not stop the decay, because the LC-MS pushed it off the table — out of sight, out of mind, out of heart. This was but a small part of the salt that needed to be applied.

In 1955, Wisconsin in convention faced a tough decision — what course of action should they pursue in dealing with Missouri, the same Missouri that had steered them away from Pietism and improper fellowship practices into the truth of the gospel? Mixed pastoral conferences had built up a feeling of brotherhood between Missouri and Wisconsin preachers. Very few were eager to leave behind the Synod that had been their partner for such a long and successful time. But all of Wisconsin's warnings, including a warning from the Synod in Convention in 1953, had gone unheeded and the LC-MS had not toed the line doctrinally. If Wisconsin failed to break fellowship with Missouri, they would be guilty of the same unionism as Missouri. But in 1955, Wisconsin took no such action. Why? Because Missouri had not met in convention to discuss the warning from Wisconsin's 1953 convention, Wisconsin felt it was their duty, in brotherly love, to refrain from a split until the time that Missouri had acted, whether to reject the salt that Wisconsin was applying or accept the admonition and change their ways.

When Missouri failed to respond in the proper way, the WELS convention of 1957 had a tough decision — Had Missouri demonstrated that they were going to continue in their false fellowship practices or were they still willing to hear admonition from their sister Synod? The convention voted not to give up in trying to lead Missouri back to the Bible and God-pleasing fellowship principles and practices. Discussions between Wisconsin and Missouri began in earnest, to see if it was possible for Wisconsin and Missouri to remain united in faith and fellowship. Over the next three years the two Synods discussed the teaching of fellowship until Wisconsin recognized that an impasse had been reached and the two were no longer one in doctrine. In 1960, Wisconsin applied the salt by telling the Synodical Conference about the impasse. The 1961 Wisconsin convention naturally voted to split from Missouri in response to the

situation that pertained with respect to Missouri. Considering the fact that these two synods had worked together on any number of projects and the fact that many pastors had developed close ties, this warning was definitely salt in an open wound. Wisconsin patiently dealt with Missouri before taking the final step because of her love and respect for this Synodical Conference partner. When the breach took place, which Wisconsin prayed would never happen, Missouri had received a forceful preaching about the decay that was beginning to take its toll in her midst. The years 1938-1961 gave evidence of this fact: Salt was needed in the LC-MS. Up to that point in time the salt had been applied, but mainly from *without*, from her fellow Synodical Conference members. The time had come for salt to be applied from *within*, from those who had spent their life in Missouri and who yearned for a return to a historic Missouri stance.

The problems that Missouri was having in the area of fellowship may very well have been symptomatic of a larger problem crouching at their door that desired to have them. The proliferation of liberal "scholarly" Biblical research faced the theologians of the LC-MS, placing on them the burden of accepting or rejecting their "findings." Unfortunately, there were places within the LC-MS where the theologians did not have the trusting heart of Samuel, who responded to the call of the Lord with words that mark every true theologian, "Speak, O Lord, your servant is listening." Instead, some of the theologians who were in a position to reject the liberalism that was gaining strength in other conservative bodies wanted the Lord to listen to *their* ideas and interpretations.

In all his cleverness, the devil recognized that the best way to bring decay upon the LC-MS was to work from within the Synod. And how better to influence the future of a Synod than to invade the training grounds for future pastors, the seminaries! Already in the 1950's, and definitely in the 1960's, the devil's plan was in full force — liberal ideas were surfacing at the seminary in St. Louis. The devil was aiming for the jugular by attacking the doctrine of Scripture upon which the Missouri Synod had taken its stand in its "prime." Professors Waetjen, Piepkorn and Hummel were downplaying and rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture; some allowed for evolution and an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1-3. Professor Martin Scharlemann, in an essay that eventually led Dr. Siegbert Becker to leave Missouri, described the Bible

as a “witness” of the truth and not truth itself. (though he later withdrew the essay containing that idea) Professor Robert Scharlemann denied inerrancy, when he

argued that the statement that the Bible contains no error “can simply not be supported by an examination of the Bible itself.” He writes: “Unless one so defines ‘error’ that it does not really mean an error in the normal sense; or unless one holds to the word ‘inerrancy’ with a sort of blind dogmatism, the assertion that the Bible is inerrant, ‘that is, contains no error,’ simply cannot be supported by the Biblical evidence itself.”<sup>4</sup>

The unity of Isaiah was questioned and the J-E-D-P theory was presented as factual. The historical-critical method of Bible interpretation was penetrating a Seminary that had once been a bastion of orthodoxy. Dr. Thiele denied the immortality of the soul, in an article ironically called “Easter Hope,” saying:

We think it is consequently fair to say, to put it very bluntly, that when a man dies he is dead. The Bible when examined in its length and breadth knows of no disembodied condition in which man lives, temporarily, and certainly not permanently; it knows of neither a temporary nor permanent human immortality as such.<sup>5</sup>

One can only imagine what that great theologian C.F.W. Walther would have said or done had his ears heard what was being said in the St. Louis classrooms. Several of the professors involved later showed that they had been holding to liberal ideas all along when they were involved in the formation of the Seminary in Exile, the controversy that rocked the Missouri Synod in the early 1970’s. As good students of their intelligent and gifted professors, many heard and took to heart the false teaching that was being presented. Those who came to the Seminary in good faith, trusting the men whom God had called to their office, could be easily led astray, though they were unwilling. Evidence of that can be seen, for example, in the student publication, *The Seminarian*, which had an article that defended the “mytho-poetic” view of Genesis.<sup>6</sup> All of this false teaching at a school that was to train orthodox clergymen gave evidence of the fact that salt was needed. With the WELS no longer there to admonish their erring brothers from the *outside*, someone from *within* the LC-MS would have to stand up to the false teachers.

Liberal teaching also surfaced at Valparaiso University, an institution for higher learning that was affiliated with the LC-MS. In the September 1959 issue of *Lutheran Education*, it was

reported that Dr. Karl Krekeler, a graduate of Concordia Seminary and teacher at Valparaiso, supported evolution. The January 1960 *Cresset*, the official newspaper of Valparaiso University, allowed for the teaching of evolution, deeming it of little importance to demand the Scriptural teaching of creation. Dr. Hoyer, who also served as a Bible class editor for Concordia Publishing House, wrote a special column in every edition of the "Cresset" beginning in the early 1960's. Though they were challenging and well-written articles, they on occasion had unfortunate and incorrect doctrinal statements. In the May 1961 edition, for example, Hoyer contended that Jesus' death on the cross did not reconcile God to man, but man to God, going so far as to say, "God gave His son into death to appease the wrath of an angry mankind. He sacrificed himself in order to change man from hate to love."<sup>7</sup> Because of the rapid spread of liberalism within the LC-MS, there was a need for those with confessional principles to position themselves on the front line of battle, ready to do whatever it took to preserve the truth. If no one applied salt, the leaven of false doctrine would spread throughout the Synod and within a very few years a church body that was respected for its *conservative* stand would, of necessity, decay and be recognized for its *liberalism*.

In fact, one Missouri Synod campus pastor who supported evolution, Rev. Ralph Moller, made this startling observation about the situation in Missouri circles, in a letter that was later published in *Lutheran News*:

In the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1962 there is no longer unanimity of opinion on how to deal with the theory of evolution . . . If we are to be perfectly frank, we must acknowledge that we are involved in a basically dishonest situation . . . We are caught in the anomaly of insisting that evolutionary concepts are untenable (if not damnable), while we tacitly tolerate a considerable divergence from this standpoint. Among laity and clergy there are many who espouse a position of roughly equivalent to that of American Fundamentalism. . . Can we live with these undeniable differences in our midst and pretend that we are in full accord with "The Brief Statement" and the position of our fathers?<sup>8</sup>

Could it be true, that the LC-MS was faltering and espousing these false doctrines? Though it could in no way be said of many of Missouri's clergy, yet there were reasons to worry for the future of the Synod, considering the false teachings that were entering the ears of young men who desired the office of overseer of souls. In no way would it be stretching the truth to say

that Missouri was entering a crucial stage of her existence in what would be a turbulent decade; the 1960's would determine whether Missouri would be the Missouri of old or whether she would decay to the point of denying the basic truths of Scripture.

One has to wonder how many knew that there was a crisis within Missouri on more than just the doctrine of fellowship. When Wisconsin, before the split in 1961, met with Missouri theologians, they came to an agreement on the doctrine of Scripture and of creation. It's safe to say that their agreement would not have allowed statements like the ones that had been made by various Concordia professors. The pastor who had little contact with the Seminary probably had no idea, probably couldn't even imagine, that such heterodox statements were being made. Even the long-time president of the Synod, Dr. John Behnken, who served in that position from 1935-1962, told Pastor Otten that he couldn't believe "that any Missouri Synod professor would deny even such a doctrine as the historicity of Jonah or Adam and Eve."<sup>9</sup> Why wouldn't they know about the false teachings that were floating around at the Seminary and at Valparaiso? Perhaps the main reason was a good one: Synodical officials and pastors, in brotherly love, trusted that the men who had been called to serve at the Seminary would continue to proclaim the word of God as it was explained in the Confessions. How true that was might be hard to substantiate, but there is a more "tangible" reason: None of the *official* organs of the Synod (*The Confessional Lutheran* was not an official paper) were reporting it. *Der Lutheraner*, the German magazine that contained devotional articles, brief synodical reports and statistics, was not in the practice of heading to the Seminary to interview the "Heretic of the Month." That type of news would not have been in keeping with the purpose of the magazine. Some labeled the editorial policy of *Der Lutheraner* as "managed news." In a way, that is an accurate statement, because only certain things would appear in the magazine that appeared biweekly. Since the purpose of the magazine was to inform and inspire, not to air "dirty laundry," it was appropriate for the editors to refuse to print articles exposing and condemning the professors at St. Louis. Brotherly love dictated that doctrinal aberrations should be dealt with individually.

The *Lutheran Witness*, Missouri's official English bi-weekly magazine was the same type of publication as *Der Lutheraner*, containing similar articles. Considering that this magazine

was entering the homes not only of trained theologians but also untrained lay people, it was probably not the organ by which to publicize doctrinal deviations at the Seminary. When conservatives offered to write articles about the false teaching that was progressing into the Synod, the editors refused to grant them space. Were they trying to brush it under the table and deny the reality of false teaching? Not necessarily. Though these magazines contained no statement of policy, it was clear that the editors felt that controversies should be dealt with via another venue. Because these official LC-MS organs were not in the practice of publishing the sordid details of controversies for the whole Synod to see the spreading doctrinal decay, many were unaware of the situation developing in St. Louis. (Indeed, when the *Lutheran Witness* did issue reports about controversy, the reports denigrated those who were trying to expose the error.) Such was the situation prevailing in Missouri at-large. If the decay was to be abated, salt would have to be applied by those who were convinced of the truth and unwilling to see Missouri go the way of other liberal churches. Even though the salt was needed, only a small percentage of Missourians (considering the size of the LC-MS) were aware of that need.

Other Lutheran publications distributed outside of the LC-MS were not giving space in their periodicals to the predicament in which Missouri found herself. *The Lutheran Standard*, the official organ of the ALC, didn't address the issues. *The Lutheran Scholar*, published by the Academy for Lutheran Scholarship, didn't print articles disclosing the difficulties in Missouri. In fact, it was this magazine that occasionally contained articles, written by Missouri men, contradicting Missouri's traditional stance. If Missouri was going to survive the 1960's with her doctrine intact, someone from within would have to apply the salt (and fast!) and seek to correct those who had taught false doctrine.

The situation was such that doing nothing would be tantamount to condoning the false teaching. But what could be done? How can this be handled? Who would have both the information and the courage to stand up to the Missouri Synod and demand that action be taken? There were probably many who were concerned, but few knew what to do or how to deal with the proliferation of false doctrine. Into the picture stepped Herman Otten, who entered Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1952. *Lutheran News*, by Otten's own admission, had its begin-

nings in great part because of what he had heard in the classrooms, from his professors and his schoolmates.<sup>10</sup> Describing his attitude upon entering the Seminary and his attitude after several years there, Otten said:

When we [a poetic plural that Otten often uses] entered the seminary in 1952 we had been led to believe that some professors would try to make us swallow some dead orthodoxy which had no scriptural support. We were determined that we would have to be shown from Holy Scripture that what professors taught was correct. However, we soon discovered that dead orthodoxy was not a problem at Concordia Seminary and that there were students and professors who rejected some doctrines clearly taught in the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1953-1954 school year a group of students asked the faculty to clarify the doctrine of inspiration. By means of evening lectures, the faculty explained the position of "**The Brief Statement.**" There were students who disagreed with the position of "**The Brief Statement,**" but thought they could reconcile their views with the faculty's presentation. Two students in particular, Walter Bouman and William Schoedel, denied the traditional doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and claimed that they had faculty support for their views. Otten and fellow student Kurt Marquart brought this to the attention of the Dean. Though Schoedel admitted that he didn't hold to the historicity of the Genesis Creation account, he was approved to teach at Concordia College in Milwaukee.<sup>12</sup> Otten's initial attempt to apply salt and preserve the future of the LC-MS had not produced the desirable result. While he was disappointed and disturbed, he never discontinued in his quest to stop the spread of doctrinal error.

During the 1956-57 school year, Academic Dean Arthur Repp asked Otten to put into writing his objection to the views of Dr. Piepkorn. The result? Otten said, "Although we showed that Dr. Piepkorn rejected a basic doctrine of Scripture, again nothing was done."<sup>13</sup> In February 1957, Dr. Waetjen rejected the Christian doctrine of Holy Scriptures and began disseminating his views in the classroom. Otten immediately went to the Administration of the Seminary and, to his disappointment, nothing was done.<sup>14</sup> The professors had succeeded in convincing some of their students of their false views. After several group discussions, eight students brought formal charges of false doctrine against eight other students. The result of that attempt? Otten summarized it by saying:

Although the liberal students in essence (sic) admitted that the charges were true, liberal members on the faculty covered up the whole matter and told us to declare a moratorium on theological discussion on the seminary campus. Some of these liberals whom we charged with false doctrine are now teaching at "Seminex."<sup>15</sup>

Applying salt, Otten was learning, was not easy; he didn't know how to successfully air his concerns so that something would be done for the benefit of the Synod-at-large.

