

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

## *– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

***When a crisis occurs, it tends to bring us to a fork in the road. Decisions have to be made. The results can be with us for years to come.***

***Our denomination entered upon a crisis in the early 1980s, but the decisions our leaders made at that time were heavily influenced by a slanted report they read with closest attention a couple years before the crisis struck.***

***This is an in-depth report on the entangled web that caused our denomination to draw back—when the time came to stand for the right though the heavens fall.***

— PART ONE —

### THE COTTRELL REPORT

In the January 13, 1977, issue of *Adventist Review* (at that time called the *Review & Herald*), the first of a series of articles appeared. Authored by Raymond F. Cottrell, the articles told the story of a denomination whose leadership was too headstrong to avert a crisis which it could have avoided. When it struck, the crisis shook the entire denomination—yet it could have been averted if church leadership had been more willing to appease the dissidents.

According to the articles (January 13-February 17, 1977), certain faculty and students at a non-Adventist seminary (Concordia) had legitimate complaints; and, if their concerns had been met, the entire problem could have been resolved with a minimum of difficulty.

That was the impression conveyed by the se-

ries, along with repeated admonitions to our own leaders to be careful lest someday they also be confronted by a similar crisis, —and, instead of placating the opposition, they stubbornly refused to adapt to changing situations.

Surely, Raymond Cottrell knew all about the situation at Concordia. In his extensive *Review* report, he said he had researched into the matter over a period of several years, and had spent hours interviewing each of the two main protagonists: Drs. Preus and Tietjen.

**Raymond Cottrell and certain others in our denomination knew what the rest of us did not know then. That we were also headed toward a confrontation—which could project us into a crisis of startling proportions, depending on how we met it.**

By 1977, when Cottrell wrote those articles, the theological crisis in Australia was already far advanced. Desmond Ford had very nearly gathered the entire Pacific Union College faculty, administration, and many of the students into his camp; and a majority of the teachers at the Adventist Seminary at Andrews University and faculty and religion teachers at Southern Missionary College (now Southern University)—had already shifted significantly from historic Adventist theology. They were busily instructing students as well as future pastors in, what would come to be known as, the “*new theology*”—the concepts that purity of heart and life and obedience to God’s commandments were no longer necessary for salvation.

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Cottrell, a brilliant and liberal thinker, was an associate *Review* editor at the time. His tilted portrayal had the effect of frightening Adventist leaders toward a certain course of action. Forthcoming events would reveal that he achieved his objective.

**Two and a half years later, our own latent crisis suddenly emerged into the open; when, on October 27, 1979, Desmond Ford delivered an Adventist Forum lecture at Pacific Union College in which he presented a sketch of our key doctrinal beliefs as ridiculous, old-fashioned, inaccurate, and in need of major revision.** (See the present writer's *How Firm Our Foundation—Part 1-8 [FF-8-15]*, now in our *New Theology Tractbook* for a rather complete presentation of, and reply to, Ford's concepts in that lecture). In that speech, he lampooned our basic beliefs as sheerest folly, and said it was time for a radical change.

Fortunately, a few stalwarts in the church heard that meeting, or a tape of it soon afterward, and demanded that Ford be ousted.

**The crisis had arrived. What would our leaders do? Would they meet the iceberg head on, as was done at the turn of the century, or would they waffle and partly compromise with the insurgents?**

Undergirding the fears of our leaders was the worry that the denomination might split down the middle if they did not deal very carefully with the situation. It was decided that only moderate policies and cautious actions could achieve cohesiveness—that is, to keep a church of rampant liberals and strict conservatives glued together.

As in the days of Chamberlain in the late 1930s, so it was again to be: "*Peace in our time*," was the goal to be reached. If the liberals would give a little and the conservatives would yield some of their principles, all would be well.

**Such a course naturally appealed to the liberal element in the church. They had everything to gain by it. Year after year, they could continue molding the minds of the young, winning them to their sides, as they moved forward in their plan to take control of the church.**

Have you ever noticed that, while the faithful are rubbing the sleep out of their eyes and wondering what is happening, the worldlings are working in concert, guided as by invisible strings from a single puppet master? Do the liberals really realize how ably they are serving the devil? They could know if they would read the Spirit of Prophecy and compare their lives and objectives with its clear pronouncements.

**The first of Cottrell's series of five articles** (ultimately six) began with these words:

"The first week in December witnessed the formation of a new Protestant denomination in the United States—the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. And thereby hangs a tale of interest and concern to Seventh-day Adventists, one we shall do well to heed and from which we as a church may learn lessons of importance and value. Willingness to learn from the experiences of others can spare us from inadvertently making the same mistakes. To neglect, or refuse, to learn from history dooms a person, or a church, to repeat history—to learn the hard way."—*Raymond F. Cottrell, "A Church in Crisis," Review, January 13, 1977.*

**That initial paragraph in the series clearly revealed to whom Cottrell was writing: our leaders.** He then went on to emphasize that our denomination was peculiarly able to fall into the same schism trap which opened before the feet of another denomination, which was riven as if by lightning.

That denomination was the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)* which split wide open:

"We can try to understand why schism came and we can take appropriate measures to avoid repeating the mistakes that led to it. Such is the purpose of this series of articles . . . Primarily because LCMS is conservative, as we are, its traumatic experience is particularly relevant to us. LCMS and SDA have much in common in addition to their conservative approach to Scripture, the ostensible bone of contention in LCMS."—*Ibid.*

**The above sentence hints at what Cottrell was repeatedly to point out: It was the fortress mentality of LCMS, their overwrought concern to stay with the fundamentals (the historic beliefs), when a little doctrinal compromise could have kept the split from occurring—which was the root of the problem.**

Throughout the series, the portrayal was that it was not the liberals who were to blame, but primarily the conservatives who refused to meet them halfway.

Cottrell pointed out that "LCMS and SDA operate the two largest Protestant parochial education systems in existence," and "today the Synod operates 16 institutions of higher education in the United States. Missouri Synod's early interest in Christian education remains a major emphasis in the life of the church" (*ibid.*). The parallels between the two denominations were striking. Especially since, as Cottrell noted, LCMS has historically been the most conservative Lutheran denomination in America.

**Thus the focus of this first article was that a terrible crisis had occurred in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and that a similar crisis could happen to our own denomination, since**

ours is also very conservative and education-oriented.

**The second article in the series.** “The Authority of Scripture” (*Review*, January 20, 1977) was cleverly arranged, defining “liberals” as including only those who reject Scriptural authority outright. This article downplayed the possibility that there might be any genuine liberals in that denomination or ours.

“This word [‘liberal’] is often used, particularly by some conservatives, to pin a pejorative label on someone they consider more liberal and open-minded than they personally choose to be, when as a matter of fact the difference between them is trivial and the person thus labeled is not ‘liberal’ by any fair, objective definition of the term.”—*R.F. Cottrell, “The Authority of Scripture, Review, January 20, 1977.*

**Frankly, this categorizing of “liberals,” as only including those who totally reject any profession of faith in the Bible, was obviously erroneous. We shall learn, later in this documentary, that it was widely recognized that the insurgents in the Missouri Synod were clear-cut liberals. We shall also learn that the standard definitions of liberalism, used widely in Protestantism, includes the teachings of such men.**

Most of our readers know from sad experience that there are many people in our local churches, and many preachers in our pulpits, who are in open rebellion against the teachings of God’s Word, yet all the while professing to love and revere it.

“In this series of articles, *liberal* denotes a person who rejects the Bible as the inspired, authoritative Word of God; and *conservative*, a person who accepts it as inspired and authoritative.”—*Ibid* [italics his].

**In later articles in the series, Cottrell used that definition, aided by the omission of important historical details, to speak highly of the liberals who split LCMS.**

Cottrell next asserts that “higher criticism” is something we all do!

“The historical-critical method, . . . is, in short, a careful study of the Bible in the light of historical evidence. This method is closely related to, if not identical with, what is known as higher criticism (strictly defined). Higher criticism stands in contrast to lower, or textual, criticism, a study of the ancient Bible manuscripts.”—*Ibid*.

**The historical-critical method is but a variant of higher criticism! The premise is that, not God’s Word, but man’s is the supreme authority. He alone is to decide if there is any truth to be found in the Bible, or anywhere else. He must decide what truth, if any, is to be found in the**

**Bible. There are various patterns of liberal attack on Scripture, but they are all based on the this premise.**

No sincere Christian believes in, or practices, higher criticism.

“By definition, higher criticism is ‘the literary-historical study of the Bible that seeks to determine such factors as authorship, date, place of origin, circumstances and composition, purpose of the author, and the historical credibility of each of the various biblical writings together with the meaning intended by their authors.’”—*Ibid*.

“As a matter of fact, all conservative Bible scholars, including SDAs, make at least some use of both lower and higher criticism in their study of the Bible.”—*Ibid*.

Such a definition is farcical. Higher criticism is deadly; it is not the study of the Bible, but a determined attack to destroy it.

**In the next two articles** (“Decisions that Polarized the Missouri Synod,” January 27, 1977, and “The Parting of the Ways,” February 3, 1977), Cottrell briefly overviewed some of the events in the deterioration of mutuality by the two sides. In his view, both sides consisted of sincere Christians who unfortunately lost contact with one another and, therefore, became unable to work out a satisfactory compromise.

According to Cottrell, the conservatives in LCMS wanted to take an ax to, what they supposed were, liberals at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. This is what started all the trouble among brethren who should have been dwelling together in peace.

“The immediate chain of events that culminated in schism within LCMS in December 1976 began a little more than seven years earlier, in 1969, with the election of Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus as president of the Synod and the appointment of Dr. John Tietjen as president of Concordia Seminary. Within LCMS these are considered the two most prestigious and influential offices. Drs. Preus and Tietjen were destined to play the two leading roles in the seven-year confrontation.

“Let us begin with their respective predecessors in these two key offices, Dr. Oliver Harms as president of the Synod (1962-1969) and Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer as president of Concordia Seminary (1953-1969). Dr. Harms, a conservative, pursued a moderating administrative policy and sought to be fair to both sides of the ongoing debate. His moderation, however, was not acceptable to the grass-roots conservative majority and their conservative pastors, who defeated his bid for reelection in 1969 . . . To them, Dr. Harms’s middle-of-the-road policy seemed vacillating at a time when they felt that vigorous action was needed. In effect, Dr. Preus thus came to office with a mandate from the

conservative majority to 'clean up the Synod.'

"That which the conservatives felt particularly in need of cleaning up was the faculty of Concordia Seminary. (See "A Church in Crisis," *Review*, Jan. 13, 1977.) With a view to strengthening the academic training of ministers to serve the Synod, President Fuerbringer had built up a strong faculty and established Concordia's standing with the American Association of Theological Schools, its accrediting association. Upon his retirement in 1969 the Concordia Board of Control appointed Dr. John Tietjen, who continued the policies of his predecessor, which were designed to maintain academic excellence. However, grass-roots conservatives were unhappy with the choice which they say as perpetuating at the Seminary, the situation to which they took exception—use of the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture, in the training of future ministers. (See "The Authority of Scripture," *Review*, Jan. 20, 1997.)

"The coming of Drs. Preus and Tietjen to office confronted them personally and the Synod with an opportunity and a challenge either to resolve, on a mutually acceptable basis, the differences of opinion that had been troubling the Synod for a number of years or to escalate the differences into an adversary relationship that could be resolved only by victory for one side and defeat for the other. For better or for worse, the Synod chose the latter course, and its conservative majority vested initiative for action in the newly elected administration. The stage was thus set for the domino series of events that followed. Given the Synod's frame of mind in 1969 and thereafter, events seem, in retrospect, to have followed an inexorable, predetermined, course with schism in December 1976, as its inevitable conclusion."—*R.F. Cottrell, "Decisions that Polarized the Missouri Synod," January 27, 1977.*

**Cottrell next cited two incorrect decisions legislated by the LCMS denominational headquarters which produced the terrible crisis that followed: (1) The board decided that LCMS would maintain certain standards, and (2) they decided that the Seminary was not adhering to those standards. Then, instead of being willing to compromise in order to maintain harmony among brethren, they became intransigent:**

"Two decisions LCMS made between 1971 and 1973 were crucial, and their subsequent implementation (1973-1976) completed the process of polarizing the church, and precipitated schism: (1) the formal authorization of *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* "as a tool to identify theological and doctrinal issues which the Synod needs to consider and resolve," and (2) the

Synod charge that a majority of the faculty of Concordia Seminary were teaching false doctrine. With these decisions the conservative majority went on the offensive and set out to purify the Synod of what they considered heretical tendencies. Both sides appear to have been utterly sincere; whether in retrospect, their wisdom was always equal to their zeal is a matter of opinion. These two closely related decisions determined the course of events that followed."—*Ibid.*

The two sides gradually hardened in their positions, with the conservatives thinking they should stand by the Bible, and the liberals (Cottrell calls them "moderates") declaring that more flexibility was needed.

"To Synod conservatives, *A Statement* simply affirms what they have always believed about the Bible . . . To the 'moderates,' however, *A Statement* does not identify and deal adequately with the very real problems with which it professes to deal. It is simplistic with respect to 'very technical matters' that 'need much careful study.'"—*Ibid.*

"'Large sections' of the *Statement*, which listed basic historic beliefs, the liberals charged as being " 'merely traditional; that is, they reproduce theological opinions about the Bible which frequently have been taught in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod' " (*ibid.*)

"To the conservatives, then, the issue on doctrine is one of accepting or rejecting the Bible as the inspired, authoritative Word of God. To the 'moderates' that is not the issue at all, for they, too, acknowledge its inspiration and authority. As they see it, the issue is not on the level of inspiration and authority at all, but on the level of traditional interpretation versus an objective examination of the evidence. The issue is a matter of opinion."—*Ibid.*

Apparently, the liberals in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod were obviously as clever as those we are confronted with in our own denomination. Our beliefs are merely "opinions"; and theirs, learned at outside universities, are better.

**In the fourth article** ("The Parting of the Ways," *Review*, February 3, 1977), it was implied that Tietjen's charges may have been correct. **But, more important as we shall learn later, Cottrell said nothing about the multitude of devious misstatements and mischievous activities carried on by Dr. Tietjen, president of the Seminary.**

**If the truth of what Tietjen and his associates actually did had been told, the reader would have drawn far different conclusions about the Concordia rebellion.**

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*Part Two*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

**In the fifth article** (“Postmortem on the LCMS Conflict,” *Review*, February 10, 1977), **Cottrell attempted to summarize how the crisis could have been avoided. He cited four factors—and said the conservatives were responsible for each of them.**

**The first factor** was the nature and authority of Scripture. **Cottrell said the conservatives were at fault, since the liberals were only using the historical-critical method which was totally harmless.** The conservatives would not admit this fact, and refused to learn the facts:

“The controversy began with the charge that members of the Concordia Seminary faculty were teaching false doctrine with respect to the nature, authority, and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. These charges came to a focus on the use of the historical-critical method of interpretation, which we discussed at some length in the second article of this series.

“The ‘moderates’ affirm the validity of the historical method within a conservative, evangelical view of Scripture, as a means of attaining a more accurate understanding of its messages for our time. To the conservatives, however, this approach to Scripture seemed incompatible with historic Lutheranism and equivalent to rejecting the Bible as God’s inspired message to man. To our knowledge this charge involved only the Concordia faculty.

“Both sides seem sincere in their convictions; we know of no reason to think otherwise. The problem appears to have been basically one of understanding and communication. We understand that there were protracted discussions at a lower level prior to the escalation of the conflict to crisis proportions five years or so ago; but, since then, to our knowledge, the two sides have never sat down together, as brothers in Christ and with open minds, to investigate the substance of the points at issue. Under any circumstances there never seems to have been real communication between them on the Synod level, no real opportunity for a meeting of the minds. Those who brought the charge seem to have assumed that they understood the ‘moderate’ position fully, that their own conclusions with respect to it were right, and that the faculty was there-

fore necessarily wrong. They were so sure of their judgment in the matter that they did not consider it necessary even to listen to what the other side had to say. As a result they never dealt objectively with the real issues involved. And if the real issues were never clearly identified and defined to the mutual satisfaction of both sides, how could their differences of opinion over the issues ever be resolved?”—*R.F. Cottrell, “Postmortem on the LCMS Conflict,” Review, February 10, 1977.*

**Mark those points well: Cottrell maintained that the historical-critical method was perfectly all right and that the conservatives never tried to find out what the Seminary faculty were really teaching. We will learn, later in this documentary, that exactly the opposite was true.**

The truth is that Tietjen, and his associates, repeatedly said they were totally in agreement with historic conservative Lutheranism—**when they were teaching rank liberalism; that is, claims that various portions of the Bible were only legends (Genesis 1-2, the miracles of the Bible, etc.); Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and others did not really write any Biblical books; etc.**

**But Cottrell said not a word about that; instead, he repeatedly refers to, or quotes, Tietjen’s statements that he was totally in agreement with historic Lutheranism.**

“In his *Christianity Today* reply to Dr. Preus, Dr. John Tietjen, president of Concordia Seminary until February 1974, said Dr. Preus’s charge that the authority of the Bible is the main theological issue in LCMS ‘is a smokescreen. The authority of the Bible is not at issue in the Missouri Synod . . . I fully accept the authority of the Bible. I am totally committed to the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God . . . Everyone in the Synod accepts the authority of the Bible.’ ”—*Ibid [quoting J.H. Tietjen, “Piercing the Smokescreen,” Christianity Today, April 11, 1975].*

Tietjen frequently issued false statements such as that.

The following comment by Cottrell, in explaining the difference between ‘moderates’ and conservatives, is an accurate statement of what liberals say:

“The moderates consider the message of the

Bible, the 'gospel,' that which the Holy Spirit and the inspired writers intended to convey as truth, as inspired and authoritative (the 'material principle'); whereas the conservatives consider the entire Bible, in all its parts, to be inspired and inerrant (the 'formal principle')."—*Ibid.*

**According to liberals, it is not the Bible that is inspired, but the "message of the Gospel" in it. It is the work of the liberals to find that message, and discard the rest. The deciding factor as to what shall be thrown out is their own opinion.**

But the definition sounds inviting. That is the way the liberals win you over. They are doing an excellent job capturing your children whom you send to our colleges, universities, and Seminary.

We should be kind to the liberals the way a hawk is kind to the snake found in her nest, gorging on the eggs.

**Conservatives take God's Word—both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—just as it reads. But the liberals use confusing labels and complicated theories to cover over their hideous beliefs. And they are hideous, for they lead to doubt and agnosticism in regard to Scripture.** From beginning to end, these men are devious. Their words are mysterious; their theories are confusing. Because they have been trained in the universities, they are supposed to be smarter than you; so, assuming that if you were more intelligent you could understand what they were talking about—you yield your mind to their control, and you are hooked.

Again, Cottrell emphasized that the liberals at Concordia were presenting perfectly correct, safe, teachings.

"Both affirm every major Lutheran teaching set forth in the Bible and the [Lutheran] Confessions, including the doctrine of Holy Scripture . . . The conservatives adhere to the traditional method of interpretation, while the 'moderates' follow the historical method, as do most conservative, evangelical Bible scholars."—*Ibid.*

**Cottrell placed "moderates" within quotation marks because he earlier stated that both sides were really conservatives, but that he would term one "moderates" to distinguish them. Yet, later in this documentary, you will be shocked to learn just how rampantly liberal they were.**

Notice the definitions implicit in the second sentence, quoted above: The "moderates" think for themselves; the conservatives are too dumb to.

**The second factor** which Cottrell cited, as causing the Concordia crisis, was theology—and the conservatives were to blame for that.

"The basic theological factor responsible for the misunderstanding in the Synod, we believe, is a

concept of Biblical inerrancy and inspiration that goes beyond anything the Bible claims for itself."—*Ibid.*

That is not true. **Even a casual study into the actual events during the Concordia Crisis reveals that. All that the conservative leaders requested was that the Seminary teach the Bible as though it was true!**

In order to elaborate on his contention that the smarter way to figure out Scripture is by reading new ideas into it, Cottrell goes to some length to explain that, like Christ, the Bible is a combination of *divine and human*—and therefore needs our *human* interpretation in order to make it come alive for us. In contrast, the conservatives stubbornly, narrowly, imagine the Bible is only "divine," and refuse to add to it the "human dimension."

"As Christ was the living Word of God manifest in human form, so the Bible is the Word of God written in human language, in order to express infinite truth in terms comprehensible to human beings. As with the nature of Christ, there is a balance between the divine and the human dimensions of Scripture . . . Fundamentalist conservatives stress the divine aspect of Scripture almost to the exclusion of any real human dimension."—*Ibid.*

So, when you sit at the feet of the liberals and learn of them, you receive in their theories the "human dimension." But when you prayerfully read the Bible for yourself, you encounter divine truth. Which do you want?

This concept of needing to add our human dimension to God's Word is but a lame excuse used to justify the devastating historical-critical method! Carl Walther, one of LCMS's earlier leaders feared that the liberalism in the other denominations would creep into his beloved LCMS. Realizing that the teachings of such men as Harnack of the German higher-criticism school, if allowed to creep into LCMS, would destroy it, Walther wrote this:

"We must apply this [liberalism] to the so-called 'divine-human character of Scripture' as that term is used by the modern-conservative theology: Beware, beware, I say, of this 'divine-human Scripture'! It is a devil's mask; for at last it manufactures such a Bible after which I certainly would not care to be a Bible Christian, namely, that the Bible should henceforth be no more than any other good book, a book which I would have to read with constant sharp discrimination in order not to be led into error. For if I believe this, that the Bible contains errors, it is to me no longer a touchstone but itself stands in need of one. In a word, it is unspeakable what the devil seeks by this 'divine-human Scripture.' "—*Carl Walther, quoted in Bible in the Balance, Harold Lindsell, p. 249.*

As Cottrell sees it, **the third factor** which led to

the crisis at Concordia was church “authority and power.” Denominational officials were picking on the Seminary faculty, when those good men were actually teaching what everyone else was teaching: the historic beliefs of the denomination.

“There does not seem to be sufficient doctrinal difference between the ‘moderates’ and conservatives in the LCMS to justify schism, no valid reason why the two differing points of view could not abide at peace with each other, on the basis of the golden rule. Both believe in the inspiration and authority of the Scripture, and within that frame of reference there should be room for more than one method of interpretation.