Unable to change the situation through *direct* appeals to the Seminary, Otten was advised by Dr. J.T. Mueller to bring his charges to the attention of Dr. Henry Grueber, a former Synodical vice-president. Grueber, in turn, relayed Otten's concerns to a Milwaukee pastoral conference, which naturally asked the Seminary to respond. Dr. Grueber had opportunity to convey their concerns to the Seminary. Things were now progressing; hope remained that the false teaching would be retracted and Concordia would again be back on track. Because of Grueber's request, Synod President Behnken became aware of the concerns. In conversation with David Scaer, a student at the time, Behnken invited Scaer and a couple of his schoolmates, one of whom was Otten, to meet with him to discuss the situation.

On January 27, 1958, Otten submitted the report, "Report to Dr. John Behnken and Dr. Herman Harms Regarding Certain Theological Trends at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from September 1952 to January 1958." The report, written in outline form to direct discussion, informed the President of the false doctrine being taught at the Seminary. Behnken sent the outline to the Seminary and asked Otten and his fellow students to discuss the matter with the Seminary Board of Control and Administration. Eager to see the false teaching exposed and the false teachers to be reproved, Otten met with them on February 13, 1958. But Otten's hopes were dashed when Academic Dean Repp, acting as spokesman for the Seminary, listened to the report and retaliated with these words: "Who gave you the right to come down here and how come you use 'we' in this outline instead of 'I' when you were the only student in this group who was at the seminary in 1952?"<sup>16</sup> Again and again, Otten's attempts from within to reveal the false teaching of the seminary met with little results. Undoubtedly Otten had to wonder what course was left for him to take, or whether he should silently ignore what he knew to be wrong so as not to rock the boat.



In May of 1958 Otten received his S.T.M. from the Seminary. The Seminary told Otten not to bother continuing his studies for Th.D. because he was unfit for the ministry because he had “ ‘disseminated adverse statements concerning the theology of several (teachers) without having first spoken to them about (sic) the issues, showing thereby an attitude and procedure . . . detrimental to his own Christian life, and giving evidence of his lack of fitness for pastoral dealing in the ministry of the Word.’ ”<sup>17</sup> This harsh condemnation of a young man who had the best interest of the church at heart, who had made any number of attempts to arrest the false teaching beginning to rob the LC-MS of its orthodox heritage, revealed that he had struck a nerve. Though he was rebuked for his improper and unloving practice, the irony of the situation was that the Seminary didn't show him the love of patiently instructing and correcting him. On May 26, 1958, Otten apologized to all concerned parties, but his apology was not accepted because, “Mr. Otten was to admit that it is always a sin under all circumstances to repeat public information about false doctrine without first privately contacting the teacher of false doctrine.”<sup>18</sup> He was to subscribe to this principle as stated by the faculty: “to repeat disturbing public quotes of faculty members without first speaking to them personally is always and under all circumstances a violation of the law of love.”<sup>19</sup>

Because Otten was unwilling to grant the truthfulness of that statement, the Seminary refused to recommend him for a call. One has to respect Otten's unwillingness to deviate from his principles, though he could have saved himself a lot of grief by simply telling the faculty and administration what they wanted to hear. Otten stated his desire to stand on his principles in these words: “I would prefer to find myself outside of the Ministry with a clear conscience, than to base my whole ministry from the very beginning on what I must regard as a compromise of principle and conscience.”<sup>20</sup> The very tactics that made him unfit, in the eyes of St. Louis Seminary, for the ministry of the LC-MS were the ones that he would continue to use for the next thirty years; had his complaints been heard and dealt with properly when he was a student, had Otten not been rebuffed when he pursued the prescribed course of action, had patient love and evangelical discipline been used with Otten, *Lutheran News* might never have been published.

Though Otten was a man without an assignment and without the approval of the Seminary and the Synod, he began his pastoral ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church in New Haven, Missouri. Already in 1957 he had been called by that congregation to serve them with Word and Sacrament until he completed his studies for the Ministry of the LC-MS. While he waited for his appeal concerning the Seminary's action to be answered, Otten continued to serve this congregation. In November 1960, the Board of Appeals of the LC-MS ruled 5-5 in the Seminary-Otten case, meaning that the Seminary had not shown just cause why Otten should not be recommended for the ministry.<sup>21</sup> A month later, Trinity congregation asked Synodical officials to give them a reason why they shouldn't call Otten as their pastor. When they received no response, they proceeded to call Otten. Even at the voters' meeting that decided to extend the call to Otten, Missouri officials gave no reason why he shouldn't be called.

Before Otten had made a decision regarding the call, district officials urged Trinity to rescind the call. Trinity refused to rescind the call and Otten accepted it. Within four months, this congregation that had no desire to be outside the Missouri Synod, found themselves in that very position. On May 25, 1961, district officials announced that they were depriving Trinity of all its rights and privileges for as long as Otten remains the pastor. In February, 1966, Trinity was expelled from the LC-MS. This suspension and succeeding expulsion from the Synod demonstrated again to the persistent Otten that discipline was being carried out against a "conservative," while the liberals were allowed to retain their positions. Otten's every effort at applying salt to restrain the decay beginning to take place in Missouri met with the same response: he was rejected and slighted. Was this the final straw? Would Otten now take to task the officials of the Synod who refused to give him a fair hearing?

Frustrated by a lack of action, Otten couldn't just sit still. A man of principle and of devotion both to the Word of God and to the LC-MS, Otten was compelled to act. One cannot help but admire the spirit of Pastor Otten, who had faced so much rejection and yet refused to give up. Needing an outlet for his frustration at the liberalism that was manifesting itself in Missouri and in the other bodies that called themselves "Lutheran," Otten found one. The Church League of America asked him to document the status of the Lutheran Churches throughout the

nation. Under the title, "What's Troubling the Lutherans?" Otten wrote four different essays that appeared in *News and Views*. From January to June in 1961, he described the situation prevailing in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and in the LC-MS. Part III, needless to say, rocked Missouri's boat, leading many to see that Missouri was drifting from her historic moorings, the very moorings which had been so firmly established by Walther. A year later, the boat was rocked again when Otten produced Part IV of this series, chronicling in detail the problems of Missouri. These essays were significant because they crystallized in Otten's mind the liberalism that plagued the church body in which he was raised. In-depth study of a situation generally has the effect of increasing in the individual a willingness to share his views with others, because his study has made him an "expert," if you will. For example, the first issues of *Lutheran News* contained the same charges that were leveled in these essays. Had he not spent his time composing these essays and researching the situation, he might never have assumed the responsibility of producing the paper that now appears on a weekly basis, except during the month of August.

Striving to follow the established channels to call a halt to the decay, Otten had earlier directed his concerns to the LC-MS 1959 San Francisco convention's Committee on Doctrine. Though he presented information on the false doctrine that had been presented at St. Louis, his request for a study of the Seminary met with a cold response. Because he had been branded as a "radical conservative" by Concordia Seminary and because he was not a member of the ministerium of the Synod, his authority was hamstrung and his message disregarded. The *Lutheran News* was but the natural outgrowth of Otten's realization that he would not be heeded by Synodical officials; they looked down on him with a certain disdain, though he was convinced that he was simply defending the truth.

Undaunted by rejection, Otten went to the 1962 Convention in Cleveland "loaded for bear," because of the research he had done for the aforementioned essay, "What's Troubling the Lutherans?" Before the convention began, Otten authored any number of memorials concerning false teaching and forwarded them to the convention committee in charge of publish-

ing reports and memorials. At open hearings preceding the convention and also on the convention floor, Otten outlined for the doctrinal committee the errors that were being passed for the truth. This convention offered a glimmer of hope in applying the much-needed salt by resolving to establish a Commission on Theology and Church Relations, to answer the concerns of members of the LC-MS. The convention did affirm several doctrines that Otten contended were being mistaught at St. Louis, declaring that all pastors in the Synod should teach accordingly. But the convention also declined a memorial that Otten supported, Memorial 336, "To Reiterate Agreement with Certain Principles Regarding Discipline." That memorial (cf. Addendum 1) expressed support for the idea that

it is not Scripturally legitimate to *require* the application of the first two steps of Matthew 18 in the case of public sin within a congregation or in the application of Synodical discipline to instances of public error; . . . We reject appeals to a vague and formless "law of love" unsupported by clear Scripture, and we maintain that the use of such appeals is not permissible to justify failure to practice truly evangelical Synodical discipline.<sup>22</sup>

That was the principle to which the Seminary had demanded Otten's subscription. In rejecting this memorial, the convention adopted a resolution that spoke in a veiled way about Otten's dealings at the Seminary and his essays concerning the doctrine of the LC-MS that had been widely circulated. Resolution 3-32 (cf. Addendum 2) said in part:

*Resolved*, That the Synod deplore those features of our common life that have in the past done violence to our Lord's will for His church: harshness and intemperance in attack and defense; *public exposure of an offending brother without personal, loving confrontation with the brother; the airing of our internal difficulties through media of communication directed to a public whom these difficulties do not concern;* and a disregard for the duty and the dignity of our duly constituted officials;<sup>23</sup>

Those who have read *Lutheran News* and *Christian News* know that Otten refused to accept the judgment of the Synod in this regard, because those papers have done what this resolution rejects. Already in the summer before *Lutheran News* would enter the picture, the Synod had reacted to that type of journalism. It should be noted that those words probably also were directed to the editors and supporters of *The Confessional Lutheran*, mentioned above. But the stage had been set for the beginning of *Lutheran News*— Otten's attempts to work "by the book" had served to frustrate him and had failed to yield satisfying results; he had learned that

the appeal for correction would have to come from lay people, from those who weren't regarded as outcasts; his research had made him the expert on the false teaching present in Missouri; and there was no paper expressly dedicated to the exposing of theological liberalism in the LC-MS.

### 11. "Please Pass the Salt!" -- *The Call for Action*

The need for salt was evident only to those who had directly experienced the theological liberalism spreading through this once staunchly orthodox body. But who called for a concerted effort to apply the salt so badly needed; who issued the directive, "Please Pass the Salt!"? One might make a pretty strong case for Herman Otten being the one who asked for the formation of a coalition to fight the advancing decay. But the appeal really came from lay people. Concerned for the future of the church body that they knew and loved, desirous of preserving the truths to which they pledged their commitment at confirmation, and cognizant of the havoc wreaked in other church bodies by the undercurrents of liberalism, these loyal Christians called for action.

But how could they have known what was going on, if the official organs of the Synod were silent on the matter? *The Confessional Lutheran* was undoubtedly finding its way into the hands of some. But a more powerful presentation concerning the spread of false doctrine came, at this point in time, not from the *pen* but rather from the *mouth* of Herman Otten. Otten spent a great deal of time lecturing in various parts of the country, explaining and illustrating his charges and concerns. During these lectures, it was quite natural for Otten to urge faithful lay people "to form some sort of organization to stem the tide of liberalism which was rapidly spreading from Concordia Seminary to many parts of the LCMS."<sup>24</sup> These lectures served not only to solidify Otten's desire to apply salt to the Synod, but to light a fire under those who thought that the situation couldn't be as serious as some had pictured it.

One of those lectures deserves special attention, because it indirectly led to the beginning of the *Lutheran News*. Invited to speak to a group of conservatives and anti-Communists in Arizona, Otten "spoke for about twelve hours on liberalism at St. Louis Sem and elsewhere

in LCMS. Suggested something be done.”<sup>25</sup> The group wanted to know what was being done to address the situation. After mentioning that some had been considering bringing together a group of LC-MS conservatives, the group wanted to know who would officially call the meeting. “At that time there really wasn’t any chairman and we (Otten) suggested that Dr. August Brustat or Rev. Cameron MacKenzie, who were at the meeting in Arizona, would both make good chairmen.” The impetus for concerted action came, in no small part, from these lay people in Arizona who wanted to see the doctrinal problems solved.

The call for action naturally also came from pastors who were unwilling to give up on Missouri. Those who look at the situation with 30 years separating them from the time of crisis often wonder why the Missouri pastors that were loyal to the Word of God didn’t leave and join Wisconsin. One dare never underestimate the loyalty that a pastor feels to the body in which he grew up, in which he was trained, in which he desired to serve and then was able to serve. Intense devotion to the historic Missouri position marked all of the men who refused to give up without a struggle. But there was probably more to it than that. Some could point to the fact that, on paper, Missouri was sound doctrinally. “**The Brief Statement**” of 1932 was an excellent declaration of faith to which the pastors of the Synod were *supposed* to be bound. Certain that God would bless a body that adhered to the truths of Scripture and confident that they could bring practice back into line with official doctrine, many must have felt that it was worth the effort to stay in Missouri and patiently deal with the erring.

These conservative Missouri pastors who called for action, including Otten, couldn’t see leaving behind a Synod that had done great work in the past. In both home and world missions, Missouri had energetically reached out with the gospel to save the lost. In assessing Missouri’s strengths and weaknesses at this time, these conservative pastors saw the scale heavily weighed down on the side of strengths. If they could but remove the false teachers and revive the former confessional spirit, Missouri would be able to take the lead in promoting true Lutheranism until the Day of the Lord. Why stay and fight liberalism in the LC-MS when the confessional WELS was there as an option? If Wisconsin was unappealing, why not start a new church body? Otten answered that question in an article in *The Christian News*, saying:

We turned down all suggestions of starting some new orthodox church body or trying to arrange more conferences. The only confessional church body which we knew had the resources, manpower, 6,000 congregations throughout the nation, radio and T.V. programs throughout the world, and which could properly take the lead in a Twentieth Century Formula of Concord was The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Unfortunately, liberals were rapidly taking over this church body and its seminaries. Our plan was to concentrate on exposing the theological liberalism within the LCMS, particularly at the LCMS's St. Louis seminary, and then once the LCMS returned to its official orthodox position, get the LCMS to lead in a Twentieth Century Reformation of all the Christendom.<sup>26</sup>

Pastors and lay people — faithful to the Lord, to his Word and to this church body in which they had learned the Word — called for action, for the application of salt.

### *III. The Salt is Applied*

In an effort to unite the concerned voices within Lutheranism and at the behest of the anxious lay people in Arizona, Rev. MacKenzie called for a meeting of conservative Lutheran pastors and laymen in January, 1962 at his congregation in Detroit. If the members of the Synod were to be informed of the decay that was occurring and if the leaders of the Synod were to take charges of false doctrine seriously, it was imperative that these men join together. As they discussed the issues that were confronting the church, they recognized that they would need to band together and “flood” the Synodical Convention in Cleveland (June 1962) with resolutions that called for a return to an orthodox stance in doctrine and practice: “Prior to the synod’s 1962 convention in Cleveland we helped draft about 50 memorials for friends of ours throughout the country to submit to the convention. So many memorials were submitted that year . . . that the LCMS adopted a resolution which prevented laymen as individuals from petitioning a convention directly,”<sup>27</sup> said Otten. But eleven of those memorials documenting views of certain Concordia, St. Louis and Valparaiso professors were not printed, which would not sit well with a group that was protesting the “managed news” within Missouri.

Because the conservatives that met in Detroit were hoping to use a “grass-roots” approach to arresting the liberal theology being passed for the truth, they asked Otten to send out a newsletter detailing for the lay Christians of the Synod the doctrines being denied. In his

first issue, which appeared about eleven months later(December 15, 1962), Otten said, "This group (that met in Detroit) resolved to ask the writer to send out a brief newsletter to keep conservative Lutherans informed and to send them information they were not receiving in some official Lutheran organs. The writer had hoped that the 1962 Cleveland convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod would make such a publication unnecessary."<sup>28</sup> Another part of the course of action by which this group of conservatives — which took the name "State of the Church" — planned to inform the delegates to the convention was to have a booth on the convention floor. In this booth they planned to distribute the "State of the Church" Book of Documentation, in which the false doctrine being passed for truth in various parts of the Synod was exposed. Plans were set for a "State of the Church" meeting in Milwaukee for November of 1962, to review what had been accomplished by the Synod in convention and to determine the course for the future for these men who were so interested in preserving the church of their youth.

The State of the Church (SOC) sent payment for a booth on the convention floor and had previously been assured that registering was a mere formality and that they would be able to man such a booth during the Cleveland convention. However, the request for a booth was denied just a few weeks before the convention, a full month after the request had been made, because the committee had no specific knowledge of the contents of *The Faithful Word* or of any other materials that the SOC was intending to hand out, they did not feel they could allow such distribution.<sup>29</sup> Already at this time criticism was being leveled against these conservative pastors who merely wanted to preserve the doctrinal stance of the LC-MS. Though the SOC was not allowed a booth on the floor, the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau was allowed to have a booth and disburse their April, 1962 *American Lutheran*, in which this slanderous statement was found: " 'Regretfully, it appears that the State of the Church Conference will be to the Missouri Synod what the John Birch Society is to our nation.'"<sup>30</sup> Again Otten and those who were in agreement with him had tried to work through proper and acceptable means, only to find that those means of exposing error were not open for them. Is it any surprise that Otten would start his own paper? Only then would he be able to tell his whole story, only then



would the rank and file Christians of the Synod become informed of the raging liberalism threatening to dictate Missouri's future doctrinal position.

Before beginning to publish *Lutheran News*, Otten tried again to work through the proper channels by writing to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) that had been formed by convention resolution. That resolution contained an encouragement for the members of the Synod to be silent about problems in doctrine or practice and then to work through the proper channels in dealing with them, saying:

While admitting the right of free expression and of public appeal as an inherent right of its members, Synod urges and requests its members to refrain from circularizing Synod or areas thereof until this commission shall have been consulted and a reasonable time shall have been accorded to adjust the matter concerned.<sup>31</sup>

With that resolution, the Synod put themselves into a position not only to conceal the problems facing the Synod but also to condemn anyone who brought charges of false doctrine into the open. While members of the LC-MS had the right to work through those channels and expect a response, Otten couldn't. As a man who was out of favor with the leadership of the Synod, Pastor Otten's requests, no matter how sincere and well-meaning, fell on deaf ears. In a letter dated August 1, 1962, Otten said,

Since I would very much like to follow the procedure established by Synod, would your commission be willing to have me present to it documentation that false doctrine is being taught and tolerated at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis? I am more than willing to appear before your commission during the next two months in order to supply you with such documentation. Naturally I would have no objections if any of the professors at Concordia Seminary are also present during such a meeting.<sup>32</sup>

Though he wrote several more times asking for a hearing, his request was never granted. Because Otten was not a member of the ministerium of the LC-MS, the commission never felt it their duty to respond, though they had heard similar questions and concerns from many other pastors. This attitude toward anything Otten wrote or said would make the publishing of *Lutheran News* necessary, because only those who retained membership in the Synod would be able to effectively work through the channels established. Had the CTCR had the benefit of seeing into the future, that the *Lutheran/Christian News* would be such a thorn in the side, one wonders if they would have dealt differently in this matter.

On November 9-10, 1962, the SOC met in Milwaukee. The SOC had as its members “those who subscribe ‘without reservation’ to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Brief Statement of the LC-MS.”<sup>33</sup> 600 people gathered for this meeting, with 125 as members already of this conference, to discuss plans for the preservation of God’s Word in the Lutheran Church. At this meeting the SOC appointed a defense committee to aid those who were being persecuted for their stand against the rise of liberalism in the LC-MS. They also established an independent mission board, under the leadership of Rev. Paul Lehenbauer, so that those who were unwilling to give to a Synod that was propagating false doctrine might have an alternative place to which to give. Publicizing this opportunity to join in the mission of the church would be an important part of the first volumes of the *Lutheran News*. More importantly, though, the SOC appointed a publications committee to proceed with the publication of a newspaper as soon as funds became available. The intent was for this paper to reveal the liberalism within the LC-MS and also to contain positive articles emphasizing the true joy of the historic Christian faith.<sup>34</sup> But, it should be noted, “nothing concrete came out of the meeting. Some were surprised at how much a publication would cost and what was all involved.”<sup>35</sup> When Otten began a paper a little more than a month later, he was simply putting into action what the conference had agreed upon as a project for the future, though they had never come up with a name nor had they said it should come out in the next month. With blueprint in hand from the SOC, Otten, on his own, began a paper that has lasted thirty years.

This SOC conference was, in the view of its designers, simply a return to the free conferences that marked the years preceding the founding of the Synod and also its first years as an organization. Having free conferences was important, they felt, as a way to lay out on the table, for all to see and judge, the doctrines and practices that are predominating in a church body. In fact, they invited many “to become active members of the Council of Advisers and to take part in the planning of the future of the SOC in respect to one last attempt to uphold the name and honor of God within the Missouri Synod.”<sup>36</sup> These men who were concerned with the stewardship of the gospel which had been entrusted to the LC-MS hoped to be the salt that would stop the decay. This telling quote from *The Faithful Word* demonstrates that the SOC’s

reason for existence was not to make life difficult for the Synodical leaders, but rather to reestablish Missouri's historic position: "Some have urged that all old Missourians should now join other synods. . . . The participants in the State of the Church Conference in Milwaukee gave indication of their unwillingness to forfeit them (All of Missouri's strengths) without a spirited struggle."<sup>37</sup> Surveying the problems that needed to be solved and the groups that had organized in an attempt to solve them, Otten concluded that "the State of the Church Conference appears to be the only group sufficiently organized for specific action."<sup>38</sup> These confessional Lutherans wanted to demonstrate to the Synod the need for people who had a passion for the truth and for the Savior. If Missouri were to be what God called her to be, the SOC felt that things would have to change — Missouri needed to have self-correction as a basic church principle; she needed men in position of trust whose first qualification is loyalty to the Bible and the Savior; she needed schools to which young men could be entrusted with confidence that they will go out from them as spirit-filled men of God.<sup>39</sup>

Though the founders of the SOC conference were convinced that they were seeking the best interest of the gospel ministry of the LC-MS, there were others who held a different view. Dr. Behnken took exception to this group, not because it was wrong per se, but because of the way things were being handled, saying in a letter to the pastors of the LC-MS:

A number of things reported from this conference disturb me. Among them are the repetition of certain matters my office is striving to solve in a proper and evangelical way; the serious criticism of many individuals and incidents without proper prior investigation and consultation; the statement which falsely indicates our connection with the NCC; the sweeping reference to Valparaiso University.<sup>40</sup>

In *The Faithful Word: A Journal of Doctrine and Defense*, mentioned above, the executive committee of the SOC admitted that they did not have approval from the officials of the Synod to be producing a publication that would come to the aid of those pastors who refused to let false doctrine be tolerated. But they steadfastly disagreed with the sentiment of the leaders, whose charges they had heard: "It has been said that this conference is the work of 'self-appointed saviors' or of 'crackpots,' or even in one instance of bold-faced opportunists' seeking to destroy the Lutheran Church. It is implied that this Conference has no right to be because it

has not been blessed by 'official authority.'"<sup>41</sup> When condemning reports surfaced about the SOC conference, the leaders could not have been surprised. Headlining the *Lutheran News* on December 2, 1963 was this story: "Officials Say SOC Promotes Disloyalty." The charge that was leveled against the SOC was that they wanted to have their cake and eat it, too. In other words, they wanted to be part of the Missouri Synod and enjoy all its benefits, but also be over the Synod as its judge.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Harms, who succeeded Dr. Behnken ("John the Everlasting"), issued a letter that condemned the meetings of the SOC as harmful to the future of the Synod and improper for those who are supposedly walking together with their brothers. His disdain also for Otten is evident in this letter, though he never mentions Otten's name specifically (pointing instead to the fact that the ring-leader was disgruntled because he was not recognized as a member of the LC-MS). A few excerpts of the letter:

In a few areas there have been some unfortunate meetings to which members of the Synod were invited. Sponsors of these meetings included *men who were not members of the Synod*. I feel that it is against Christian principles for a dissatisfied person to try to lead others to dissatisfaction and perhaps to follow the call of the dissatisfied leader. . . For some of these meetings men from other Districts have been brought in to promote the organization of a new church body or to organize a congregation and draw members away from the LC-MS. These things are completely out of order, my brethren, and we should have nothing to do with them.<sup>43</sup>

Was Dr. Harms accurately assessing the situation? Was it true that this conference was an unfortunate development if the unity of the Synod was to be maintained? A strong case could be made in Dr. Harms' defense. There were channels established by which these concerns could be addressed; problems were to be dealt with in a loving manner and patiently, not judgmentally and with a lynch-mob mentality. By joining into a conference that, by its very appearance, set itself up as the sole orthodox teachers, these men gave the impression (mistaken though it may be) that they were superior, an impression that builds up walls that sinful humans do not easily tear down. That this was the appearance given, though it was not intended, is unmistakable from this little tidbit from an editorial in *Lutheran News*: "We realize that the SOC has frequently been criticized for its activity. *Even some who consider themselves conservatives believe they can be more 'effective' by not joining the SOC.*"<sup>44</sup> Some conservatives refused to join because they didn't want people to immediately be on the defensive when they began to ques-

tion the way things were being done. From this time on, though he never planned on it, Otten would rob his message of its power because he appeared ready only to attack and degrade, rather than lovingly correct and build up. When he began publishing *Lutheran News*, many refused to even grant him a hearing because he seemed to be interested only in criticizing the Synod and its leaders and creating controversy. Because that perception became reality in the mind of many, Otten's charges, complaints and requests would frequently fall on deaf ears.

It would be wrong, however, to lay the blame entirely on the SOC. These men, led by their energetic and faithful chairman Cameron MacKenzie, had tried to work through proper channels, only to have their requests brushed aside. One need only read Dr. Siegbert Becker's 12-part series in *Lutheran News*, entitled "Why I Left the Missouri Synod," to feel the frustration that these men endured. Trying to work through the channels that had been established, Dr. Becker ran into dead end after dead end. Striving to eradicate the false teaching of Dr. Martin Scharlemann, Becker tried everything. When it became apparent that Dr. Scharlemann, who admitted that he had a different view of Scripture than Becker,<sup>45</sup> would not be disciplined for his false teaching, Becker felt that it was only proper for the matter to be aired publicly, saying in the *Lutheran News*,

The writer of these lines tried for years to use the Synodical machinery, but to no avail, as we hope to show in later articles. This is not to imply that the officials of Synod are not well-meaning men. We will judge no one's heart. The doctrinal chaos which has engulfed Missouri is by now so wide-spread that it is humanly impossible to deal with it adequately. . . . The writer of these articles is therefore convinced that there is no course left open but to 'let the people judge.'<sup>46</sup>

Frustrated with the way that they were being dealt with on an individual basis, they banded together in hopes of raising a stronger voice of opposition to the way things were progressing in the Synod. Suffice it to say that neither side was innocent in this matter; the Synod had frustrated the SOC by refusing to deal with problems; the SOC had frustrated the Synod by circulating controversy and condemning the leadership of the Synod. Where trust and love were to be the guiding principles of working to preserve the truth of the gospel, distrust and hatred prevailed.

The executive committee of the SOC began publishing *The Faithful Word* mentioned above to affirm the truth to which Missouri had traditionally held fast. It was their desire to be the salt that would preserve the theology inherited from Walther, who served as the editor of *Lebre und Webre*. In fact, the first issue was presented with the “desire to identify it with the Scriptural position of *Lebre und Webre*.”<sup>47</sup> Before *Lutheran News* ever began or was considered, *The Faithful Word* was in publication. In some ways the two periodicals were similar. Both meant to serve as a testimony to the danger of false doctrine; both meant to call for action on the Synodical level; both were regarded as a hindrance to unity in the church; both were published to unite true Lutherans, as is evident from these nearly identical words from the two different papers: “It is the prayer of the Executive Committee that *The Faithful Word* will serve as a voice and meeting ground for faithful Lutherans.”<sup>48</sup> “It is our prayer that *Lutheran News* will assist in uniting conservative Lutherans throughout the world.”<sup>49</sup>

If these publications had so much in common, weren't they going to include the same things? Why was there a need for a second publication? It should be noted that there were significant differences between the two publications that both had their start from the SOC. Published occasionally, *The Faithful Word* would never be an organ that would expose the problems in the Synod and move lay people into action the way the bi-weekly *Lutheran News* would when it appeared a year-and-a-half later. While *The Faithful Word* was the official organ of the SOC and had its support, the *Lutheran News* was the sole responsibility of Rev. Otten. Though there would be some overlap in the purpose and the content of the two papers, the doctrinal circumstances demanded a second paper, a paper that would let the people judge for themselves what was going on synodically.