“Why, then, was the Missouri Synod controversy characterized from the very first by an adversary relationship that waxed more intense and bitter as time went by?”—*Ibid.*

**Cottrell says the problem was that leadership wanted to exercise authority and push people around. —But you are going to learn that the situation was far different! It was a matter of liberals determined to take over the denomination, just as liberals have been regularly doing throughout the 20th century.**

“The grass-roots majority and the elected administration took issue with a small but important segment of its intellectual community. With both knowledge and administrative authority and power go certain responsibilities and obligations . . . One of the first responsibilities of an administrator is to use administrative authority and power with discretion, moderation, and impartiality.”—*Ibid.*

**Cottrell explained to our leaders, who intently read this riveting, frightening, series, that they should treat their own “intellectuals”—the administration and faculty of Adventist colleges and universities—with extreme care. Be nice to them; go along with them. Avoid a crisis in our own church.**

“To the conservatives, then, the issue was one of accepting or rejecting the Bible as the inspired, authoritative Word of God. But to the ‘moderates’ that was not the issue at all, for they too acknowledged its inspiration and authority. To them the substantive, doctrinal issue was one of following the traditional, subjective, deductive method in interpreting Scripture versus an objective inductive study of Scripture. Again and again the ‘moderates’ appealed to the conservatives to face up to what they considered the ‘real issues that are troubling the Synod’—‘a false understanding of authority in the Church,’ ‘a threat to the rights of congregations,’ the ‘effort to settle doctrinal issues by majority vote rather than [by] the Word of God,’ ‘ethical issues,’ and other actions that have divided the Synod.”—*Ibid.*

“Deductive” was a key word, above. The so-

called “moderates” wanted to be *inductive*; that is, approach the Bible by reading in their own imaginings and theories instead of accepting it for what it said.

**Note, in the above paragraph, that Cottrell criticized a special kind of “authority in the church,” which he termed a “threat to the rights of congregations”—that is, settling doctrinal issues by “majority vote.”**

**—That is why the conservatives won and the liberals lost at LCMS. It was the members, not the leaders, which sent delegates to the Synod meetings (comparable to our General Conference Sessions),—and they convened every year instead of every five. They demanded that the liberals be eradicated from Concordia. That was why the liberals were routed! Leadership, by itself, never would have had the nerve to make that decision otherwise.**

Leaders always fear splits and strive to hold the organization together, regardless of the integrity of principles which might be lost. But, unlike the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, the LCMS synods were composed of members from the local congregations. Ever since the 1950s, their sons had come home with stories about the increasing liberalism at Concordia—and by the 1970s it had gotten so bad, they demanded changes!

Unfortunately, our own Session delegates are automatically packed with over 51 percent church leaders and subordinates; the agenda is preplanned, so no major crisis can come to the floor of the Session for vote. Only 7-12 percent of the delegates are laymen.

In contrast, within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the laymen and their local pastors held the deciding votes in every Synod!

**Raymond Cottrell knew that our liberal crisis would break within five to eight years (it broke in two). In the above quotation, he was warning our leaders not to let the “majority” have the say in settling the coming crisis.**

In the very next paragraph, Cottrell amplified on his thought:

“The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is a body of dedicated Christian people who purpose to bear faithful witness to Scripture, to the principles of the Reformation and to historic Lutheranism. The conservative, grass-roots majority are disposed to preserve their traditional way of interpreting the Bible and their traditional concept of what it means to be a Lutheran church.

“The Synod ‘moderates’ are likewise loyal to Scripture and to historic Lutheranism, but they do not look upon this loyalty as obliging them to accept traditional opinions about Scripture or meth-

ods of interpreting Scripture. In their Biblical studies they purpose to react positively and discriminatingly to the very considerable body of factual information about the ancient past now available—within the framework of conservative Lutheranism. They seek to study, understand, and interpret Scripture inductively and objectively, in the sense intended by the inspired writers, in order to hear what God is saying to us today.”—*Ibid.*

**Cottrell warned our leaders to be wary of the “conservative grassroots majority” of members, who might want to “preserve their traditional way of interpreting the Bible and their traditional concept” of what it means to be Seventh-day Adventists.**

**He said our leaders should have confidence that the so-called “moderates” are themselves equally “loyal” to God’s Word and to our “historic” beliefs.**

“Historic” Adventism, Cottrell explained, is nothing more than a stack of timeworn opinions; it is the task of the wonderful “moderates” to “positively and discriminatingly”—and “inductively”—present us with something better, and what is it? “what God is saying to us today” (not in the 1st or 19th centuries).

**The fourth factor** which Cottrell claimed to be the cause of the crisis—was also attributable to the conservatives!

“The sociological root of the problem in LCMS was the ultraconservatism of the grassroots majority, pastors and parishioners . . . It was this conservative majority that elected Dr. Preus to office and gave him a virtual mandate to ‘clean up the Synod,’ that called for and voted the doctrinal statement, that charged Dr. Tietjen and his faculty with heresy.”—*Ibid.*

Although giving it a different name, Cottrell only said what he said earlier, under what he termed the “theological factor.” According to him, the problem was the “grassroots ultraconservatism,” which he now adds is dangerous.

**The cry of the liberal is, It is dangerous to be a conservative and defend the historic beliefs of the denomination! It is dangerous to listen to their complaints and let them have any say in what goes on. They might return us to obedience to God’s Word!**

Notice that, so far, Cottrell has not blamed the liberals; all the problems were caused because the conservatives wanted to defend their historic beliefs.

“We believe that the sociological factor—the prejudgmental, exclusive frame of mind of the conservative majority and their unwillingness, as it seems, to communicate meaningfully—was decisive in causing the split in the Missouri Synod. The issue was not one of conservatism versus liberalism, of Bible believers versus Bible doubters. The ‘moderates’ consider themselves conservatives.”—*Ibid.*

We have here a clear-cut statement of condemnation of the conservatives, and it all turns on the phrase “consider themselves.” **The conservatives knew that, year after year, the Concordia Seminary was corrupting the students and sending out liberal pastors. But the teachers and administrators at the Seminary protested that they themselves were as doctrinally pure as the driven snow.**

**These deceptive tactics caused perplexity among some of the LCMS members (just as it has for years created confusion in our own church),** but the majority knew that Concordia was corrupt and elected Preus to “clean it up.” They did right! It is not wrong to do right! It is not wrong to reprove sin; it is not wrong to cast the lump out of the church (*1 Corinthians 5*).

Alternating between one point and then the other, Cottrell keeps hammering at both: (1) The cause of the church split was that the conservatives irrationally stirred up trouble, when they did not need to. (2) The liberals are our friends, our bosom buddies. Instead of arguing with them, we should listen to what they say. They have new light, advanced information they have learned at outside universities.

“Missouri Synod ‘conservatives’ and ‘moderates’ apparently represent two different frames of mind within a genuinely conservative tradition . . . To a conservative, the old ways are, *ipso facto*, better; to the ‘moderate,’ new ideas and ways of thinking are worth at least exploring. The conservative prefers to remain in his own familiar home valley; the ‘moderate’ is an explorer at heart. The conservative feels secure in adhering to the heritage of the centuries, to the letter; the ‘moderate’ feels more secure in applying the principles inherent in that cherished heritage to the world of reality as he finds it today. The conservative places a premium on uniformity; the ‘moderate’ believes that a diversity of ideas can contribute to a clearer definition of truth and thus to a firmer, more viable faith. The conservative prefers to be guided by traditional preconcepts and to weigh evidence subjectively and deductively from his presuppositions (if, indeed,

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*Part Three*

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he is aware of them); the 'moderate' is willing that other conservative points of view shall coexist with his own, and is willing to respect those who hold such views as people of integrity."—*Ibid.*

**The above paragraph is packed! It is an encyclopedia of reasons why we should fall at the feet of the liberals and heed their counsels. They are smarter than we conservatives. While we slavishly remain at the Tree of Life, eating its leaves (MH 199, 6T 230, 7T 195), the liberals have found a tree with different knowledge. The serpent told Eve that day, "Think for yourself; don't just take what God says in His Word!"**

The liberal "is an explorer at heart," and "feels more secure" in his "cherished heritage," "the world of reality" he discovered at the universities. The liberal scorns "uniformity," when he can have "diversity of ideas" that give him what Eve thought she obtained: "a clearer definition of truth." Her faith had been transferred from God's Word to her own opinions and feelings; but that automatically placed her in subjection to Satan.

**So it is with the liberals. The devil promises them new freedom. He promises that they will enter upon a higher experience as they make themselves the normative standard of truth, and "weigh evidence objectively." Liberality and pluralism is the cry. The liberal is actually saying, "Give me freedom, freedom to believe as I wish and do as I wish." "Above all," he says, "let me devise a new set of beliefs, a new theology, which will enable me to sin all I want, without fear of the law of God or a coming judgment.**

Before passing on to the next point, it should be noted that the concluding phrase of the above-quoted statement by Cottrell, about conservatives, is simply not true. Liberals are *not in submission to the Word of God and its standards and laws*, and are not pleasant people when they are in control.

"The doctrine which, from the very first origin of religious dissensions, has been held by all bigots of all sects, when condensed into a very few words, and stripped of rhetorical disguise, is sim-

ply this: I am in the right, and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger, you ought to tolerate me; for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am stronger, I shall persecute you; for it is my duty to persecute error."—*Sir James Mackintosh, Critical and Historical Essays, Vol. 1, pp. 333-334.*

**With the leadership of the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church hanging on each word presented only 32 months before Desmond Ford's October 27, 1979, lecture which began our own crisis,—Cottrell summed up the problem. He told what our leaders must do to prevent such a split from ever occurring in our own church. That solution was what he has been saying all along: (1) Do not try to protect the conservative position. (2) Do not let the conservative majority take over matters. (3) The liberals are actually conservatives, except that they are more intelligent. (4) Placate the liberals, and everything will turn out fine.**

"How shall we fit all of the pieces of the Missouri Synod Puzzle together into an accurate picture, with meaning and value for Seventh-day Adventists? . . . We find no evidence that the original issue with respect to the inspiration and authority of Scripture, or the charge that the majority of the concordia faculty was teaching false doctrine, had any substance in fact (though there may have been individuals of whom it was true). The ultraconservatism of the grass-roots majority, pastors and parishioners, prejudged the issue without really understanding it, drew a tight little theological circle designed to exclude the faculty as credible members of the Synod without hearing them, and was unwilling to enter into meaningful communication with them. They were also responsible for an arbitrary use of administrative authority and power to achieve their objective of conforming the Synod to their particular mode of thought. As an instrument to denounce the 'moderate' position, *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* was false and misleading despite its clear delineation of the boundary between conservative and liberal views of Scripture. The blanket charge against the majority of the faculty seems to us grossly irresponsible."—*Ibid.*

The *Statement*, mentioned above was merely an official statement of historic Lutheran beliefs

which the liberals at the Seminary were required to assent to, and which they refused to do.

At this juncture, Cottrell finally affixes some blame, though the lightest possible, on the “moderates.” He says the conservatives should have tried to share their beliefs more with leadership, so it would be understood that there really was no doctrinal problem.