Enter the *Lutheran News*. On December 15, 1962, uncertain of what the future would bring, but recognizing the present situation endangering true Lutheranism, Otten delivered the first issue. Inquiring minds cannot help but ask: Why was it that Otten was the one that started the paper and not someone else? Otten is quick to point out

that we are not a professional journalist. We studied to be a pastor and never took any courses in journalism. We have been the pastor of a congregation now for about twenty

years. Editing *Christian News* is a sideline activity. During our college and seminary days we had no intentions of ever editing and publishing a newspaper. We studied a little agriculture on the side because we had intended to be an agricultural missionary.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling reason that Otten was the one who started the paper was because he had done so much lecturing on the liberalism running rampant in the LC-MS. Having written "What's Troubling the Lutherans?" Otten had all of the information at his disposal, the very information that, to this point, had been hidden from the lay people. Frustrated by his inability to work through Synodical channels, unwilling to leave the church of his youth, Otten really had no recourse but to start *Lutheran News*. Reviewing the beginnings of the paper that bears his image, Otten had this to say: "I don't know [why I started it and not someone else]. No one else did it."<sup>51</sup> At the time, there was no vision of publishing a paper for thirty years. In fact, the original plan was for it to be an interim paper: "The editor plans to publish *Lutheran News* every two weeks for at least the next six months or until a group of conservatives begin the publication mentioned in the December 15, 1962 issue."<sup>52</sup> The editor said that he "never gave much thought how long CN would last."<sup>53</sup>

Looking back at the beginnings of *Lutheran News*, one is struck by the fact that it was a *courageous* beginning. Most magazines that intend to last for more than six months are begun only when sponsors have been contacted and financial support has been obtained. But that wasn't the way that *Lutheran News* began. In retrospect, Otten said: "[We had] no time to seek supporters. We probably would have had much more money if I had visited wealthy. But as a pastor I had to stay with my people."<sup>54</sup> "Bankrolled" by his wife's Christmas money, Otten published the first edition and sent it free of charge to those who had expressed an interest in preserving authentic Lutheranism. Though he was strapped for money and receiving only a minimum salary from Trinity, Otten still courageously determined that he would send this paper out every two weeks, never thinking that it would last as long as it has. There can be little question that embarking on this project was not exactly a fiscally responsible thing to do — money problems would plague this periodical for its first thirty years. But Otten was undaunted by the cost because he was more concerned for the future of Missouri than for his future financial security. What was perhaps more courageous was Otten's willingness to step out on his

own, saying in the first issue: "Only the editor is responsible for all editorial comment."<sup>55</sup> Though he alone was responsible, he had support from others, from friends who agreed with him.<sup>56</sup>

A brief perusal through the first five issues of *Lutheran News* illustrates that the beginnings of this paper were *humble*. The first issues were nothing more than mimeographed sheets sent out to a few hundred conservative Lutherans. There were no pictures, no highly attractive designs or graphics; there were simply typed words, which weren't entirely legible in every part. By photocopying various articles, Otten hoped to let the articles speak for themselves, without spending much time commenting on them. Considering that the paper was meant to be informational, to present facts and let the people judge for themselves, it's not hard to see why the paper wasn't more aesthetically pleasing. Truth be told, it's hard to imagine publishing, on a bi-weekly basis, anything more than a humble paper while at the same time serving as a parish pastor. That the paper has progressed in quality of appearance and size is to Otten's credit, that he labored to improve it as best he could.

The first issues of *Lutheran News* marked a *purposeful* beginning. Though it never contained the purpose statement that can now be found in every issue of *Christian News*, Otten had in mind a clear guiding purpose. In fact, the somewhat lengthy statement of purpose that first graced the pages of the paper in 1967, really would summarize the purposes of the first issues of the *Lutheran News*.<sup>57</sup> (cf. Addendum 3) The *Lutheran News* was, as the later statement of purpose said, "an independent publication designed to supply rank and file Christians with information needed to face the present crisis in Christendom."<sup>58</sup> Because the official organs of the LC-MS were not reporting doctrinal controversy, this paper was primarily to inform the lay people about the "present crisis." In one of his many editorials, Otten said that "The main aim of this paper is to give information on the present religious situation and expose modern apostasy."<sup>59</sup> A month later he said this: "Our primary purpose is to publish information on doctrinal matters which is not generally available in official publications."<sup>60</sup> Informing the members of the Synod was not a goal or an end in and of itself; it was but the means to an end. If



salt were to be applied, it would have to come not only from Otten, but more importantly, from the Christians who retained membership in the LC-MS.

The purpose in informing the rank and file Christians of Missouri was to “wake them up to take action,”<sup>61</sup> according to Otten. Some would say that Otten was creating controversy for the sake of controversy, of exposing false teachers for the sinful pleasure of causing them to fall into disrepute. Otten never saw it that way; instead he looked upon himself as a watchman who had a responsibility to preserve the truth of the gospel. That was the point of an editorial in which he said, “If the church is on fire with false doctrine, it is necessary that every true shepherd and watchman sound the alarm and ‘disturb’ the sheep until they are fully aroused and flee for their lives from the fire and the wolf.”<sup>62</sup> By informing the laymen in the LC-MS, Otten hoped to inspire them to memorialize the Synod in convention,<sup>63</sup> asking the Synodical leaders to deal with the situation accurately and efficiently. Otten had learned that a request from the grass-roots would carry much more clout than one that came from him.

Even the idea of waking up the “rank-and-file” Christians in Missouri was but the means to an end, to the ultimate purpose of this paper. Even after thirty years, the same purpose comes through loud and clear — the formation of a 20th Century Formula of Concord. In the very first issue, he said, “Possibly this paper could be used to bring about the much-discussed realignment within Lutheranism.”<sup>64</sup> Through this paper and the people who were committed to retaining the truths of the confessions, Otten hoped to physically divide the conservatives and the liberals who were already doctrinally divided, saying that “they (liberals) could unite with the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America and form their own Lutheran body and call it anything they want. Then our (conservative) group could remain with the Missouri Synod.”<sup>65</sup> Continually calling for a re-alignment in Lutheranism, Otten hoped that those he considered liberals would be courageous enough to stand up and admit that they were no longer in doctrinal agreement with the LC-MS. Since he believed that the issues facing the Synod were quite clear, Otten frequently enjoined all true Missourians to stand up and be counted, to call for evangelical discipline as a general practice, rather than as an occasional activity.<sup>66</sup> Thirty years later, the same call is being voiced in Otten’s paper:

The first thirty years we spent much time and space exposing the problems within the LCMS. . . We pray that during the next 30 years the editor of CN, whoever he is, will have valid cause to encourage support of the LCMS, and get the LCMS to take the lead in a mighty TWENTIETH CENTURY REFORMATION AND FORMULA OF CONCORD.”<sup>67</sup>

Though the paper started small and humbly, it started with a clear, definite and distinct purpose.

*Lutheran News* made a **strong** beginning. Accuse Otten of being too controversial, too impatient, too hasty to condemn, but don't ever accuse him of being lazy. Though he did most of the work in editing and writing for the paper himself, while at the same time serving a parish, Otten succeeded in cranking out papers with impressive regularity. Nearly 600 issues were delivered to the post office on time before Otten finally missed a deadline, because of a knee injury. The time and effort that might have cause others to fold didn't seem to faze the indefatigable Otten. Why continue this paper? By means of an editorial, Otten responded to that question: “If we did not believe that there are still faithful laymen, pastors, professors, students and officials in various Lutheran bodies, we would not be spending so much energy and time attempting to inform Lutherans about the current doctrinal situation.”<sup>68</sup> The word was getting out about the paper and interest was of such magnitude that after five issues, the paper was issued as a four-page tabloid, similar to its appearance in 1993. After the first six months, there was no hint of turning back, because the SOC had not started the publication of a paper and because the need for what the *Lutheran News* was offering was, according to Otten, still needed and still desired.<sup>69</sup> In 1977, Otten looked back on the first 15 years of his paper and made this comment about the strong beginning:

It is no secret that *Christian News* would hardly exist if it weren't for the fact that there are a significant number of Lutherans convinced that liberals have captured the Lutheran press. CN couldn't possibly have published almost 600 issues since its beginning if it had not been for the fact that many have supplied us with the necessary financial support.<sup>70</sup>

Otten's willingness to carry on what was for him a “labor of love” (though his detractors might call it something else) combined with his feeling that Missouri was at a crucial juncture in her

history combined to guarantee that the *Lutheran News* would continue to fight for the truth, regardless of the cost.

*Ambitious* might be another word chosen to describe the beginnings of *Lutheran News*. Aiming to send out 15,000 copies, to every pastor and teacher in the LCMS, as well as contacting some 5,000 laymen, Otten was in essence calling for increased support from those who were determined to do something about the liberalism that was plaguing Missouri. Varying reports of publication figures make it hard to tell whether Otten's goal was ever achieved, though he has certainly come close.<sup>71</sup> Considering the fact that the LC-MS had approximately 2.5 million members, Otten's desire to in some way inform and inspire to action many of them was truly ambitious. Word of mouth would have to pick up where the paper's circulation left off, if he was going to influence more than those who already knew of the problematic situation facing the Synod as a whole.

When the first issues of *Lutheran News* made their way from Otten's desk to the mailboxes of Christians elsewhere, the salt was being applied to the church. As a student of history, Otten recognized that "the Missouri Synod stands today where other major denominations were several decades ago before they were completely taken over by liberal leadership."<sup>72</sup> What had Otten learned? He had learned that the decay of a church body always starts in the same place: in their view of the Bible and their treatment of it. His experience at St. Louis Seminary had led him to wonder where Missouri was headed, because some professors were denying a basic doctrine of the Word and becoming wrapped up in theological liberalism. In the second issue of *Lutheran News*, Otten sounded a bell that would be sounded again and again in the first years of its publication:

There appears to be some misunderstanding as to what is the real issue in the present controversy within the LC-MS. . . The real issue centers around the Bible. Is the Bible God's directly revealed and inerrant Word or is it merely the interpretation of what certain unknown authors considered to be some "mighty acts of God?" If the Missouri Synod would only permit the historic Christian doctrine that the Bible is God's factually inerrant revelation to man, then most of the other issues would gradually disappear.<sup>73</sup>

Otten had accurately assessed the situation. The historical-critical method of Bible interpretation was beginning to make inroads, which spells doom for the teaching of inerrancy. In April

of 1963, Otten reiterated and expanded on what he had said before: "The major issue in the Missouri Synod today is the doctrine of Holy Scripture. It is becoming more and more apparent that the advocates of the higher-critical approach, which contends that the Bible contains errors and myths, will be tolerated in the Missouri Synod."<sup>74</sup> When the doctrine of Scripture is allowed to falter, all of the other doctrines go with it. Because he didn't want that to happen to Missouri, because he didn't want to see her go the way of other liberal bodies, Otten refused to *gingerly* apply salt to the church. Instead, Otten's goal was to emphasize the importance of this teaching, so that Missouri would never *officially* condone or support attacks on inerrancy; though they often did so *tacitly*, by not disciplining those who did undermine the infallibility and verbal inspiration of Scripture.

Each of the first issues of the *Lutheran News* focused on one particular area in which high-handed treatment of the Scriptures had caused the propagation of false doctrine. Setting the words of the false teachers side-by-side with the historic position of the Christian Church in a series entitled, "A SPECIFICATION OF DOCTRINAL ISSUES,"<sup>75</sup> Otten hoped to demonstrate that there were those in Missouri who had neglected the church of their youth and had married the daughters of men. Allowing that parts of the Bible were but myths meant to teach a lesson, some Missourians claimed that evolution was a legitimate theory for the creation of the world, so long as it was theistic evolution. (cf. quote from Moellering mentioned above) Upset by the way things were being handled at Valparaiso, for example, Otten said in an editorial: "Do not be deceived by Valparaiso University public relation authorities who would have Missouri Synod Lutherans believe that evolution is only taught in the same manner that our schools must teach what the Roman Catholics believe and that it is then clearly repudiated."<sup>76</sup>

Otten also demonstrated that evolution was being taught in the ALC and LCA, to show that before any fellowship between the bodies could be declared, some agreement would have to be ironed out. Officially, Missouri stood on evolution the way their fathers had. But Otten questioned the practice running rampant in the Synod. Because he was rightly concerned that the doctrine of Scripture couldn't stand alongside the teaching of evolution, the young editor refused to look the other way and allow it to continue. Otten's love for the word and for his-

toric Christianity dictated that he condemn evolution as false teaching on the front page of the *Lutheran News*.

Fellowship principles were a topic for consideration in the early issues of Otten's paper. Missouri's refusal to sever all ties with the National Council of Churches (NCC) caused the warning light to go on in Otten's mind. Though the NCC was willing to join with anyone and everyone, that didn't mean that Missouri should join in working together with them. Otten realized that the NCC stood for things and allowed things that contradicted the basic tenets of Christianity and therefore concluded that the LC-MS couldn't, in good conscience, retain a working relationship with them. Investigation of Missouri's relations to the NCC revealed that Missouri was doing more than listening to the overtures of NCC. The officials of the Synod denied any involvement that involved fellowship principles, but Otten persisted in reporting the danger of retaining any ties with such a liberal body, that a "least-common-denominator gospel" might result.

Because he had spent the previous four years documenting false teaching and seeking to work through proper channels, so that the false teachers would be rebuked and corrected, Otten had undoubtedly become frustrated by the fact that disciplinary action had not been taken. As he carried on the fight and documented the repeated errors being allowed to stand, Missouri's seemingly non-existent program of discipline was disconcerting to Otten. When congregations could no longer remain in a Synod that allowed false teaching, they withdrew their memberships. After one such instance, Otten lamented: "Unless evangelical disciplinary action is taken against those who will not accept the doctrine of inspiration defined in **The Brief Statement**, more congregations and individuals will leave the Missouri Synod."<sup>77</sup> Discipline, properly conducted, would be the only way to preserve the truth and to save the souls who looked to pastors trained by the LC-MS for guidance. Again Otten had put his finger on the key to the future of the LC-MS — evangelical discipline.

We have already alluded to the fact that no official organ of the LC-MS had dedicated itself to reporting the problems that were surfacing within the Synod. That tendency, or editorial policy, was what Otten labeled as "managed news." Otten openly admits that "the early is-

sues of our paper frequently complained about the managed news policy within Lutheranism and the lack of real freedom of the press.”<sup>78</sup> Intending to inform the lay people of doctrinal deviations within the Synod, Otten promised to allow both sides to air their views, so that the people could decide who was teaching the truth and who wasn’t. Because he had personally felt the frustration of not being allowed to address the issues at hand, Otten promised to uphold the principle of the freedom of the press and to objectively present the facts; Otten even promised to give space to anyone who wanted to send him an article or a letter responding to something he had written.<sup>79</sup> In fact, Otten was in the practice of sending marked copies of his paper to those with whom he taken exception, promising to print any response that was in keeping with the size of the article that he originally printed.<sup>80</sup> Convinced that he was in the right and trusting that Missouri could only benefit from having everything out on the table, Otten lived up to his promises; unfortunately, many refused to accept Otten’s “gracious invitation,” because they saw it as a “no-win” situation — if they wrote, they would be providing fodder for Otten’s righteous wrath and stinging words, while granting credence to a paper they wished weren’t in existence. If they didn’t write, they could be sure that their reputation would suffer a beating and their silence would automatically be regarded as an admission of guilt. Suffice it to say, many probably thought of responding to Otten’s request for a rebuttal the way Dr. Huber, then of Springfield, did, when he wrote: “Mr. Otten, Drop Dead. Cordially, C.E. Huber.”<sup>81</sup> Though Otten’s critics would claim to be in favor of openness and trust, they would never support the kind of “openness” that would mark both *Lutheran News* and *Christian News*, because they contended that those papers violated trusts left and right.