“We wish that, before passing the point of no return, both sides had attempted a full-fledged peace conference, examined all of the facts and issues candidly and objectively.”—*Ibid.*

As you will learn later in this documentary, Dr. Preus, the leader of the LCMS conservatives, tried repeatedly to do just that! But, each time, Seminary personnel sidestepped and refused to say exactly what they believed. This happened over, and over, and over again! The only reply was that they were conservatives, they believed in the Bible, and they were faithful to historic Lutheranism. But not on a single, specific point would they freely say so. Occasionally, some of their real teachings slipped out, but it was not their intention that they be made public.

**The entire crisis was just like the one in heaven when Lucifer talked out of both sides of his mouth, all the while buying time to win as many over to his side as possible—all the while trying to edge closer to his goal of taking over all heaven.**

That concluded the fifth part of what was initially said to be a “five part” series. But, by this time, Cottrell had decided to add a **sixth article**, entitled “An Ounce of Prevention” (*Review*, February 17, 1977).

The theme of this final article was the need for “brotherly love” and “maturity” in our own ranks. We must love one another, even when they believe something different. We must grow up and no longer childishly fuss when something we perceive as error is taught in the church.

Here are a few brief examples of this compromising line of thinking:

“The gospel makes a spirit of brotherhood under the golden rule paramount under all circumstances.”—*R.F. Cottrell, “An Ounce of Prevention,” Review, February 17, 1977.*

“A mature Christian will not permit differences of opinion on nonessentials, or circumstances, to undermine the spirit of brotherhood . . . Men of good will can associate and work together at peace, with mutual respect and confidence, despite differences of opinion.”—*Ibid.*

“The fundamentalist mind-set of the LCMS majority, it seems, predisposed them to an exagger-

ated concept of inspiration and inerrancy, to misjudge the moderates, and to use questionable tactics to achieve their objective. We do not for a moment question their sincerity in so doing. This mind-set, nevertheless, inspired *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, designed to prove that the moderates were teaching false doctrine and to purge the Synod of them. Mind-set—a fixed way of thinking—was crucial in the LCMS confrontation. A person should have conviction, but he should also be open to truth.”—*Ibid.*

“One feels more secure with objectively established facts, even when they may require an adjustment in thinking; the other feels more secure with familiar facts and thought patterns, and tends to feel threatened by unwelcomed facts. One respects sincere convictions that conflict with its own; the other prefers that all conform to a particular mode of thought, and tends to be judgmental and exclusive.”—*Ibid.*

“Mature, responsible persons will recognize and respect mind-sets that differ from their own. They will accord conscientious convictions full honor and respect, and make adjustments as may be necessary in order to relate meaningfully to people whose way of approaching a problem differs from their own.”—*Ibid.*

“Mature, responsible Christians . . . will listen intently and with respect to points of view that differ from their own, and endeavor to evaluate them objectively. They will avoid drawing lines that have the effect of excluding as credible church members, persons with views differing from their own.”—*Ibid.*

“The very conservative LCMS concept of inspiration and inerrancy is rooted in traditional concepts and preconcepts that, superimposed on the Bible, provide a basis for misconstruing the moderate approach to Scripture as an abandonment of inspiration and inerrancy and resulted in the charge of teaching false doctrine.”—*Ibid.*

**In a footnote at the bottom of that concluding article, Cottrell quoted an example of the kind of fanatical conservative attitude which caused the Concordia crisis, a view we should turn from with loathing, if we are to keep our own denomination safe for liberals to run rampant in:**

“In a paper presented to a Synod theological convocation in the spring of 1975, Dr. Ralph A. Bohlmann, now president of Concordia Seminary [after Tietjen and his fellow liberals vacated the place], said that ‘considerations of truth must take precedence over considerations of love, should these be in conflict.’—*Ibid.*

That footnote referred the reader back to an antecedent statement by Cottrell, where the footnote originated:

“Brotherly love was made contingent on submission to the conservative doctrinal position.”—*Ibid.*

— PART TWO —

## WHEN THE CRISIS STRUCK IN OUR OWN DENOMINATION

***A little over two years after Raymond Cottrell's report, essentially the same crisis burst upon our own denomination. Just as in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, ours had been gradually developing for years. But the reality of the confrontation was not readily apparent until Desmond Ford delivered a lecture on October 27, 1979.***

At the time, the present writer was busily preparing Sabbath tracts for eventual publication, when he would be able to afford a used press and folding machine, and did not learn about the lecture until the following February. Immediately he set to work replying to the errors implicit in the new theology (FF-1-30 to begin with).

Our earlier tracts detail an extensive history of what took place during those years (and are now found in the *New Theology Tractbook*, *Doctrines Tractbook*, *Doctrinal History Tractbook*, and *Schools Tractbook*, to name some of them).

**But, briefly, here is an overview of some of the action in the first few years of the crisis. (Do not imagine that the crisis is over. Because, unbelievably so, the crisis was swept under the rug, it continues on steadily today.)**

The very liberal *Spectrum* magazine, which revels in attacks on the Spirit of Prophecy and conservatives while presenting favorable reports on homosexuality, adornment, women's liberation, and similar topics, had organized local chapters of the *Adventist Forum*, where liberal subjects could be presented in order to win still more to their view of things.

Such a forum was held on Sabbath afternoon at Pacific Union College on October 27, 1979. After a decade of inducting the South Pacific's future pastors in the new theology, at Avondale College, Ford came to Pacific Union College in the mid-1970s to carry on a similar work on the West Coast. He would walk around with a copy of *Desire of Ages* in his hand, praise Ellen White as a great writer, and speak encouragingly to the students. He was an Absalom, stealing the hearts of the youth while also winning the faculty and administration over to his side.

But the college was up in the hills and, so far the liberal inroads being made there were not widely known.

By the fall of 1979, Ford thought the time was ready to come out more openly. He felt he had won enough constituents to his side, that he dared to do

this. Besides, he was only preaching to Adventists in attendance from Howell Mountain and the Napa Valley below.

But a few miles down the hill, in sleepy Elmshaven at the foot of the St. Helena Sanitarium was A.L. White, Ellen White's grandson. He had recently retired and was busily working on the six-volume E.G. White *Biography*.

When he was given a tape of Ford's lecture, he contacted Takoma Park immediately and demanded action—and he was determined to get it. Desmond Ford must be discharged!

Arthur White was not the type of man to ignore. He was beloved by church members all over the world, and he did not usually become aroused. One thing led to another, and leadership had to do something to take the boiling pot off the fire.

Hearing the tape, the present writer prepared a lengthy rebuttal to Ford's presentation (see the present writer's *How Firm Our Foundation—Part 1-8 [FF-8-15]* for detail information on Ford's doctrinal presentation and why it was incorrect).

**With the Cottrell report still fairly fresh in their minds, our leaders had something to worry about. If they did not successfully defuse this situation, a major split could occur in our church as it had in the Missouri Synod denomination.**

In order to help the situation be resolved in favor of the liberal element in the church, at about that time Raymond Cottrell stepped forward with the bright idea of sending out a poll of our college and university Bible teachers throughout the world field, to see where they stood on a number of beliefs. He selected items which would yield the most worrisome results.

**Cottrell knew the tabulations would frighten leadership even more, and they would be far less likely to cast out the liberals; there were too many of them in our colleges and universities!**

When the Cottrell Poll was tabulated, the results were not pleasant to behold (see *The Cottrell Poll [WM-22]*). It was decided that a meeting would be held the following summer, immediately after the General Conference Session. By so doing, the delegates could be told that the problem would be solved a few weeks later. With so many delegates from overseas, they would be too conservative.

But what to do with Desmond Ford during the interim between October 1979 and July 1980? He had been placed on full-salary leave, and it was recommended that he be given an apartment in Takoma Park so he could prepare his defense at the forthcoming meeting. That sounded like a good idea. W. Duncan Eva, President Neal C. Wilson's chief advisor, highly recommended it. Yet this was like letting

Absalom walk around Jerusalem for an extended period visiting the people at the gate and winning their hearts.

Ford had friends to help him work on his defense paper, and he stuffed the back part of it full of skeptical papers written earlier by others (his so-called “thousand-page thesis” only had about 600 double-spaced pages, plus extra material written by others). This gave him plenty of free time to accept speaking appointments all over the East Coast, which he did. The infection was spreading still farther.

**Meanwhile, closet liberals were busily at work, figuring out how to new-model the official doctrinal statement, so their own jobs would be safe. It was suggested to unwary General Conference leaders (I do not believe top echelon of General Conference leadership was strongly infected with the contagion until about 1983-1985) that it would be a good thing to revise the official *Doctrinal Statement* of the church. This would give the delegates something to think about during the entire Session—and keep them from probing into other matters.**

Wilson liked the idea; and, since he was not a theological brain as Elder Branson (GC president from 1950 to 1954) had been or spiritually discerning like Elder Pierson (1966-1979), he naively agreed with the proposal—that the most competent people in the denomination for the revision task were the religion teachers at Andrews University. Talk about the fox and the hen house;—they had put the fox in the hen house!

**Gleefully men at Andrews, assisted by several men in other schools—all trained in outside universities—set to work at this pleasant task. The objective was to produce a flowery but fogged doctrinal statement. It would sound nice, say a lot, while actually saying little. The final wording must provide a large tent which both conservatives and liberals could be comfortable within.**

All the while, Desmond Ford was busily extending his contacts, winning new friends, and helping out in preparations for the forthcoming Session and the special investigative council which would follow. You could say it was a family operation by the name of “Ford, Andrews, & Co.” No, Des did not write the doctrinal revision; but you can know he was on the phone helping the good doctors at Andrews with their project. The letter they signed immediately after Glacier View witnessed to the fact.

When the Dallas Session convened on April 17, 1980, the delegates were confronted by pages of wordy nothings, which they were to briefly comment on and then approve. Many complaints were voiced (and dutifully written down in the *G.C. Bulletins*) about how the basic teachings of the church had been stripped out. But, when they complained, the suspect item was “sent back to committee for study,” touched up a little, and eventually sent back without much change. Day after day this went on—this point here, that point there, this one sent off, something earlier discussed (“What did we want done with that?”) had arrived back to be rushed through by the chair.

**Dazzled by the parades, diverted by sight-seeing, exhausted by the evening extravaganza presentations, fatigued when each new morning’s business session began, constantly interrupted by some new report from the nominating committee—or the introduction of some special visitor from the government or another denomination—the Session finally wound to a close. The document prepared by Andrews & Associates had been voted in, essentially intact.**

Within less than a month, Glacier View began. “*Glacier View*” was actually the name of the Colorado (now Rocky Mountain) Conference summer camp. Picturesquely located near Ward, Colorado, it was an ideal place for secluded meetings.

We often speak of “Glacier View,” but there were actually two Glacier Views. The first was a week-long session which discussed doctrinal issues. The objective was to see if the Cottrell Poll was correct in its tally, that a large number of our Bible teachers no longer believed several sample basic beliefs. Another objective was to try and hold everyone to a middle-of-the-road “consensus,” one which might not offend the church members, but which the university-trained teachers could live with.

Beware of that word “*consensus*”! It does not mean agreement or unity. It means partway acceptance of something we are stuck with; it means compromise by all. The best that leadership could hope for was a kind of consensus which would be least likely to cause rebellion among all sides, and church members as well.

Every religion teacher and editor in the denomination was present, plus many administrators. Years later, Morris Venden bragged that only he and one other man there believed in perfection of character.

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*Part Four*

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Knowing a number of excellent men who were present, I doubt that the picture was quite that extreme. (Venden, by the way, taught a concept of imputed “perfection of character” which does not require obedience to any commandment.)

**Following a stormy first week, everyone remained for a second session—the second “Glacier View.” Desmond Ford was brought in, and this session focused on him. At one point in that week, Wilson approached him privately and asked if he, Ford, could subscribe to the newly enacted *Statement of Belief*. Des happily replied that he could sign it with complete confidence and fully support it. Wilson’s stunned astonishment reveals how naive he had been throughout the preparation of that *Statement*. The new theology could be nicely tucked inside its paragraphs. The sweet nothings had done their job well. The important teachings had been omitted and only broad generalities remained.**

When the Friday meeting ended, it was up to Wilson to take action (they did not dare let those in attendance at Glacier View do the deciding). But what should he do?

**Sunday morning he would hand down his decision. By prearrangement, on the sacred hours of that Sabbath morning, a telegram, signed by nearly every faculty and administrative member of Pacific Union College, was sent to Wilson. Upon opening it on the holy hours, Wilson was shocked to learn that the entire college gave Ford their full backing! They told him he must not fire Desmond Ford.**

**At approximately the same time, a petition signed by a large number of faculty members of Andrews University and its Seminary—including, of course, the people who wrote the revised *Statement of Belief*—arrived, informing Wilson of their full support of Desmond Ford.**

To make matters more wobbly, Wilson’s closest adviser, W. Duncan Eva, a Britisher (and one of Ford’s closest friends at the time in the General Conference), strongly urged Wilson not to discharge

Ford—but send him to England, let him teach at Stanborough School in Watford and preach all over Europe. That would “get him out of the way,” Eva assured Wilson.

Although thoroughly shaken by these events, it was only due to a concern to do the right (and probably because he still felt the larger part of Adventism was opposed to Ford’s message)—that Wilson made the decision that he did. Ford must be fired.

When the news of this broke, there was anguish in our colleges. Throughout the world field, younger ministers who had been trained in those schools feared for their jobs. They no longer believed in historic Adventism, and the news might get out. Would they be next?

**But the Adventist denomination was different than the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. How was it different?**

**Do you know of any denominations in the 20th century which have cast out their liberals, when they were about to take over the church? Only one: the LCMS, at the time of their Concordia crisis. Do you know of any other which has successfully resisted the liberal invasion? Only one: The Southern Baptists.**

**Why is that? Because both are essentially congregationally based denominations. The members were in the saddle; and, before their churches became flooded with liberal preachers, they decided to do some housecleaning.**

But the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is different. With the sole exception of conference-level biennial constituency meetings, our church is controlled from the top down. The laymen have essentially no say about decision-making (on the average, only 7-10 percent of the delegates to GC Sessions are laymen).

**Now you can see why Raymond Cottrell’s 1977 report on the LCMS crisis was so crucial. It was written primarily to church administrators. Be careful, he warned, do not throw out the liberals—or you will split the church and lose many members.**

Two years after that report, when the crisis broke in 1979—followed by Glacier View in 1980—it was

church leaders who would have to decide how to handle the situation, not the laymen.

Would the leaders cast out the liberals or would they follow the cautious timeserving counsel of half-disguised liberals?

It is true that, by order of N.C. Wilson, Desmond Ford was discharged—although it required a day-long meeting of the Australasian (now South Pacific) Division Committee to do it. Everyone on that committee knew he was their best friend and they believed everything he believed. (Ford had only been at PUC on leave from Australia; his employing organization was still down under.)

**But little else was ever done. Only one or two of the most flagrant liberals at our colleges and our universities followed Ford out. The new theology continued to be taught in our schools, only more discreetly. It is true that the school administration had the authority to discharge teachers for false doctrine; but, since they did not want to stir up trouble and generally shared the same beliefs, they were not inclined to do so.**

**As for local new theology pastors, few were discharged unless they came forward and quit or became too openly rancorous, because they did not wish to pretend that they were conservative when they were not.**

In early 1981, the present writer was sent a copy of a letter, written by N.C. Wilson to an inquiring pastor. The young man had written him, asking whether he should quit since he no longer believed in our historic teachings. In reply, Neal assured him that he still had a place in our work and that, as long as he kept his doubts to himself, he would not be discharged. It was a remarkable letter, and one which Wilson considered important enough to permit local conference presidents to privately circulate to disheartened pastors who feared for their jobs.

**But that letter, along with one other event, summarily revealed what the outcome would be: Unlike the Missouri Lutherans, who tried to expel their liberals, we never did! A big fuss was made over Desmond Ford, and then our leaders backed down. They were Chamberlains who sought peace in their time. But they paid for it by dooming later Adventism to apostasy. Because of their neutrality in a great crisis, we today, over 15 years later, continue to have no peace.**

“If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.”—3 Testimonies, 281 [Read the entire chap-

ter; it is astonishing.]

There are those who consider it wrong for the present writer to take sides in the present crisis. They say, “We are neutral and will not say yea or nay about the growing apostasy. That is the Christian thing to do.” All such will find, too late, that they have made a terrible mistake.

The other event was one which I consider to be one of the momentous ever made in our denomination. It effectually sold us down the river to the liberals.

**Please now, think: Nearly every Protestant denomination has been taken over in the 19th- or 20th century by liberals. What was the means by which they were taken over? Pause and think a moment, before you rush on to the next paragraph.**

**It was the schools! It was the schools! The liberals took over the faculty and administration of the colleges and universities—and, from there they sent out pastors to turn the local churches upside down and remold them in the image of man (specifically Barth, Brunner, Tillich, and all the rest). “Give us the schools,” the liberals say, “and soon we’ll have you all!”**

The death knell of Adventism was rung in October 1983, at the Annual Council. You can read all about it in our tract “*Theological Freedom [WM-110]* (now in our *Schools Tractbook*).

**At that time, an action was taken—by majority vote of our leaders throughout the world field—that the teachers in our worldwide colleges and universities could be liberals and not be fired! As long as the administrators in their respective schools were not upset, they could teach anything they wanted!**

**Impossible but true! Rather than root out the deadly liberalism, our leaders made peace with it. They said, we will give you “academic freedom,” such as the worldly colleges and universities have. Just work quietly and do not stir up trouble.**

And that was it. Yes, it was true that the professors could still be fired for teaching heresy, but as long as they proceeded cautiously that would not happen. And, for practical purposes, it is not happening. **Nearly the entire Andrews University faculty, to name but one institution of “higher learning,” has been liberal for well over 15 years. Yet every ministerial student in North America is supposed to obtain a master’s degree there.**

In the next section, we are going to closely examine what really happened at Concordia (which is a picture markedly different than the one Cottrell presented). **Please notice throughout it, that the**

men running that Seminary were primarily fighting for time. They knew that, if given enough time, they would take over the denomination and convert (or drive out) the members.

But, by means of the October 1983 Annual Council action, the liberals in our schools were assured that they would have all the time they wanted to liberalize the teachings, members, and institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church! All they had to do was work carefully, slowly, and provoke no crises ahead of time.

Friends, you cannot let liberals remain in the training centers, if you really believe in the cause. You cannot let them continue to train your youth, unless you do not really care to avoid the inevitable destruction of the church.

— PART THREE —

## HISTORY OF THE ATTEMPTED LIBERAL TAKEOVER IN LCMS

“Despite repeated efforts we have not dealt honestly with our pastors and people. We have refused to state our changing theological position in open, honest, forthright, simple and clear words. Over and over again we said that nothing was changing when all the while we were aware of changes taking place.

“Either we should have informed our pastors and people that changes were taking place and, if possible, convinced them from Scripture that these changes were in full harmony with ‘Thus saith the Lord!’ or we should have stopped playing games as we gave assurance that no changes were taking place. With increasing measure the Synodical trumpet has been giving an uncertain sound . . .

“Quite generally our pastors and almost entirely our laity became more and more confused. Confusion led to uncertainty. Uncertainty led to polarization. Polarization destroyed credibility. Loss of credibility destroyed the possibility for meaningful discussion. The loss of meaningful discussion set the stage for a head-on collision.”—*Roland Wiederaenders, LCMS first vice-president, letter, dated June 21, 1973.*

In 1952, a year after the present writer began college, Herman Otten began attending Concordia Seminary, in St. Louis. When he discovered that non-Biblical teachings were being taught, he expressed his concern to the school administration. **But he was told that classroom teaching was private and he did not have a right to reveal it to LCMS officials.**

In 1957 Otten graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree and, six months later, began pastoral work at Trinity Lutheran Church in New Haven, Missouri (about 40 miles west of St. Louis, as the

crow flies). From that time forward, for years to come, there was a running battle between Otten and Trinity Church, on one side, and the Seminary and LCMS administration on the other.

**Just as the liberal crisis in our own denomination caused the present writer in early 1980 to begin preparing a flood of reports, so the crisis in LCMS caused Otten to begin publishing in 1961. Every means possible was used to silence him and either separate him from that denomination or from Trinity Church or destroy his local church along with him.**

**The denomination just did not want unauthorized publications telling what was going on. However, there were leaders in LCMS who quietly helped Otten, because they too wanted to see the apostasy curtailed.**

Eventually, probably largely through Otten’s ongoing reports, a majority of the entire LCMS was aroused to the point that, at a 1969 Synod convention, it demanded that the apostasy at the Seminary be stopped.

The three largest Lutheran bodies in the United States are the *American Lutheran Church*, the *Lutheran Church of America*, and the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (LCMS). Of the three, LCMS, the second largest, had remained the most conservative in its beliefs. Its headquarters are located in St. Louis, Missouri. The members tend to be of a German background and are anxious to be faithful to the teachings of Martin Luther, the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the two Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

Another name for LCMS is “*Missouri Synod*,” and members frequently refer to it as “the Synod.” “*Synod*” stands for the fact that the churches in the denomination were held together by annual synod conventions, which are much like our quadrennial General Conference Sessions. In the present report, the word “*synod*” or “*Synod*,” alone, will refer to the denomination and its leadership while “*synod convention*” (their own phrase) stands for the annual meeting.

It should be noted here that, at the present time, LCMS has several colleges which are called “*Concordia*,” but it has only one Concordia Seminary (although it also has a second, smaller, Seminary at Springfield, Illinois). **Throughout this entire report, “*Concordia*” and “*Seminary*” refer only to the Concordia Seminary, located at 801 De Mun Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.**

Do not imagine that the liberals were only located at the Seminary; there were pockets of them in several large-city churches throughout the na-

tion. But the crisis centered at Concordia; all realized that the decisions made there would decide the stance to be taken toward liberals throughout the church.

In 1932, LCMS adopted a *Brief Statement* of its doctrinal position. Fifteen years later, in 1947, at the centennial of the denomination, the *Brief Statement* was approved as the official proceedings of the convention.

Article 1 of that *Brief Statement* is about the veracity of the Bible, and includes these words:

“We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called ‘theological deduction,’ but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures . . . Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters.”