The early issues of *Lutheran News* were causing quite a fuss, to be sure, but their effectiveness in salting the church couldn’t help but be curtailed by the fact that it seemed to be just an outlet for all of Otten’s pent-up frustrations. Even the most objective reader, upon hearing Otten’s personal history, would likely say that the *Lutheran News* had its start as the result of one man’s frustration. In the *Christian News*’ Statement of Policy (cf. Addendum 3), Otten freely admits that his paper is “not a doctrinally neutral observer.” His personal efforts at working through the established synodical machinery had frustrated him — frustration for which

the leaders of the Synod must share a good deal of the blame — and had made it nearly impossible for him to be objective in any sense of the word. The situation in the LC-MS was of great concern to others, to be sure; but for him it was not only a *doctrinal* matter, it was also a *personal* matter. That was the perception of the *Lutheran News* in the eyes of many, so that pastors and officials would question Otten's right and purpose in publishing this paper. LC-MS President Dr. Harms labeled Otten a "dissatisfied person" and a "dissatisfied leader," whose paper was aimed at leading others to share his feelings of dissatisfaction.<sup>82</sup> Though Otten doesn't disclose every detail of his personal history with the LC-MS, he repeated much of his personal history in any number of issues, testifying to the fact that he is still frustrated by the way he has been treated by the Synod. While his frustration is certainly understandable, his objectivity in presenting things is thereby called into question.

Dr. Becker, after leaving the LC-MS, used the *Lutheran News* as an outlet for his frustration, so that the people could judge for themselves whether Missouri remained the Missouri of old. Because he had been rebuffed by the proper Synodical machinery, he had no recourse but to reveal the story via the *Lutheran News*. He understood the seriousness of what he was doing, and he took no joy in writing his essay for publication in *Lutheran News*, but he felt the choice had been made for him. One can almost sense the heaviness of heart with which Becker began his twelve-part series, when he wrote:

One hesitates also to write such a series of articles as this because it involves a struggle between two duties which seem sometimes to be in conflict. On the one hand, there is the command of Scripture which tells us to cover up the sins of the neighbor. On the other hand there is the clear command of the Bible, "Them that sin rebuke before all." (1 Tim. 5:20) On the one hand there is the desire not to damage the reputation of anyone. On the other hand there is the clear call of God to cry aloud and spare not to show the children of God their transgressions. . . It is not my wish to hurt the reputation of any man by this series of articles.<sup>83</sup>

Otten and Becker shared the same frustration; but only Becker expressed his misgivings about publishing his controversial story, making it more likely for people to read and believe what he had written.

In the first issues of *Lutheran News* Otten offered to travel just about anywhere for the opportunity to debate anyone who took exception to what he had said in print. Again, his offer

was by-and-large ignored or refused, because he was out of favor in the Synod and because people were afraid of him. The perception of Otten as an unloving, vindictive, dissatisfied and disgruntled man made it dangerous and ill-advised for those whom Otten had accused to become involved in a public debate with him.

Through all of this, the salt was being applied, slowly but surely, to a church that was showing signs of decay. The response to Otten's paper in conservative circles was enthusiastic, prompting Otten to plan on publishing the paper for another six months. Six months came and went and Otten continued to produce his eight-page tabloid. Why? The *need* continued and others seemed interested in getting the paper.<sup>84</sup> No vision from God or sign from above inspired Otten to persevere in the production of his young paper; the paper just continued to be necessary.

Few will disagree that the *Lutheran News* is a unique paper. The trademark of the paper would have to be the photographic reproduction of articles and letters that had appeared elsewhere. From the very first issue, articles were reproduced, either completely or in part. Because he wanted the articles to speak for themselves and because he wanted to be fair to the people whom he would systematically take to task, Otten felt compelled to copy whole articles into the paper. Of course, his methods have been called into question from the very beginning, even though he didn't receive any "hate mail" for the first four months. The very nature of the paper placed Otten into a frustrating quandary. He discovered that it was extremely difficult to expose the false doctrine that was being passed for the truth among many Lutherans. If he failed to photographically reproduce the whole article, he would be accused of quoting something out of context. If he copied the whole article, he would be in violation of some copyright laws. When he quoted from correspondence, he was accused of violating the law of love and destroying any bond of trust that could possibly exist between him and others. When all of his methods had met condemnation, Otten could only conclude that he would be unable to satisfy everyone as long as he persisted in issuing the *Lutheran News*.<sup>85</sup> Desisting publication of this periodical was not a legitimate option, as far as Otten was concerned, unless someone else



would decide to produce a magazine that meant to expose liberalism in all its shapes and forms.

Another trademark method that the *Lutheran News* employed to pour salt out of the shaker into the wounds of the LC-MS was the editorial page, most often written by Otten himself. Though there were editorials that simply affirmed the truth of God's Word and praised the grace of God in acting on man's behalf to save all people, the majority of editorials might best be characterized with the word "stinging." Never one to speak softly, Otten spoke his mind and "let the chips fall where they may."<sup>86</sup> Because his chief concern was exposing the theological liberalism within the LC-MS, Otten's energies were most often directed at tearing people down and condemning them for what they had said. Otten's love for the truth can hardly be questioned; but love for truth hasn't always guaranteed God-pleasing actions. The Gnesio-Lutherans, for example, were concerned for the truth of God's Word, but their frustration often led them into a negativism that showed itself in personal attacks upon those who didn't agree with everything they said. Otten's continual attacks could but be translated as negativism, which the devil uses to create an atmosphere of distrust and uncertainty, an atmosphere that can destroy a church body. Otten defends himself by saying in the purpose statement of *Christian News*:

Given the radical, indeed mortal nature of the doctrinal conflict . . . strong straight-forward and sustained criticism is to be expected. Those who decry this as "negativism" either do not understand the gravity of the crisis or are themselves in league with the enemy. Scripture is extremely "negative" whenever it deal with apostasy (sic) and hypocrisy (sic)! And these are the dominant features of modern church life.<sup>87</sup>

Yes, God has no place for false teachers; false doctrine must be rejected and condemned. But those false teachers are souls for whom Christ died, who deserve from Christians patient and evangelical discipline. When that discipline fails to achieve the desired result, frustration and anger must not be the answer, because man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Sustained, stinging criticism directed at an individual can do more damage than good. Those individuals who faced the criticism of Otten could hardly help but become defensive; soon they learned to tune him out, making it impossible for them to be led to God-pleas-

ing repentance by what Otten was writing. The conservatives who read Otten's paper could hardly remain neutral; they would necessarily become upset with and skeptical about Synodical leaders and lose their willingness to trust those in positions of leadership. More than any other part of the paper, Otten's editorials tended to polarize the two sides, rather than working patiently and evangelically to bring the two sides together.

When he wasn't piecing together the latest *Lutheran News*, Otten was at his typewriter, writing to those with whom he took issue, documenting his point and asking for some sort of rebuttal. These letters frequently made their way into the paper. When he received no reply, Otten duly reported the same. When letters came back in answer to Otten's charges, they were fair game for inclusion in the paper. Given that situation, is it any wonder that Otten's letters frequently went unanswered? Those who received Otten's letters wished that they were merely between a rock and a hard place, because they were in a far tougher quandary: Respond to the letter and have their name "in lights" in the *Lutheran News* or refuse to respond and be regarded as guilty. Even refusing to respond didn't guarantee that the matter would slowly die away. Persistent almost to a fault, Otten would continue to write letter after letter to an individual until they responded or he tired of pasting stamps on letters heading to the same place. His willingness to write to others, in hopes of bringing an errorist back onto the path of truth, was admirable. His desire to give the other side an opportunity to respond was worthy of commendation. But those admirable traits lost some of their luster because there was always the threat that any letters sent to Otten just might appear in the *Lutheran News*. Were the letters salting the church, or were they building up dividing walls that couldn't be broken down? For better or worse, both things happened.

In a time of crisis in the church, Otten began his paper with no official support, because he firmly believed that "Unofficial journals and a free press can serve as a healthy corrective in any church body."<sup>88</sup> Through the *Lutheran News*, Otten hoped to bring about a reformation of the LC-MS. Since Otten desired to not only salt the church, but also to reform it, he recognized the importance of informing the lay people of the Synod about all of the problems confronting the church. But informing people about false teaching is not easy, because it cannot

be done in a vague way. If Otten refused to name names and give documented proof of his claims, no one would believe him, considering his personal history. If he was going to accomplish his goals, Otten realized that he would have to provide, in print, the names of those who were subverting the church with man-made doctrines. The only other option available was for him to continue working through synodical channels and to persist in personally dealing with and admonishing those who had issued the statements with which he took exception, instead of publishing the paper. For Otten, the choice was relatively simple. In fact, the choice, he felt, had really been made for him, because his past attempts at using the appointed machinery had failed so miserably that he was viewed with disdain by many in the Synod who didn't even know him, because he was the one whom the Seminary refused to recommend for ordination and placement into Missouri's ministry.

Legitimately frustrated, Otten sometimes acted illegitimately. Naming names in a paper like the *Lutheran News* could only serve to destroy their reputations. That prospect, however, didn't daunt Otten. The editor was no respecter of persons, regardless of who they were, what office they held or how they were regarded by others. Ever since his student days, when he was accusing professors of false doctrine, he had held a different view of the eighth commandment and the principles of discipline outlined in Matthew 18. The Seminary had held that it was sinful *per se* to repeat disturbing quotes of faculty members, without first seeking resolution of the problem with the professor himself. Otten found himself in disagreement with that principle, contending that "false doctrine which is publicly taught can be publicly exposed and rebuked."<sup>89</sup> The Seminary responded by saying that what was taught in the classroom at the Seminary was a private and confidential matter. Unwilling to allow their argument to stand, Otten insisted that "Since I consider the theological instruction carried on in the name of a confessional church-body to be an eminently public matter, I have never considered myself bound to regard such instruction confidential in any sense."<sup>90</sup> Support for his claim he found in Luther, who had said in his Large Catechism that "when the matter is out in the open, there can be no question of slander or injustice or false witness. . . For when the sin is public, it stands to reason that its punishment also should be public in order that everyone may know how to

guard against it.” Otten maintained that the procedure for implementing discipline, as it is to be found in Matthew 18, covers private, not public situations. In other words, the publisher of *Lutheran News* felt that, while it might be helpful to meet personally with the teachers he disagreed with, it was not Scripturally mandated. Otten also pointed to the fact that the evangelists, under inspiration, reported sins and crimes they had not personally seen, but knew only second-hand. Otten summarized the conflict between himself and the leaders of the Seminary and of the Synod with these words: “The basic principle about which the case revolves is the maxim that theological instruction at a Synodical seminary is open and public. The case against me rests on an unwarranted denial of this principle.”<sup>91</sup>

Because he contended that any teaching made in a public setting was open to public repudiation, Otten never felt it wrong to include in the *Lutheran News* names of professors whom he felt were erring and statements that he felt conflicted with the clear doctrine of Scripture. His last line of defense would be to point to the false teachers with this idea: If these men hadn't sinned by espousing and propagating false doctrine, they wouldn't have to see their name in print in *Lutheran News*. Convinced that he was telling the truth, the editor couldn't see how he could be in the wrong. Otten's basic defense boils down to this: “Are the articles correct? Where has *Lutheran News* been in error?”<sup>92</sup> Telling the truth and “letting the chips fall where they may,” however, is not the proper thing to do in every situation across the board; while Otten may have grasped that principle theologically, he has failed to grasp it practically. The editor even went so far in defending himself to say that only his publication had really kept the eighth commandment, because it alone was in the practice of revealing, and not concealing, the problems that existed in the church. The other Lutheran publications didn't tell the truth about what was going on in the Seminary, thereby deceiving their readers. Because the other periodicals took the middle road and refused to air dirty laundry, Otten contended that they were in the wrong, and that *Lutheran News* was alone telling the truth.<sup>93</sup>

Christian love, as it is summarized in Matthew 18, dictates a different course of action from what Otten did. Though we cannot impugn his motives, we can differ with him in the practices he employed to accomplish his goals. While at the seminary, Otten tried to meet with

professors personally, only to have his requests denied. Any number of times, Otten endeavored to resolve the problems through the properly appointed channels. But he ran into brick walls, moving him to give up on applying the principles of Christian discipline and instead to make his charges public. Otten summarized his feelings about his endeavors of discipline thus: "Where specific cases were opened, in accordance with Matthew 18, these were suppressed and the doctrinal issues were not settled. Such a state of affairs naturally leads to *a feeling of intolerable frustration and helplessness.*"<sup>94</sup> That feeling of frustration soured him on the idea of dealing with false teachers on an individual basis. The result was *Lutheran News*, with its editorials and letters naming and discrediting those who were fracturing the unity of Missouri. Unfortunately, Otten allowed his frustration at not achieving his goals to dictate his further actions. When his attempts at applying Christian discipline came to naught, Otten mistakenly judged that to be a mandate to expose and correct false teachers by other, more public, means. When following God's directives fails to produce the desired results, the Christian does not have the option of disregarding those commands. Correction and admonition must be given to the erring, according to Matthew 18, out of love and respect for the individual soul. By failing to deal with the false teachers on a personal basis, Otten showed a lack of love for individuals. Even though the editor of the *Lutheran News* had only the good of the church in mind when he started his paper, he failed to remember this point: Love for God's word does not preclude a love for souls. In other words, love for the reputation of others and respect for their person goes hand-in-hand with a love for the truth. Led by his feelings and not by God's Word, Otten stood ready to defend the truth with methods that contradicted the word of truth.