This is a great truth that conservatives in our own ranks believe, and it formed the basis of LCMS doctrines as well.

**At this point, it is well to reply to the argument of liberals among us that the Bible is “err-ing.” Liberals everywhere, including within our own denomination, say that the God’s Word cannot be trusted; it has errors. They say this in order that their own words and opinions may be placed in the forefront to “interpret and correct it” for us. Beware of those who talk that way. Although it is true that flaws may have occurred in translation (1SM 16), the Word of God itself is unerring (4T 312, 441; 5T 389; AA 506; CT 449-450, etc.).**

**Similar accusations are made against the Spirit of Prophecy, for the same reason. Men want the attention of the people turned away from God’s Word and drawn to themselves as the spiritual authority.**

But, with the passing of the years, liberals gradually infiltrated LCMS colleges and its Seminary. We have noted how a young student, Herman Otten, discovered that fact as early as the 1950s.

**Why did they penetrate the schools of such a conservative church? Simple enough; the schools hired men who had obtained their doctorates in outside universities.**

**Why was it so perilous to hire such men? Because such men teach deadly heresies and, planted in LCMS schools, they immediately set**

**to work to convert the youth of the church to their views! The young pastors they would send out into the field would, in turn, transform the local congregations into worldly meetinghouses.**

“History tells us that in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the ’20s the Fundamentalists lost because the Modernists gained control of the ecclesiastical machinery as well as the theological seminaries. It was a decisive combination.”—*Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible, p. 85.*

“If history has any lesson to teach, it is that defection from inerrancy [of Scripture] generally takes place in the educational institutions and then spreads from there. In the case of the Missouri Lutherans it appears to have resulted from post-graduate studies pursued by men trained in Missouri schools who then secured doctorates in secular or liberal institutions. They are enamored of the historical-critical method, and numbers of them left their old moorings with respect to biblical infallibility. More frequently than not, men with this kind of training did not go into the parish ministry, but headed for institutions where the possibility existed to disseminate this newfound learning among younger minds that could easily be influenced away from historic Missouri viewpoints. In addition, this kind of mind enjoyed teaching these new and attractive but irregular doctrines through the literature of the denomination. So they became editors and writers for church school materials.”—*Op. cit., 83.*

**At the Detroit Synod convention of 1965, the delegates once again declared their “unwavering loyalty to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.” But men were at work to undo their best intentions. They had been at work for years.**

“The St. Louis Seminary did not become liberal overnight. It was planning a manipulation that produced the result. In a graduate class at the school, the professor told his students about the historical background of the effort to change the Missouri Synod [the entire denomination]. This professor was one who later left Concordia when the exodus occurred . . . In a July 1968 class he told the students:

“ ‘The ‘progressive’ movement got started in a smoke-filled pastor’s office in New York City in 1930, when two LCMS pastors decided, after Synod had turned down the Chicago Thesis and had authorized the drafting of the Brief Statement, that they would start a movement to ‘change Synod.’ ”—*Harold Lindsell, The Bible in Balance, p. 255.*

Behnken was elected president of the Synod in

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

*– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

*Part Five*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

1935, and held that office until 1962. **During that time liberals were protected and slowly grew in strength in the denomination. It is believed that trusting naivete on the part of Behnken may have been largely to blame.**

Alfred O. Fuerbringer was elected president of the seminary in 1953 and remained in control until 1969. Fuerbringer intensified the inroads of liberalism at the Seminary. Certain teachers were hired, others were not.

Between 1964 and 1969, major changes occurred at Concordia Seminary. The faculty became radically different.

Five years after his retirement from the presidency, Behnken realized his great mistake in trusting the liberals. In 1967, he wrote a letter to the members of the LCMS Council of Presidents, asking them to check on what was going on at the Seminary.

“Some present-day theologians hold that God’s account of creation is not to be taken literally, factually or historically, but must be understood as a legend, a parable, a symbol, a myth, etc. . . . Some other accounts in Scripture, even Books of Scripture, have been subjected to similar treatment.

“Modern discoveries, advanced learning in the natural sciences, the ‘refinement’ of the term ‘evolution’ to ‘theistic evolution,’ etc. are given as reasons for this new approach to the accounts in God’s holy Word.

“Then there are those who hold that where the traditional and the new interpretations of Scripture are in conflict with each other we must grant the new interpretations equal rights, regard them as optional, mere alternatives, and hence permissible.”—*John W. Behnken, Letter dated March 6, 1967, to Council of Presidents.*

The letter was passed on to the administration of Concordia, but no reply was ever given. This was to become a standard pattern.

**Why should we concern ourselves about a crisis in another denomination? Because the problems, the subterfuges, the techniques, and the deceptions to be found there—exist in our own.**

**The Concordia crisis is a window through**

**which we can better view our own situation—and what might have been if our leaders had been faithful to cast the liberals out of our colleges and universities.**

“Today even Lutheran churches are in full flight from dogma, that is, from the very idea of God-given truth and doctrine. The time was when those wishing to escape from the dogma of the Augsburg Confession restricted it to ‘fundamental’ (e.g., the General Synod) or to some central Gospel-core, which would then be ‘enough’ for true unity. This jubilee year of the Formula of Concord (1577) can note a decided advance on this technique. A new book from the LCA’s Gettysburg Seminary takes up the Augsburg Confession’s distinction between the Gospel (in which there must be unity) and ceremonies (in which there is freedom), and then classifies dogma or doctrine under ‘ceremonies,’ which are ‘the responsibility of free human creativity!’”—*Kurt E. Marquart, Anatomy of an Explosion: A Theological Analysis of the Missouri Synod Conflict, p. 79.*

**Throughout the Protestant churches today, there is an antipathy to doctrine and definite beliefs and standards. If it is admitted that they are important, or even exist, then men are required to surrender to, and obey, them.**

At the 1973 Bangkok meeting of the World Council of Churches, M.M. Thomas, the Central Committee Chairman, made this statement:

“We are living in a time when we are deeply conscious of pluralism in the world—pluralism of human situations and needs . . . As a historian of religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, has recently said on the grounds also of the loss of authority of the established churches today, ‘the old ideal of a unified or systematic Christian truth has gone . . . leaving a system of open variety, of optional alternatives.’”—*M.M. Thomas, 1973 Bangkok World Council of Churches meeting, Christianity Today, March 30, 1973.*

**The hue and cry is that all we need is love for God and one another—and that doctrine (which is actually obedience to God’s Word) matters not.**

“In philosophy a small error in the beginning leads to a very large error at the end. So in theology a small error overturns the whole doctrine. Therefore doctrine and life must be rigorously

distinguished from each other. Doctrine is not ours but God's, Whose called servants we merely are. Therefore we may not yield or change even one tittle of it . . . Accursed be that love which is preserved to the detriment of the doctrine of faith, before which all must yield love—apostle, angel from heaven, etc. . . If they believed that it is God's Word, they would not play with it like this, but hold it in the highest honour, and accord it faith without any disputation or doubting . . . For doctrine is our sole light, which enlightens and leads us and shows us the way to heaven. If it becomes wobbly in one part, it must necessarily become wobbly altogether. When that happens, love cannot help us.”—*Martin Luther, Longer Galatians Commentary, pp. 644-649.*

According to E. Clifford Nelson, the very liberal American Lutheran Church tried, from 1959 to 1968, to get the conservative Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to unite with it (*E.C. Nelson, Lutheranism in North America: 1914-1970, p. 535*).

**Oliver R. Harms, president of LCMS after Behnken retired, tried hard to bring about this union. Working closely with him was Alfred Fuerbringer, head of Concordia Seminary and another strong liberal.**

“The St. Louis Seminary had done what it could to support Harms, even sending him a formal letter of ‘loyalty’ and ‘thanks’ for his ‘leadership in the trying situations besetting the Church and especially in the progress toward fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.’ But seeing the handwriting on the wall, the Seminary administration moved swiftly, already in 1968, to insure itself against possible reversals at Denver.”—*Watershed at the Rivergate, p. 87.*

**The men at the Seminary had reason to be worried. News about what they were teaching was trickling out. Although they kept trumpeting that they were teaching the “full gospel” and “the Confessions,” and “believe fully in the Bible,” etc., those instructors were actually teaching something far different.**

For example, in a 1967 essay, Dr. Everett Kalin stated:

“For we are seeing with increasing clarity today that the accounts about Jesus’ words and activities as they are contained in the four gospels in the New Testament are in themselves the products of long development . . . In the process of their oral use in the community prior to the composition of the gospels, these materials were modified, reinterpreted, and rephrased many times. In other words, a saying of Jesus as it is given in one of the gospels in the New Testament is the product of the church’s tradition up to that time.”—*E. Kalin, essay delivered November 13, 1967, at Webster College.*

The following year, another Seminary teacher

changed “inspiration” and “inerrancy” to something else:

“The ‘scholastics’ [by which he meant the Missouri Synod conservatives] have taken the phrase ‘verbal inspiration’ and ‘inerrancy’ as their shibboleths. [In contrast we liberals,] The ‘confessional’ or ‘evangelical’ group points out that these words should not be regarded as necessary.”—*Robert Smith, Lutheran Forum, October, 1968.*

A little earlier, another Seminary teacher let the cat out of the bag that J,E,D,P theories about Mosaic books were being taught there (*Ralph Klein, Concordia Theological Monthly, May 1968*).

Course descriptions in the Seminary catalogs also revealed the gradual changeover. Here is how one course of instruction changed within six years:

“EN-545. **The First Epistle of Peter.**—This course consists of a study of 1 Peter on the basis of the original text, with a special view to its doctrinal content; specifically, the church, baptism, the descent into hell, and Eschatology.”—*Concordia Seminary General Catalog, 1964.*

“EN-304. **1 Peter.** Detailed literary-philological study of 1 Peter, with emphasis on the probable sources and its contribution to the Christian community’s self-understanding.”—*Concordia Seminary General Catalog, 1970.*

The doctrines was gone and “sources” and “self-understanding” by the “community” had taken their place.

**In 1966, Dr. Behnken wrote Fuerbringer, president of the Seminary, asking that 28 questions be answered about the historicity of persons and events in the Old Testament to which he wanted answers. As usual, no reply was sent to him.**

Behnken wrote again, pleading for even a short statement of what they believed.

Fuerbringer replied with a nebulous comment about the difficulties of the matter.

Behnken wrote again and Fuerbringer replied: “By and large, neither the sacred Scriptures nor the Lutheran symbolical books speak directly enough to some of the issues that your letter raises to enable our faculty to make the kind of statement that you desire without a great deal of careful reflection.” **They did not dare tell whether they believed that Genesis 1-2 were true, whether Daniel had ever existed, whether Jesus said what is in the Gospels, and on and on!**

The next year, Behnken made his correspondence public, sending copies of the letter to high officials throughout the denomination.

**Fuerbringer had done an excellent job covering for the liberals at the Seminary, but he was supposed to retire at the forthcoming Synod’s**

**Denver convention,—and there was great danger the delegates might replace him with a conservative!**

“Dr. Repp one day announced to the faculty that we had better get a new president before the term of President Fuerbringer comes to an end. He suggested that the election of a new president ought to take place before the Denver Convention lest we get a man out of step with what was going on. I think you will understand how extraordinary such a suggestion is in the light of the fact that new seminary presidents are not, as a rule, elected before the term of the previous one ends. I think it demonstrates a determination to prevent any possible change in what was going on at the seminary.”—*Dr. M. Scharlemann, quoted in Tom Baker, Watershed at the Rivergate, 62.*

**On May 19, 1969, less than two months before the Synod’s Denver convention, an event took place which would profoundly affect both the Seminary and the entire denomination. Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, president of Concordia Seminary since 1953, suddenly retired before he was supposed to. It was well-known that the liberal LCMS president’s (Oliver Harms) term of office would expire at the forthcoming meeting. Because of Herman Otten’s independent press reports, the membership had been aroused and it was very likely that conservatives would be elected to both the denominational and Seminary presidencies.**

**Upon Fuerbringer’s announcement, immediately Harms and three other electors voted in Dr. John Tietjen as Concordia’s sixth president.** This handpicked nomination occurred, even though Tietjen had received only a few congregational nominations, compared with over sixty for Dr. Scharlemann and over a hundred for Dr. R. Bohlmann (the man who later replaced Tietjen).

**John H. Tietjen was to become the great champion of liberalism in the Missouri Synod. He had taken his graduate work at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, a well-known bastion of extreme liberalism. At the time of his election to the presidency of Concordia Seminary, he was executive secretary of the Department of Public Relations of the Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA). This was an ecumenical organization which linked the Lutheran denominations with the National Council of Churches and, through it, to the World Council of Churches.**

Apparently the religion editor of the *Minneapolis Star* and a member of the liberal American Lutheran Church knew something; for, soon after Tietjen was elected, the editor wrote this in a publication:

“Besides the synod presidency, another key synod office was filled in 1969—the presidency of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where Dr. A. O. Fuerbringer retired. Named to succeed him was Dr. John H. Tietjen, former director of public relations for the Lutheran Council in the USA, who was expected to exercise strong leadership in the direction of the great ecumenical involvement for the Missouri Synod, including LWF [Lutheran World Federation] membership.”—*Willmar Thorkelson, Lutherans in the USA, p. 26.*

How he knew that, when most people in LCMS did not, is intriguing.

This was written on the dust jacket of his earlier 1966 book, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity?*

“In 1959 he received his Th.D. from Union Theological Seminary, and began his editorship of the *American Lutheran*—first as a managing editor from 1962 to 1966 . . . In September 1966 he became executive secretary, Division of Public Relations of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America (LCUSA).”

The *American Lutheran* was an extremely strong pro-ecumenical organization. As for LCMS, it was decidedly against ecumenism. Electing Tietjen was an effrontery to the whole church.

**Getting liberals into office at the forthcoming Denver convocation was considered the top priority of the modernists in the denomination.** An in-house Concordia Seminary paper in mid-1968 included this comment:

“Fuerbringer described the importance of good nominations for elections at the Denver convention.”—*Faculty Journal, May 28, 1968.*

But that is not how it worked out. **The 1969 synodical convention in Denver marked a turning point in the denomination. Herman Otten had done his work well. For over a decade he had been sending out papers, warning about the liberalism. A majority of the membership cared deeply about their denomination—deeply enough to want to save it** (unlike a majority of members in our denomination, who, when they read the warnings, prefer to go back to sleep and their television sets).

**At that convention, Harms urged the members to approve a resolution to unite LCMS more closely with the liberal American Lutheran Church. He told them that the faculty of Concordia Seminary heartily recommended it.**

**Instead, the synod passed resolutions strengthening their position on adhering to Scripture and dislodging leaders who would not do so.**

**Then they voted in Dr. Jacob A.O. Preus as president of the denomination, and directed him**

**in no uncertain words to eliminate the liberals at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.**

Tietjen attempted to pacify the synod, by issuing statements that there were no doctrinal differences between the teachings at Concordia and those in the official beliefs of the church. But those statements were not true.

“Neither the faculty nor I know of any basic theological differences within the faculty involving interpretation of Scripture or the meaning of confessional subscription.”—*John Tietjen, Lutheran Witness Reporter, November 24, 1969.*

**Do not expect truth from confirmed liberals! They are not children of God. They are working to destroy confidence in the Word of God, not build it up. —And, in our own ranks and even in the independent ministries, traveling preachers, and newsletters will also be found such liberals! They come to you with messages that the Spirit of Prophecy writings are incorrect, were written by someone else, are not to be trusted, etc. Beware of such men; ask them to leave your homes and local congregation. If listened to, they will bring grief to both you and your loved ones.**

**If you have already accepted some of their ideas, plead with God to cleanse them from your mind—and restore to you perfect trust in all the Word of God, both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy—all of it!**

Throughout these years, there were a few teachers at the Concordia Seminary who were faithful to the Bible and the historic beliefs of LCMS. These were referred to as the “*conservative minority*.”

A few months after the Denver convention, a group of liberal church workers in the St. Louis area issued a document, entitled “*A Call to Openness and Trust*.” Three faculty members at the Seminary were signers. This was one of the few times in which a statement was issued by the liberal camp in which they admitted that they had different views than the conservatives. Apparently, they did it in the hope that it would arouse liberals throughout the denomination to come to their aid.

“The Gospel that is Christ is not a doctrine which equates Gospel with Bible—is the basis for unity of the family of God. We specifically hold that differences concerning: (1) the manner of the creation of the universe by God, (2) the authorship and literary form of any books of the Bible, (3) the definition of the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, (4) the moral obligation of Christians in individual

or corporate action, (5) the question of factual error in the Bible, and (6) the role and authority of clergy in the church are not to be the basis for inclusion or exclusion of people among the true disciples of Jesus Christ or membership in the Missouri Synod.”—“*A Call to Openness and Trust*,” *January 1970.*

Notice that the above statement said that the “*Gospel*” is something separate from the Bible. The liberal position was that the Bible was judged by their “*Gospel*,” whatever that was. Whenever they were cornered, the liberals in LCMS declared they were standing by the “*Gospel*.” This was done in order to confuse issues and avoid admitting that they no longer believed in the Bible.

The liberals in our own denomination will not accept and obey the plain teachings of the Bible either.

**Why are liberals across denominational barriers so much alike in their positions and defenses? Probably because they maintain extensive contacts with one another. Keep in mind that they schooled together at outside universities.** Throughout the Concordia crisis, the liberals there were counseling with fellow liberals in the universities and other denominations.

As part of the ongoing smoke screen that, now that he was Seminary president, Tietjen would regularly throw up, he amplified on “*A Call to Openness and Trust*” with an article in the church paper, *Brother to Brother*. It consisted of a bold attack. **Tietjen declared that the conservatives were trying to change the doctrines and methods of governance in the church while the Seminary was faithful to both.** He concluded with these remarkable words:

“Make no mistake about this, brothers, what is at stake is not only inerrancy by the Gospel of Jesus Christ itself, the authority of Holy Scripture, the ‘*quia*’ subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, and perhaps the very continued existence of Lutheranism as a confessional movement in a Christian world.”—*John Tietjen, Brother to Brother, February 11, 1970.*

Reading the above, one might think he was a true conservative, but the truth was far different.

Analyzing it, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) published a statement in reply, which included this:

“The document downgrades the importance of true Christian doctrine not only by its failure to distinguish between true and false doctrine, but es-

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*Part Six*

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pecially by treating articles of faith as open questions.”—CTCR, *Analysis of “Call to Openness and Trust,”* April 1970.

**Until 1969, at the Denver convention the CTCR had been a liberal pawn. But a change of personnel in the highest posts of leadership had returned it to the conservative camp. We need that in our denomination as well.**

Years later, a document was found in the Seminary files which dated back to this same time.

**On February 18, 1970, Tietjen attended a meeting of the Departments of Systematic and Exegetical Theology at the Seminary, at which time a three-page document was produced. It listed contrasting views of twelve points on “the doctrine of Scripture,” clearly showing that the Seminary was teaching a wide variety of errors.**

**Here were the twelve points: inspiration, uniqueness, authority, source and norm, unity, Christ and Bible, inerrancy and infallibility, literary form and truth, on doing Biblical theology, New Testament and Old Testament prophecy, New Testament and Old Testament interpretation, and Jesus and adapting Christ’s words.**

It was for such reasons that, reviewing the past in 1976, the Synod’s Board for Higher Education declared that there had been

“a conscious effort over the year to change the doctrine of the LCMS by using the Synod’s own Schools to bring about change.”—SBHE, *Missouri in Perspective*, December 8, 1976.

Yes, contrary to what Raymond Cottrell would later say, **there had been a liberal drive to change the doctrines of the LCMS denomination—and the groundwork for it had been in progress for years.**

Read what Tietjen’s own ALC journal, the very liberal *American Lutheran*, had published in 1964:

“In recent years Concordia Seminary must be given credit for its share in the change that has been going on in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. There are some who do not like to hear it, but the Missouri Synod has changed and is changing—in many ways—theologically too. The St. Louis

seminary has helped produce the change. About the middle of the forties the Seminary itself experienced a change. With the passing of an older generation of professors younger men arrived on the scene, men who had studied in institutions outside of the Missouri Synod, men who had escaped from the cultural isolation . . . Quietly and unobtrusively the seminary faculty prepared the ministry of the future. Slowly the synod began to change . . .

“Hounded by heresy hunters, its faculty members have had to cross every orthodox *t* and dot every doctrinal *i* in all of their public utterances . . .

“The time had come for Concordia Seminary to reclaim its role as teacher of the Missouri Synod. In ever so many areas the synod needs effective theological leadership. The faculty members of the Seminary ought to speak out boldly on the questions of Biblical interpretation, ecumenical involvement, confrontation with the problems of a scientific age, the relation of the Christian faith to social issues, and reforms needed in the Lutheran Church today. There are signs that members of the faculty are prepared to speak out. The responsible synodical officials ought to stand ready to support the Seminary in its exercise of leadership. And the church had better listen. The church is always in need of prophets. It may not always like what they say, but woe to the church when it fails to pay heed.”—*American Lutheran*, December 1964.

In a letter dated April 20, 1970, J.A.O. Preus, president of LCMS, announced to the Concordia Seminary Board of Control that he was appointing a *Fact Finding Committee* to investigate the beliefs of the faculty at the Seminary.

**In a news release, through the *Lutheran Witness Reporter*, Tietjen made the remarkable statement that this was the first time he had been told of such “basic theological differences” within the faculty and that “neither the faculty nor ‘I’ know of any basic theological differences within the faculty involving interpretation of Scripture or the meaning of confessional subscription.”**

Faculty interviews were to begin on December 11, 1970, and continue through March 6, 1971. Each professor was to be interviewed for about two hours. A tape was made and copies were distributed to the school and certain church officials.

Tietjen was present at each interview.

Writing in the January 1971 Seminary newsletter and reprinted in the pro-liberal *Lutheran Witness Reporter* of January 17, Tietjen's article was entitled, "Faculty Interviews Continue 'Under Protest.'" Declaring that "such a procedure is division-making and sets faculty member against faculty member," Tietjen ignored the fact that each faculty member was only asked about his beliefs, not those of anyone else's. Such words as "unscriptural," "unethical," "divisive," "disruptive," and "detrimental" were used. Tietjen made it all out to be a terrible witch-hunt against the innocent.