The first volumes of *Lutheran News* provide a classic example of Otten's tendency to show little respect and love for the soul of a fellow Christian who had erred in his presentation of God's Word. Dr. Martin Scharlemann was the key figure in any number of issues of Otten's unofficial journal, because of his unfortunate essays that reeked of Barthian thought. Otten published his charges in *Lutheran News* and documented his points by citing Scharlemann's papers. As was his custom, Otten wrote to Scharlemann and asked to meet with him in public debate so that the truth could be preserved and the lies be destroyed. Scharlemann responded

the way so many did: He didn't consider Otten worthy of a response, because the editor was a dissatisfied, frustrated man who was not part of the Synod. Never one to give up, Otten attended the 1962 convention and asked Scharlemann if he had changed his position from the one he had stated in his papers, that the Bible was only "a medium of God's Truth" and that the "Book of God's Truth contains error."<sup>95</sup> Scharlemann sidestepped Otten's questions and offered to the Synod in convention his apology, his desire for forgiveness and his willingness to withdraw the papers, in their entirety, from consideration. (cf. Addendum 4) The Synod resolved to assure Scharlemann of his forgiveness "and manifest this forgiveness by prayers on his behalf, by brotherly encouragement for his ministry, and by the request that its members refrain from attacks upon him on the basis of these essays."<sup>96</sup> The Synod had spoken. The essays had been withdrawn, though not recanted. But Otten refused to allow a simple withdrawal of the essays themselves; he wanted the doctrine behind the essays to be recanted. Scharlemann refused to acquiesce to Otten's demands, considering the issue to be dead. The *Lutheran News*, however, refused to allow it to die. Otten's disregard for the Synod's resolution to encourage Scharlemann and desist from further attacks on his person made him a 'persona non grata.' What was the result of Otten's repeated attacks on Scharlemann, even after he had withdrawn his papers? In the name of love for the truth, the *Lutheran News* had sullied Scharlemann's reputation. Unfortunately, Otten felt that love for the truth was more important than a love for souls.

#### IV. "When!" or "Enough Salt Already!"

As Otten applied salt via the *Lutheran News*, things began to happen. Because of Otten's tireless tirade against the false teaching that he was sure would destroy his beloved Synod, many individuals and many churches recognized that the time had come to act on the basis of their knowledge. Remaining in a Synod that was tolerating and spreading false doctrine was undesirable and unconscionable for several pastors and churches; departure time had come for many of those who had already affiliated themselves with the SOC as a last-ditch attempt to right the ship that was beginning to sink into the abyss of heterodoxy. Slowly but surely, sev-

eral staunchly orthodox churches severed all surviving ties with the Synod. Though it was not easy to take such a stand, they refused to back down. On April 28 and 29, 1964, a number of those churches met in Chicago to form the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation. (LCR) Pastor Cameron MacKenzie was appointed as the Administrator of the Federation, while also serving as the Publications editor, the Chairman of Doctrine and Practice and holding the position of chancellor of the Martin Luther Institute for Sacred Studies.

This federation was a sequel to the SOC movement, the movement that documented the problems present in Missouri. While those who joined this federation were certainly aware of the doctrinal aberrations prevailing in the Synod, one could hardly deny that the *Lutheran News* had served to further cement their resolve to separate themselves from the LC-MS. Without Otten's paper, the time would not have arrived so quickly, because the situation would not have seemed so acute. Otten's information and documentation had convinced many, lay people and pastors alike, that the time had come to choose between truth and error. The churches that joined in this new federation had learned, with the encouragement and help of *Lutheran News* that loyalty to "organization" can be dangerous, saying:

In all organizational efforts of men there are inherent potentials of the organization becoming supreme and overriding, superior to doctrinal loyalty to the Word of God. Thus the organization becomes an end in itself rather than the advancement of the kingdom of God. The most flagrant example on the contemporary scene is the deterioration of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, for here we witness men seemingly orthodox yet unable to resist the policies of their leaders who protect and even promote neo-orthodoxy; here men are first loyal to the organization, to its rules and procedures!<sup>97</sup>

By forming the LCR, these churches silently testified to the power of the *Lutheran News*. Though the paper may not have told them anything new, its very appearance every two weeks on the nose demonstrated to many the seriousness of the situation predominating in the Synod. With the evidence of false doctrine and improper practice staring them in the face every two weeks, these Christians could no longer maintain fellowship where they knew unity of faith did not exist. *Lutheran News*, in turn, used the action of these churches to illustrate to its readers that action had to be taken to preserve Missouri's theological inheritance.

Some individual Christians and churches had responded to Otten's application of salt. But others didn't appreciate Otten's purpose, his tactics or his person. After a few months, the editor began to receive letters that couldn't and wouldn't approve of him or his paper. The critics, however, didn't stop there. CLAHO (Concerned Lutherans Against Herman Otten) organized to give Otten grief so that he would stop the publication of the paper. This anonymous group placed an ad in newspapers across the country, urging people to call Otten collect to ask about a position with a paper. They even had credit cards in Otten's name and threatened to fill his mailbox with sordid materials and products that he had not ordered.<sup>98</sup>

Considering the subject matter of Otten's paper, the manner in which he published his paper and the attitude that he expressed towards synodical officials, one is not surprised to learn that the Council of Administrators had little respect for the *Lutheran News*. In the April 14, 1964 *Lutheran Witness*, this statement of the Council appeared:

1. *Lutheran News* is in no sense a synodical publication but a private venture in personal journalism.
2. The editor is not an ordained pastor of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
3. The congregation the editor is serving and whose parsonage is listed as publishing address has been expelled from membership in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by its Western District.
4. In violation of the spirit and letter of Resolution 3-32 of the Cleveland delegate synod, *Lutheran News* continues to be sent into congregations and homes unsolicited.<sup>99</sup>

The Council didn't appreciate a journal whose whole intent, it seemed, was to divide the body that they were trying to bring closer together. Nor did they appreciate Otten's methods, because it was his practice to continually criticize the way things were being handled by Synodical leaders. With this statement, the Council hoped to so undermine his authority that Otten would resign from this task and focus his enormous energies elsewhere. But their wish would go unanswered, because Otten was convinced that he was performing a service for the gospel and for the LC-MS.

There would never come a time in the first thirty years of publication when Otten would have the support of everyone. Even some conservatives who originally supported Otten's work would later change their tune and demand the cessation of *Christian News*, contending that Otten was handling things improperly. In fact, Dr. Jacob Preus was one who seemingly agreed



with Otten, only to change his tune when he was elected president of the Synod. Was Otten wrong, as the Synodical leaders contended? Or were the Synodical leaders wrong, as Otten contended? That is the \$64,000 question. One thing becomes very clear in reviewing the history of the *Lutheran News*: there was impropriety on both sides. The leaders of the Seminary and the Synod failed to deal evangelically and patiently with Otten, deciding instead to dismiss him as a frustrated radical. Otten retaliated by disrespectfully criticizing and dishonoring the leaders of the LC-MS. Because of their position, the leaders of the Synod could influence the members' attitude toward *Lutheran News*. And influence they did. At St. Louis, Otten's paper was held in such contempt that 140 papers addressed to individual students were thrown into the fireplace before they had been delivered, in direct violation of postal service laws.<sup>100</sup>

After six and a half volumes of *Lutheran News* and *Christian News*, the Council of Presidents (COP) repudiated Otten and his paper in 1969, saying in the *Lutheran Witness* these harsh words:

We are of the conviction that the publication now known as *Christian News* disseminated with or without the prior consent of those who receive it, is an obstacle to the furtherance of the objectives of the Synod, breeds mistrust, creates unnecessary tensions, and disturbs God's servants in the performance of their tasks. We, therefore, unani- mously repudiate this publication and caution against lending credence and support to it.<sup>101</sup>

Though it is impossible to gauge the effect of that declaration, one would have to conclude that Otten's paper had received a black mark in the book of many. Trusting the officials they had elected into positions of authority, the majority of the members of the LC-MS would naturally heed these words and grant little credence to Otten's divisive paper. The COP's repudiation almost guaranteed that *Christian News* would have a hard time finding support from the mem- bers of the Synod, but one of several reasons why the publication would never have a circula- tion of more than 20,000.

While the majority report was disdain and denunciation, Otten did have his supporters. Letters of support were quite common in the beginning, so common that he couldn't print them all for lack of space. Designed as a controversial paper, to lay out on the table the neo-or- thodox teaching making inroads in Missouri, the *Lutheran News* gave extensive space to letters

from those who disagreed with the editor, so that he might expose them as hardened false teachers who should have no place in the LC-MS. When the leaders of the Synod criticized the paper, however, Otten defended himself or gave space to those who desired to support his position. In answer to charges of slander, Otten published an article by Dr. William Beck entitled, "If Someone Says 'Otten is Slandering.'" Those who supported the editor of *Lutheran News* concurred with Beck, that Otten had every right to expose the false teaching that was being taught at a synodically-funded Seminary. Otten's advocates, in letters to the editor, frequently echoed these words and thoughts of Beck:

The Lord wants soldiers. The truth is being lost in our church, not by those who teach errors, but by the many WHO DON'T CARE. They sit indifferently as though they weren't involved, as though they could be the noble gentlemen by being above all such struggling. They don't realize that all we need to do to lose the truth is NOTHING. . . God now wants men . . . who'd rather die than yield an inch of the truth."<sup>102</sup>

Though this was only the minority report, Otten received enough support to continue in his struggle to expose false doctrine, utilizing the same manner and methods.

A less persistent man would have given up the work involved in producing a bi-weekly paper. Considering the cost and time involved, the repudiations he received, the letters that found nothing of value in the *Lutheran News* and the lack of synodical action in dealing with the problems he had reported, one could hardly label Otten as thin-skinned if he were to stop publishing this periodical. But instead of bowing out, Otten actually began to redouble his efforts. On January 1, 1968, Otten began to print the **weekly** *Christian News*, changing the name from *Lutheran* to *Christian* in hopes of attracting more non-Lutheran readers. Otten laid out his goals for this "new" paper in one of the last issues of the *Lutheran News*:

It has always appeared to us that many conservative papers, including LUTHERAN NEWS, are really only reaching the same committed readers. They are only speaking to those who are already members of the "conservative club." We hope CHRISTIAN NEWS can break this barrier. We welcome any suggestions our readers may have in helping us make CHRISTIAN NEWS simpler and more appealing than LUTHERAN NEWS. Letters with sound criticism do us more good than letters of praise.<sup>103</sup>

This new effort offers a glimpse into the personality of the editor. Undaunted by criticism, untiring in his work, zealous for the preservation of the truth, certain that he was doing what was

right, Otten could do nothing but expand his paper in size and increase its frequency of appearance. In the same issue that announced the expansion of the *Lutheran News*, Otten pleaded for financial assistance from its supporters. Not even financial difficulties would stop Otten from his appointed rounds of disclosing theological liberalism running rampant in Christendom.

The editor continued to hold out hope for the church of his youth, because it was the only church that he felt could “take the lead” in establishing the Twentieth Century Formula of Concord mentioned before. In spite of the false doctrine that he was documenting and decrying, Otten continued to seek membership in the Synod. But his requests fell on deaf ears, because some felt that certifying Otten would be a certification of all that *Lutheran News* and *Christian News* had said over the years. Though the editor wasn’t seeking support for his paper, the leaders of the Synod understood well that certifying Otten would be understood as a vindication of the paper. President Preus, in a letter to Otten, said:

You now have so totally identified yourself with *Christian News* that you seem to be insisting that the faculty certify you and *Christian News* for the ministerium of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This is asking more of the faculty than you have a right to ask them. . . It is well known, according to the stipulated policy of your newspaper, that you operate on the un-American principle that a man is guilty until he proves his innocence.<sup>104</sup>

Why did Otten think that there was even a chance of him being certified? The Seminary had originally declined to recommend him for assignment, because he had refused to admit that it was sinful to reveal sins publicly before dealing with the individual privately. Nothing had changed. *Christian News* existed to expose anyone who said anything that could possibly be misconstrued, regardless of whether or not the individual had been dealt with in accordance with Matthew 18. Maybe the better question would be, why would Otten want to be certified as a member of the LC-MS? The fact that the disgruntled editor desired certification demonstrates that he always felt that he was part of the Synod, while at the same time showing that he aspired only to assist the Synod even when he was criticizing them. His motives were as pure as any Christian’s could be; it was his methods that were questionable and would stand in the way of the certification he so desired. Missouri in convention suggested that the Seminary offi-

cialists meet with Otten to straighten out the situation. Though Otten met with them, nothing was resolved and it appears that Otten will never be certified as a member of the ministerium until he ceases publication of the *Christian News* and asks forgiveness for the tensions he caused. President Preus wrote to Otten, explaining what would need to be done for him to be certified for the ministry of the LC-MS:

Please do not ask me to meet with you or your congregation until such a time as you have apologized for your sins that are in violation of the Eighth Commandment and the Lutheran Confessions, shut down *Christian News*, and absolve the Synod of all liability relative to anything past or present regarding *Christian News*.<sup>105</sup>

None of those things is likely to happen anytime soon, judging from Otten's actions in the past.

#### V. "Well-Salted or Over-Salted?" — History's verdict

Did *Lutheran News* salt the church? Did it stop the decay threatening Missouri? Those are questions that must be asked, but remain hard to answer. Let this be said at the outset: Many of the men that Otten had accused of false doctrine showed their stripes either by leaving the Synod to join a more liberal body or by leaving with Seminex. Otten's paper had slowed the decay by forcing the hand of the liberals and making them come out in the open with their false doctrine. Had Otten not exposed these liberal tendencies existing in the Seminary and Synod, one has to wonder where Missouri would be today. From that perspective, it appears that the newspaper published from New Haven, Missouri salted the church well.

Though circulation never exceeded 20,000, the paper was able to apply salt, if only by waking others up to the dangers lurking at Missouri's door. In part due to the influence of *Lutheran News* and *Christian News*, Dr. Harms was ousted as president and a conservative whom Otten supported was elected. That conservative was none other than Jacob Preus, who would later go out of his way to discredit Otten and the *Christian News*. Otten's paper was so influential in the election that Preus won that some derisively termed it "Jacob's Ladder." James Adams, a biographer of Dr. Preus, discussed the power and influence of Otten's paper:

But when historians assess power and influence in Missouri in the '60's, no man right or left will be more important than journalist Herman Otten. . . Although its (CN) national circulation was never above 20,000 (compared to a peak of 550,000 for official publica-

tions), the paper had wide impact. It was “must” reading for all who were trying to keep ears to the Missouri ground. Otten sought to “expose” mostly moderates and neutral bureaucrats but taunted conservatives also if they failed to walk his fundamentalist tight-rope. . . If his newspaper didn’t always get action, it rarely failed to get reaction. Otten perpetually had the establishment on the defensive. He kept traditionalists informed and inflamed — even if they were still politically unorganized.<sup>106</sup>

Otten did influence the Synod with his paper; considering the way things were heading, one would have to say that he had influenced the LC-MS for the better. Since it is impossible to prove that his paper wielded the authority to change the Synod, Otten would only say, “Only God knows who influenced whom or who was responsible for getting good men elected and liberals to leave.”<sup>107</sup>

Even a man who was not a supporter of Otten’s paper acknowledged its influence in salting the church. Rev. Wayne Saffen, a man who left Missouri later, ascribed to *Lutheran News* great influence and commended it for its impressive record in setting the agenda for the Synod, in an article written in 1968:

Editor Herman Otten is now the “Praeceptor of the Missouri Synod.” This fact deserves public admission and recognition. *Christian News* sets the theological and social action agenda for the Missouri Synod. This reviewer has often been confused by the many who say they never read it. But they know what’s in it. It is quoted copiously. Every issue it generates winds up on the desk of the Missouri Synod president. . . Actually, the *Lutheran News* record and that of its editor are impressive. The record pyramids. Victories outweigh defeats and almost all defeats were narrow decisions. You can’t win ‘em all. But this Casey rarely strikes out at bat. So why is he treated as a leper in Missouri Synod? ***Officials have to talk his line to get elected.***<sup>108</sup>

In that same article, Laffen predicted that Harms would be removed from office and be replaced with a more conservative man. His prediction was accurate and so was his assessment of Otten. The *Lutheran News* had accomplished what the editor desired — a good salting of the church.

Professor Kurt Marquart, in assessing the explosion of Seminex, attributed to Otten the same type of power and influence and recognized the important role that *Lutheran News* and *Christian News* had played. He said that

it seems at least doubtful whether events would or could have taken this course without the long and lonely years of courageous idol-smashing carried on by Pastor Herman Otten's *Lutheran News* (1962), which became the weekly *Christian News* in 1968. It has been a remarkable phenomenon. Feared, ridiculed, hated and condemned it was; but

ignored, hardly ever. Always independent, no matter who was in power synodically, *Christian News* pursued its own prophetic mission without fear or favor. And one does not expect “fairness” or diplomacy from prophets or gadflies! Errors of judgment occurred, of course, but no other paper was as open to correction as *Christian News*. Blunt and abrasive the paper was and is — but for examples of real “lovelessness” and personal malevolence one must turn to the unbelievable letters of its critics. . . Like Luther, *Christian News* was plain-spoken. But without this dogged plain-spokenness would the Missouri Synod ever have woken up? 109

Higher praise for the value of Otten’s paper would be hard to find. Because of his appeals to the “grass-roots,” because of his sustained and unending criticism of the false teachers, Otten awakened those who were unaware and helped to preserve Missouri from totally abandoning her historical position.

Otten’s purpose in distributing his newspaper was praiseworthy and honorable. Seeking to straighten out a synod that was wandering from the truth should have been the goal of every pastor who was concerned for the future of his Synod. The record of what Otten’s journal was able to accomplish is, indeed, an impressive one. Without him, the decay might not have been abated. The results are praiseworthy, too. But the results dare not justify the means. The account of Jacob and Rebekah deceiving Isaac in order to secure his blessing comes to mind. The results were certainly what God intended, and therefore praiseworthy, but the means can only be classified as sinful. One cannot help saying that the church was over-salted by Otten’s paper, in the sense that improper and dishonorable methods tainted Otten’s proper and honorable goals. Feeling it unnecessary to deal personally with false teachers, Otten simply exposed their names in his paper and caused damage to the reputation of many. Whether he was right or not in his assessment of them, though he was often accurate, makes no difference. Christian love demands patient and evangelical discipline on a personal basis, before the matter is made public. Publishing personal correspondence from others showed a basic lack of respect for the individual. That lack of respect naturally put the recipient of the unwanted “press” in a defensive mood and caused others to assume that Otten had accurately portrayed him as one who needed to be removed, who had hardened his heart to the truth. Unfortunately, when he determined that the individual was wrong, he did not have patience enough to correct them or lead them to repentance. When he damaged the good name of others by the reports in his

paper, Otten could always fall back on the fact that he had never claimed infallibility for himself. Be that as it may, his willingness to admit when he was wrong did not give him the freedom or the right to make accusations. The fact that we are sinful does not give us the right to sin; nor does that sinfulness justify us when we do.

Otten's desire to be certified by Missouri would lead one to think that he had no designs on continuing *Christian News*. But continue he has, and will do so as long as he is able. Otten contends that "it now looks like it will always be good to have an independent publication. Even some conservatives tend to become bureaucrats once they get in power."<sup>110</sup> The problem, as Otten sees it, is that the other publications will never print the things that need to be printed. Otten has said that he has offered to turn his paper over to some orthodox Lutheran group or church.<sup>111</sup> But no one was willing to pick up the hot potato. If some other publications would change their policies to put it more in line with the *Christian News*, the editor has hinted that he would no longer need to print his paper, issuing this challenge to the other publications:

*Christian News* reaches only a small number of the Lutherans throughout the world. Some of you represent publications which have a circulation of around a half million. You have the manpower, equipment and financial backing which we don't have. If you would be saying and doing what every truly Lutheran publication should be saying and doing, you would remove the need for *Christian News*. We would much prefer to spend our extra time with our congregation, family and developing our camp. If you gentlemen would take up our challenge we could cease publication.<sup>112</sup>

Since the other publications will never adopt the "strong straight-forward, and sustained criticism" that marks *Christian News* as different, the paper will continue.

#### *V1. Has this salt lost its saltiness?*

God in his power and his grace is able to use the sins of men to serve his good purpose. By planning for those sins, the Lord of the church has been able to preserve the truth. Did God use *Lutheran News* and *Christian News* to stop the decay in Missouri? I would find it hard to say no to that question. Otten's paper publicized the fact that there were doctrinal aberrations blowing in the wind in Missouri. By do doing, he wakened many to the need to deal with the

problems. Because he had been rebuffed in his attempts to deal with the problems through Synodical machinery, Otten had no resort but to publish a paper that would inform and inspire the lay people of the Synod to take action. That's exactly what it did. Though it didn't accomplish things as quickly as Otten would have liked, it did, nevertheless, produce results. Missouri owes a debt of thanks to God for what he accomplished through Herman Otten.

It would be impossible and also improper to impugn Otten's motives. He desired only to save the church from falling into the liberalism that marked the other churches of the day. This writer feels for Otten's struggle and for his sincerity in his actions. Frustration with Synodical leaders, however, does not give one the right to defame them by making public things that should be dealt with privately and patiently. Nor does frustration give one the right to show no trust in the leaders that have been placed into authority by the members of the Synod. By virtue of their position, they deserved better treatment than to be harangued by a man who was not a part of the Synod. The Eighth Commandment demands that the actions of Synodical leaders be taken in the kindest possible way. Otten started his paper because he couldn't believe that problems could continue if the leaders were earnestly working to correct the situation. Though he couldn't be sure that the leaders were not attempting to solve the problems, the editor frequently made it seem that they were failing in their calling. When President Preus censured *Christian News*, he emphasized that Otten's paper was interfering with the leaders' attempts to quietly resolve the problems. Controversial situations need to be handled carefully, so that worse controversy can be averted. It almost goes without saying that in a state of controversy, there is little benefit in stirring up more controversy. Yet that is exactly what the *Lutheran News* did. In fact, it often seems that Otten's paper attempts to produce controversy if none is extant.

Otten's paper was meant to be salt; while his paper did contribute to the preservation of the truth, it happened more in spite of his work than because of it. Because of his questionable methods, Otten's paper has served as an agent of destruction, instead of preserving the truth. By vilifying those with whom he was in disagreement, Otten created a certain tension that made



resolution extremely difficult. Is there value in a paper that publicizes problems before every attempt has been made to carry out discipline? The question could be rephrased in this way: Is there value in sin? The answer is a decided, NO! Good may very well result from a sin that we commit. But sin remains sin, regardless of whether or not God uses it for his good purpose. Where there is no true love, there is no true salt. Therefore, Otten's paper has not been salt the way God intended it to be.

Yes, *Christian News* has outlived its usefulness; the salt has lost its saltiness, because it was never the loving salt that God desired. This appraisal of *Christian News* is one with which Otten would never agree, because it is his contention that "strong, straight-forward and sustained criticism is to be expected." In fact, Otten even defends himself against those who would disapprove of his paper by saying that "those who decry this as 'negativism' either do not understand the gravity of the crisis or are themselves in league with the enemy." (cf. Addendum 3) This pious phrase forgets to take into account that love for the neighbor is what God demands in his law, not just when it seems convenient or easy, or only for those who are outside of the church, but for everyone. Part of that law of love is showing respect for individuals; in other words, doing whatever you can to preserve their reputation. Documenting the errors of a man without patiently seeking to correct him discredits the man, mars his reputation and dishonors the name of the God.

We certainly can admire and emulate Otten's courage, his sincerity and his willingness to put himself on the line for the truth of the gospel. But we cannot admire his methods, because Otten's main goal was to so discredit someone that he would be forced to leave the Synod in shame, with a mark by his name. Frustration got the best of Otten and led him down a path from which he will never be able to leave, because he refuses to quit on anything that he feels has some value and benefit. There has to be a better way to preserve the truth — like having enough love and respect for those who have erred in their teaching or practice to spend the time rebuking and correcting them; like trusting those in a position of authority enough to rest assured that they are doing their best to resolve the troubles that are facing the church.

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<sup>1</sup>Plass, E. ed. p. 1482.

<sup>2</sup>*The Confessional Lutheran*, January, 1940, p. 1, EMPHASIS MINE.

<sup>3</sup>*The Confessional Lutheran*, January, 1961, p.1, EMPHASIS MINE.

<sup>4</sup>Baal or God?, p. 148, taken from *The Lutheran Scholar*.

<sup>5</sup>Baal or God?, p.122, quoting from *The Seminarian*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457.

<sup>7</sup>*Cresset*, May 1961, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Baal or God?, pp. 196-7.

<sup>9</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>10</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>11</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>12</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>13</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>14</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 14, 1963.

<sup>15</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>16</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>17</sup>"Feared Firebrand of Missouri Synod," article in *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 28-29, 1976, quoted in Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 462

<sup>18</sup>*Lutheran News*, March 11, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>*Lutheran News*, June 3, 1963, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 17, 1963, from a letter dated January 12, 1958.

<sup>21</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 471.

<sup>22</sup>Book of Reports and Memorials, 1962 LC-MS Convention, p. 165.

<sup>23</sup>Proceedings, 1962 LC-MS Convention, p. 112, *emphasis mine*.

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<sup>24</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>25</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>26</sup>*Christian News*, December 14, 1992, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 458, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>28</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 15, 1962, p.1.

<sup>29</sup>*Lutheran News*, April 8, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 458.

<sup>31</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 458, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>32</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 14, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup>*Lutheran News*, April 22, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 15, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 458, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>36</sup>*Lutheran News*, September 23, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>"The Faithful Word," Vol I, no. 1, December 1961, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>*Lutheran News*, February 10, 1964, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 30, 1963, pp. 1-2.

<sup>40</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 458, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>41</sup>*The Faithful Word*, Vol I, No. 1, December 1961, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 2, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>*Lutheran News*, August 24, 1964, p. 1, *emphasis mine*.

<sup>44</sup>*Lutheran News*, November 30, 1964, p. 4, *emphasis mine*.

<sup>45</sup>*Lutheran News*, April 6, 1964, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup>*Lutheran News*, September 9, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup>*The Faithful Word*, Vol I, no. 1, December 1961, p. 4.

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<sup>48</sup>*The Faithful Word*, Vol I, no. 1, December 1961, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 28, 1963, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup>*Christian News Encyclopedia*, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>51</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>52</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 1, 1963, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>54</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>55</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 15, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>57</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>58</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 11, 1967, p.5.

<sup>59</sup>*Lutheran News*, June 3, 1963, p. 8.

<sup>60</sup>*Lutheran News*, July 1, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>62</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 14, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>64</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 15, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup>*Christian News Encyclopedia*, p. 453, quoting from *The News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA) of June 28, 1974.

<sup>66</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>67</sup>*Christian News*, December 14, 1992, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup>*Lutheran News*, July 1, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>70</sup>*Christian News Encyclopedia*, p. 457, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>71</sup>In response to my questions concerning circulation, Otten said that 14,000 has been the typical circulation. An article in Tacoma, WA said that he had a circulation of 16,000. The St. Louis Globe-Democrat said that he had a circulation of 18,000. An article in *Christianity Today* quotes a figure of 14,500.

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<sup>72</sup>*Lutheran News*, March 25, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 1, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup>*Lutheran News*, April 22, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup>A Series of articles appearing in *Lutheran News* from January 1, 1963-February 25, 1963.

<sup>76</sup>*Lutheran News*, February 25, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup>*Lutheran News*, April 22, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 459, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>79</sup>*Lutheran News*, January 1, 1963, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 460, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>81</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 459, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

<sup>82</sup>*Lutheran News*, August 24, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup>*Lutheran News*, September 9, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup>Herman Otten, interview.

<sup>85</sup>This paragraph is a summary of an editorial in *Lutheran News*, June 17, 1963, p.2

<sup>86</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 472, quoting from "Journalism and the Eighth Commandment," a letter to the Honorable Placement Committee, dated February 6, 1980.

<sup>87</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 11, 1967, p. 5. Cf. Addendum 3.

<sup>88</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 471, quoting from *Christian News*, January 11, 1982, from an editorial entitled "Unofficial Journalism."

<sup>89</sup>*Lutheran News*, June 17, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 472, quoting from "Journalism and the Eighth Commandment," a letter to the Honorable Placement Committee, dated February 6, 1980.

<sup>91</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 472, quoting from "Journalism and the Eighth Commandment," a letter to the Honorable Placement Committee, dated February 6, 1980.

<sup>92</sup>*Lutheran News*, April 22, 1963, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup>This paragraph is a summary of Otten's arguments, found in Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 472, quoting from "Journalism and the Eighth Commandment," a letter to the Honorable Placement Committee, dated February 6, 1980.

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- <sup>94</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 472, quoting from "Journalism and the Eighth Commandment," a letter to the Honorable Placement Committee, dated February 6, 1980, *emphasis mine*.
- <sup>95</sup>*Lutheran News*, March 25, 1963, p. 8, quoting from Scharlemann's papers, "The Bible as Record, Medium and Witness," p. 21 and "The Inerrancy of Scripture," p. 1.
- <sup>96</sup>Proceedings, 1962 LC-MS Convention, p. 107, cf. Addendum 4.
- <sup>97</sup>*What is L.C.R?* 1964, p. 3.
- <sup>98</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 455, quoting from *Christian News*, April 9, 1973.
- <sup>99</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 460, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"
- <sup>100</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 457.
- <sup>101</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 461, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"
- <sup>102</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 456, quoting from *Christian News*, December 1, 1975.
- <sup>103</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 11, 1967, p. 5.
- <sup>104</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 469, from March 10, 1980 issue of *Christian News*, quoting a letter from Dr. Preus, dated January 10, 1980.
- <sup>105</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 469, from March 10, 1980 issue of *Christian News*, quoting a letter from Dr. Preus, dated January 16, 1980.
- <sup>106</sup>Adams, pp. 130-131.
- <sup>107</sup>Herman Otten, interview.
- <sup>108</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 463, a photographic reproduction of an article in *The Lutheran Campus Pastor*, February, 1968.
- <sup>109</sup>Marquart, pp. 94-95.
- <sup>110</sup>Herman Otten, interview.
- <sup>111</sup>*Lutheran News*, December 11, 1967, p. 5.
- <sup>112</sup>Christian News Encyclopedia, p. 467, quoting from *Christian News*, Dec. 12, 1977, from an essay entitled "Why Christian News?"

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3. That there will be a resurrection of the flesh and that the soul continues its existence after death; and

WHEREAS, In all cases such challenges or denials of Holy Scripture's clear teaching have not been effectually and finally corrected and repudiated up to this time; therefore be it

Resolved, That St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation fervently pray that the Lord of the church will still in mercy lead our Synod in faithfulness to His Word and give wisdom and strength to our Synodical officers to conserve the pure teachings of Holy Writ; and be it further

Resolved, That this Congregation request the 1962 synodical convention —

A. To direct all officers, boards, and committees to whom the Synod has delegated responsibility for doctrinal supervision (Constitution, Article XI, B. 1—3; Article XII, 6—8; Bylaws 4.101, 5.23, 6.39 a, 6.75, 6.83, 6.165 a, 11.23 a) faithfully and diligently to discharge their duties to maintain the Synod's doctrinal standard, Constitution, Article II; and

B. Likewise to direct the officers responsible for carrying out the directives cited promptly to secure the retraction, because of the errors they contain, of the articles and essays "God Is One" (*Lutheran Quarterly*, August 1959); "The Bible as Record, Witness, and Medium" (Northern Illinois District, April 1959); "Revelation and Inspiration" (Western District, October 1959); "Resurrection of the Body and Immortality of the Soul" (*Seminarian*, March 1958); and such other articles and public teachings as have been and need to be protested against on valid Scriptural grounds; and that, if such retractions are refused, the officers proceed without delay to apply the Synodical discipline prescribed in the Bylaws cited.

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CONGREGATION  
Rhineland, Ont.  
DOUGLAS ROBERTS, Secretary

Identical resolutions have been received from: Immanuel Lutheran Congregation, Hamler, Ohio; Rev. Kenneth K. Miller, Emmaus Lutheran Congregation, Fort Wayne, Ind.; State of the Church Conference, Cameron MacKenzie, chairman, Theodore Smithey, secretary; Trinity Ev. Lutheran Congregation, Oak Park, Ill., A. S. Hammer, secretary (almost identical); Salem Lutheran Congregation, Malone, Tex., Willie Krueger, secretary, F. Machina, pastor; St. Matthew Lutheran Congregation, Detroit, Mich., C. A. MacKenzie, pastor, Ray C. Raezler, chairman, William Downey, secretary; Highland Park Lutheran Congregation, Los Angeles, Calif., L. W. Faulstick, pastor, Ben J. Braun, chairman, F. J. Bobzin, secretary; Church Council of Our Savior Lutheran Congregation, Midland, Mich., Marvin L. Martin, pastor (almost identical); Wayne Kneisley, Leo Eichstaedt, Russell W. Long, First Lutheran Congregation, Hanna, Ind. (almost identical); Trinity Lutheran Congregation, Harvel, Ill., Paul C. Dorn, pastor.

[336]

### To Reiterate Agreement with Certain Principles Regarding Discipline

WHEREAS, Our Lord has specifically committed to each congregation of Christians the duty and authority to carry to conclusion the steps of discipline set forth in Matthew 18 and has accorded no such authority to others; and

WHEREAS, On the other hand the Synod is a confessional organization which has the right to establish standards of membership in it and has the duty to its members to enforce those criteria of fellowship; and

WHEREAS, Scripture clearly teaches in 1 Timothy 5: 20 and Galatians 2:11-14 that in instances of public sin public rebuke is in order; therefore be it

Resolved, That —

1. We recognize that there is a distinction between congregational discipline (Matthew 18) and the discipline properly exercised by a synodical body for the maintenance of the confessional standard upon which membership is conditioned;

2. It is not Scripturally legitimate to require the application of the first two steps of Matthew 18 in the case of public sin within a congregation or in the application of synodical discipline to instances of public error;

3. We reject appeals to a vague and formless "law of love" unsupported by clear Scripture, and we maintain that the use of such appeals is not permissible to justify failure to practice truly evangelical synodical discipline;

4. We hold it to be the responsibility of officers of the Synod to carry out synodical discipline in accord with the Constitution, Articles III, 1. 8. VI, XI, XII; and be it further

Resolved, That we prayerfully petition the Synod at its 1962 convention to reiterate its agreement with the principles set forth above; and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be forwarded to the Synod meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1962.

HIGHLAND PARK LUTHERAN CONGREGATION  
Los Angeles, Calif.  
L. W. FAULSTICK, Pastor  
BEN J. BRAUN, Chairman  
F. J. BOBZIN, Secretary

Identical resolutions have been received from: Immanuel Lutheran Congregation, Hamler, Ohio; Rev. Kenneth K. Miller, Emmaus Lutheran Congregation, Fort Wayne, Ind.; State of the Church Conference, Cameron MacKenzie, chairman, Theodore Smithey, secretary; Trinity Lutheran Congregation, Oak Park, Ill., A. S. Hammer, secretary; St. Matthew Lutheran Congregation, Detroit, Mich., Cameron A. Mackenzie, pastor, Raymond C. Raezler, chairman, William Downey, secretary; Trinity Lutheran Congregation, Harvel, Ill., Paul C. Dorn, pastor.



*Resolved*, That the author of this memorial direct his proper concern to the Board of Parish Education; and be it further

*Resolved*, That in its important and fruitful work the Board of Parish Education be careful to avoid the introduction of materials which disturb rather than edify the lay members of our churches in their Christian faith.

**Action:** This resolution was *adopted*.

### Principles Regarding Discipline

#### RESOLUTION 3-32

##### Memorial 336, p. 165, *Reports and Memorials*

WHEREAS, The manner in which we deal with one another's frailties and offenses is an integral part of our Gospel witness for the glory of our Father in heaven; and

WHEREAS, It is the will of our Lord that all rebuke serve to win and restore the offending brother and that the church be the vehicle of His Father's abundant forgiveness (Matt. 18:12-35); and

WHEREAS, Public correction of a public sin, where necessary, dare not evade or frustrate this gracious intention of our Lord; and

WHEREAS, The law of love is neither "vague" nor "formless" but concrete, personal, and practical: "This is My commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12); therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the convention decline Memorial 336; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod deplore those features of our common life that have in the past done violence to our Lord's will for His church: harshness and intemperance in attack and in defense; public exposure of an offending brother without personal, loving confrontation with the brother; the airing of our internal difficulties through media of communication directed to a public whom these difficulties do not concern; and a disregard for the duty and the dignity of our duly constituted officials; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod, constrained by the love of Christ, ask all who have offended in these respects to seek the forgiveness of those whom they have injured and implore those who have been injured freely to forgive; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the Synod henceforth let the love of God, the seeking Shepherd of the lost, be the informing power of our discipline, in order that we may restore one another in that spirit of meekness which St. Paul enjoins: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. 6:1)

**Action:** This resolution was *adopted*.

### COMMITTEE 4 — Parish Education

#### To Provide School Opportunities for More Children

##### RESOLUTION 4-01

##### Report 401, II, E, 1, p. 185, *Reports and Memorials*

WHEREAS, The Christian day school, more thoroughly than any other church agency of child training, can educate the mind, heart, and soul under the influence of God's Word and will; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in 1947 established a goal of 50 percent of our own children in our own schools; and

WHEREAS, The percentage has remained at about 33 percent since 1947; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That congregations with schools be encouraged to set challenging enrollment goals and provide adequate staff and facilities for an expanded program; and be it further

*Resolved*, That congregations without schools be urged to enlist the help of their District boards and/or District superintendents in exploring school possibilities and laying sound bases for an eventual school; and be it further

*Resolved*, That congregations which cannot have schools of their own be encouraged to explore the possibilities of a cooperative arrangement with neighboring sister congregations; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That congregations be urged to establish a system of priorities for enrolling children in their schools as follows: children of members, children of unchurched homes, children of sister congregations, children of other churches. (When sister congregations join in a cooperative effort, the children of these congregations are classed as children of members.)

**Action:** This resolution was *adopted*.

#### Teacher Education

##### RESOLUTION 4-02

##### Report 401, II, E, 2, pp. 185, 186, *Reports and Memorials*

WHEREAS, It is essential to maintain the highest possible standards of education in secular areas and particularly in the teaching of the Christian religion; and

WHEREAS, It is important to have capable and qualified teachers in the Christian day schools; therefore be it

*Resolved*, To commend those teachers who engage in programs of study and to commend those congregations that provide financial support for their day school teachers who engage in programs of study; and be it further

*Resolved*, To encourage all day school teachers who do not meet state certification requirements to begin and/or to continue programs of study toward that end; and be it further

*Resolved*, To encourage all day school teachers to

## ADDENDUM 3

### Statement of Policy - CHRISTIAN NEWS as it appeared in the Dec. 11, 1967 edition of *Lutheran News*

1. CHRISTIAN NEWS is not an official organ of any church-body, but an independent publication designed to supply rank and file Christians with information needed to face the present crisis in Christendom.

2. CHRISTIAN NEWS is not a doctrinally neutral observer, but is committed to the full historic Christian faith, as it is authoritatively revealed in the written Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, and correctly set forth in the Confessions of the orthodox Church, to wit, the Book of Concord of 1580.

3. CHRISTIAN NEWS is therefore unalterably opposed to the various fashionable "theological" systems which sacrifice the supernatural mysteries of the Christian Faith to the proletarian prejudices of "Modern Man's" computerised (sic) mentality. Moreover, CHRISTIAN NEWS holds that the continued use of Christian words and phrases, and the lip-service paid to "the Scriptures and the Confessions" by the practitioners of this new anti-Christian "theology" are totally dishonest and hypocritical.

4. Given the radical, indeed mortal nature of the doctrinal conflict and the need to reach and undeceive millions of rank and file Christians who have no idea of the fate being prepared for their churches under cover of pious-sounding slogans and platitudes, strong straight-forward, (sic) and sustained criticism is to be expected. Those who decry this as "negativism" either do not understand the gravity of the crisis or are themselves in league with the enemy. Scripture is extremely "negative" whenever it deal with apostacy (sic) and hypocrisy (sic)! And these are the dominant features of modern church life.

5. The writers of CHRISTIAN NEWS claim no sort of infallibility for themselves. They therefore invite readers to notify them of any errors of fact, judgment or theology, which may occur from time to time, so that suitable corrections may be made.

to be utterly truthful, infallible, and completely without error.

This is the presupposition and basis for all my work as professor of New Testament Interpretation. It is to this Word of God that I have pledged obedience, and to it I want, with the help of God, to continue to subject myself and all my thinking, my speaking and writing.

It has become obvious that several essays I have written have become the source of much difficulty, disturbance, and confusion because of their inadequate formulation and their failure to guard carefully against misunderstanding. I realize that basically they have addressed themselves to the wrong question, namely: In what sense are the Scriptures the Word of God? The proper inquiry would have been and is: How are the Scriptures, as the Word of God, to be used?

I deeply regret and am heartily sorry over the part that I played in contributing to the present unrest within the Synod. Since last Tuesday especially I have been haunted by the statement of the lay delegate from Bethel Lutheran Church in Chicago, namely: "If only he would say that he is sorry!" I do so herewith and I ask of my fellow members in the Synod that they forgive these actions of mine which have contributed to the tension in the church.

Herewith then I withdraw the following papers in their entirety:

- 1) "The Bible as Record, Witness, and Medium of Revelation"
- 2) "Revelation and Inspiration"
- 3) "The Inerrancy of Scripture" and
- 4) "God Is One"

Such withdrawal is here understood to mean that the questions to which these essays proposed to address themselves will not again be dealt with by me on the basis of anything written in them. If and when I need to address myself to these issues again, any such effort will be undertaken only in full cooperation with my colleagues on the seminary faculty and any others in Synod delegated to carry out this task. At that time, I want to assure you, a new, more considered, and properly safeguarded approach will be used.

I trust that you will find this declaration of mine to be acceptable and that, by the grace and with the help of God, the unrest in the Synod will be ended so that we may all devote our full energies to our God-given tasks. I thank you very much.

MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN

At this point the committee offered the following resolution:

III

WHEREAS, Certain essays by Dr. Martin H. Scharlemann, namely, "The Bible as Record, Witness, and Medium of Revelation"; "Revelation and Inspiration"; "The Inerrancy of Scripture"; and "God Is One" (declared by Dr. Scharlemann to be "exploratory in nature"),

have been doctrinally misleading, have been subject to much misunderstanding and misconstruction, and have been a source of unrest within the church; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Scharlemann has now declared his penitence for what he had done, has asked for forgiveness, and has assured the Synod that there would be no recurrence of such an act; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Synod gratefully acknowledge the mercy of God in this action now taken by Dr. Scharlemann; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod assure Dr. Scharlemann of its forgiveness and manifest this forgiveness by prayers on his behalf, by brotherly encouragement for his ministry, and by the request that its members refrain from attacks upon him on the basis of these essays; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the Synod request its Commission on Theology and Church Relations to address itself to issues raised by Dr. Scharlemann in his essays.

**Action:** This resolution was adopted by a rising vote of 650—20.

**NOTE:** Subsequently, before adjournment of the convention on Friday, June 29, eight negative votes were withdrawn, and three of these were changed to the affirmative.

**To Decline Request to Sever Connections with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America and the World Council of Churches**

**RESOLUTION 3-20**

**Memorial 314, pp. 152, 153, Reports and Memorials**

WHEREAS, Various departments of the Synod have found it advantageous to use certain resources of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches; and

WHEREAS, The utilization of such resources does not involve membership in the National Council of Churches or the World Council of Churches nor violate the Scriptural principles of fellowship; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That no action be taken with regard to Memorial 314.

**Action:** This resolution was adopted.

**India Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**RESOLUTION 3-21 R**

**Report 301, I, C, and II, D, and Memorial 318, pp. 142, 143, 147, 154, Reports and Memorials**

WHEREAS, The San Francisco convention in 1959 (*Proceedings*, p. 165) resolved "that we recognize the India Evangelical Lutheran Church as a sister church" and "that we pledge it our assistance in men and money, as circumstances permit" and "that the Board for Missions in Foreign Countries is to serve as administrative liaison between the India Evangelical Lutheran Church