**Seriously now, if your beliefs were fully in harmony with fundamental beliefs—as Tietjen said the faculty's were—would you mind being interviewed, so your doctrinal purity could be settled once and for all?**

At this juncture, the five minority professors at the Seminary (all of whom were solidly conservative) spoke up. In a February letter, they declared that the majority at the Seminary were maligning the denominational president and that, yes indeed, errors were being taught at that institution. They knew exactly what was going on there.

"The faculty majority has wronged the President of Synod. It has done this by distorting the facts and by its slurs against him and his manner of conducting the investigation . . . We believe that Luther's Large Catechism is correct when it advises that public sin must be publicly rebuked."—*Faculty minority, letter dated February 3, 1971.*

(Those five minority faculty members were Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, Dr. Richard Klann, Dr. Robert Preus, Dr. Martin Scharlemann, and Dr. Lorenz Wunderlich. [When, in this report, we speak of "Preus," we refer to President J.A.O. Preus, not to Robert Preus, the Seminary minority faculty member.]

**At the Milwaukee convention, held in July 1971, delegates from liberal local LCMS churches stirred up debate over the legal right of Preus to appoint that Fact Finding Committee, but the protests were voted down.**

On March 3, 1972, Preus issued *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, to help identify correct beliefs. Although not actually used, it still aroused a storm of verbal and written protest by Seminary personnel.

Keep in mind that all this time, the students at the Seminary were receiving an ongoing barrage of liberal propaganda in their classes and chapel periods.

On April 4, the faculty majority issued a *Response*, in which they blasted the *Statement* as an

unchristian, binding, dogma, and theologically inadequate, etc.

**Just because Preus had been elected in 1969 "to clean up the Seminary," did not mean that all the liberals had been eliminated from positions of leadership.**

**On June 22, 1972, the Board of Control which the Seminary was directly answerable to, issued a *Progress Report*, in which it stated that it found the faculty to be entirely correct doctrinally!**

**This was strange, since that report included both the majority and the minority; they are equally "without false doctrine,"—yet the two groups taught radically different beliefs, standards, and practices.**

However, two members of the Board, Dr. E.C. Weber and Mr. Walter Dissen, vigorously contested the validity of the Board's evaluation of the Seminary faculty.

"These are more than mere theological details. They involve doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, they involve the Gospel itself as well as confessional subscription. Consider this in light of the well-publicized position of the faculty that it does not feel bound by doctrinal statements of Synod and it is understandable why the Synod's constituency is disturbed.

"In view of all of this we cannot report in good conscience that there is not false doctrine . . . If we do not openly report this to the church we also become a party to approval of these aberrations."—*Seminary Board of Control, Minority Report, June 22, 1972.*

**In response, Tietjen published his own report, *Fact Finding or Fault Finding*, in which he vigorously attacked the report of the Fact Finding Committee, declared it based its work on unLutheran, anti-Christian, theories which "threaten our Synod with grave danger." He threatened that, if the attacks on Seminary personnel did not stop, the school would lose its accreditation with the accrediting agency (which happened to be the American Association of Theological Schools, a strongly pro-liberal organization). —How did he know that might happen?**

If you did not know it already, liberals and atheists control all the educational accrediting agencies in America.

As an aside here, the reader should know that **the liberals work closely together, not only with others in the denomination, but with liberals outside. They are in harmony only when opposing conservative, Bible-believing, people. Whenever the liberals in a college are threatened, the accreditation agency sends an investigative team**

**to the campus, possibly place the school on probation, and warn them to change their ways—or else. This has happened in our own denomination.**

Tietjen was already making contacts, as early as 1972, to make sure it would happen ere long to Concordia Seminary.

In order to increase the pressure on the church to stop trying to clean the liberals out of Concordia, an article was planted in the *New York Times*:

“Faced with the loss of accreditation, the Concordia Seminary faculty and administration acknowledged this week that the school’s future as a viable academic institution depended on the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod rejecting its conservative leader, the Rev. Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus, or in revising church laws to check his power . . . Many faculty members say privately that the ideal solution for the seminary is defeat of Dr. Preus.”—*Dispatch from St. Louis, New York Times, June 11, 1972.*

**It is an intriguing fact that, while the report of the Fact Finding Committee stated there were doctrinal differences at Concordia, the Board of Control ruled that there were absolutely none,—and then Tietjen, in his *Fact Finding or Fault Finding*, declared there were serious doctrinal differences! That was a slip of the pen, but he said it.**

“There are, indeed, genuine doctrinal issues that must be confronted and resolved . . . We have grave misgivings about the doctrinal position of our adversaries, and we have some things to say to them about their doctrinal soundness.”—*John Tietjen, Fact Finding or Fault Finding, September 8, 1972.*

**On January 15, 1973, the Board of Control issued a second report, commending all faculty members “on the basis of the Fact Finding Committee report.” Although the Board had interviewed only 29 of 44 teachers, it voted to “commend” them all as having no “false doctrine.”**

**A Board of Control minority report vigorously protested the correctness of the majority report.**

Three years later, the president of the Missouri District and a minority member of that Board of Control, said this:

“The Board of Control before New Orleans [convention, at which time board membership was changed] was prejudiced in behalf of the Seminary [pro-Tietjen]. The majority on the Board of Control at that time simply voted in favor of those professors because they were anti-Preus.

“I can still remember where one individual [professor] had been interviewed. After he stepped out of the room, one member of the Board of Control said, ‘I wouldn’t want that man to teach my confirmation class.’ And yet when the time came to vote

whether he should be commended, this man voted to commend that professor. So you have a majority bloc prior to the New Orleans convention which voted together.

“As a result no professor was found guilty of any false doctrine. It was my opinion at the time that there were some professors who were in need of correcting. However, because the Board of Control by majority vote said that all should be commended, the matter of false doctrine was dropped.”—*Dr. Herman C. Scherer, speaking at Zion Lutheran Church, Ferbuson, Missouri, October 19, 1979.*

**The Board of Control had permitted Tietjen to write the report of the findings during the doctrinal faculty interviews!**

Angered by the ongoing snow job, Preus wrote:

“No tape recordings were made or stenographic records . . . The Board appointed Dr. Tietjen to write the resumes in collaboration with the interviewed professors (!) . . . The church also deserves to know that the Report of the Board of Control did not make any reference to any criterion as to what would constitute fidelity to the Holy Scriptures . . .

“It is the conviction of your president that we are not merely talking about minor theological differences, but that we are talking about matters that involve false doctrine. To erode the authority of God’s Word is false doctrine.”—*J.A.O. Preus, letter published in Brother to Brother, April 27, 1973.*

**We wish we had a J.A.O. Preus in our church to clean up our schools!**

**In addition, two minority board members revealed in a letter to Preus that four of the board members had earlier been awarded honorary degrees by Tietjen’s Seminary. How is that for winning the board to your side?**

For his part, Tietjen was keeping busy at the Seminary, offering advanced classes, taught by liberals, to lower-class students—so they would elect not to take courses offered by the conservative minority.

**The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has a remarkably nice way of operating, Once each year delegates from each local church meet together in a Synod convention; the location varies from year to year. Each local congregation submits suggested resolutions, which are then worked over by a number of floor committees (missions, higher education, evangelism, etc.). The resolutions are then presented to the entire convention, which then discusses and votes on them individually. —What an effective, democratic, way to do things!**

**In preparation for the July New Orleans synod convention, Dr. Preus appointed a special com-**

mittee (the “Committee Three”) to obtain as much information as possible, so the convention could have all the facts and make wise decisions.

This committee examined all the controversial documents and interviewed various persons. **By this time, the American Association of Theological Schools had already placed Concordia Seminary on probation, exactly what Tietjen threatened might happen. An AATS Visiting Team had suddenly arrived and gone into “consultation” with Dr. Tietjen.**

A side note should be made here. **In order to worsen the accreditation probation rating, Tietjen had refused to appeal it, which as president of the institution he was supposed to do.** When, in July 1972, he was asked by Preus for a reason for his inaction, Tietjen airily replied that the probation status had been justly imposed.

“The Seminary has not appealed because it believes the criticism of infringement on the rights and responsibilities of the Board of Control is a valid one. There is little reason to appeal when the facts support the reason cited for probation.”—*John Tietjen, letter dated October 3, 1972, to Special Task Force.*

**Tietjen was willing to destroy the school, if it would serve his purposes.**

After examining the situation carefully, the Task Force made this report:

“The recommendations of the Special AATS Visiting Committee and the actions of the Commission on Accrediting in placing Concordia Seminary on probation were based on a lack of information and on misinformation for which President John Tietjen must assume major if not exclusive responsibility; the Board of control of Concordia Seminary has failed in its responsibility to properly protect the accreditation of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.”—*Special Task Force Report to Committee of Three.*

**The Board of Control also had the right to appeal the probation; but, according to a report by two minority members, it also refused to carry out its proper duties.**

These matters were brought to the attention of the delegates to the New Orleans convention when it met in July.

Wide-ranging interviews were conducted by the Committee of Three, in preparation for the convention. Transcripts of the interviews were made available to church leaders and convention delegates.

**Here is but one brief example of what was on**

**those interview transcripts. It will afford you an example of the kind of runaround Tietjen could provide:**

*“Concerning the interpretation of historical events in the Scriptures, the Committee asked:*

*“Do you believe that the [teachers’] way of subscribing to the Confessions is that they allow themselves to interpret them according to their own understanding of the Scriptures?”*

*Dr. Tietjen:* It has been our position as a church that our confessional subscription is to the doctrinal content of the Confessions, not to their historical judgment, their world views, their particular exegetical interpretations, or their scientific understanding or any thing like that.

*Committee:* I would suppose that most people in the Missouri Synod would find a grave source of inconsistency in that kind of use of Genesis, chapter 3, in view of what is in the Formula and Smalcald Articles, in identifying Adam and Eve distinctly in the fall as an historical event. Would you consider this a historical judgment?

*Dr. Tietjen:* The members of our faculty affirm the factuality of the fall and the creation, and that is indeed the doctrine that is being taught in Lutheran confessions.

*Committee:* But that doesn’t quite answer the question of the factuality and historicity of Adam and Eve and of that fall event, does it?

*Dr. Tietjen:* That is a question of interpretation that we have to ask, isn’t it?

*Committee:* The question which is not the answer . . .

*Dr. Tietjen:* The question that has to be asked is, What is that literature that is affirming the fact of the fall? Is it intended to be a literal, historical narrative or is it another kind of narrative?”—*Sample interview, from Final Report of the Committee of Three.*

**Later in this report, we will discover that the liberals at Concordia Seminary, by their own statements, did not believe Adam and Eve ever existed nor had a fall. One teacher said that God selected two of the half-apes nearby as Adam and Eve.**

**Instead of speaking directly to the point, liberals—whether they are attacking Bible doctrines or the Spirit of Prophecy,—will lead you around in circles.**

**Historians will find that it was the 1969 and 1973 Synod conventions which resulted in returning the denomination to conservative control. That was because laymen controlled the**

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

*– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

*Part Seven*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

**conventions, and there were still enough of them to demand a return to Biblical doctrines.**

**The fiftieth regular convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod met in New Orleans, Louisiana, on July 6-13, 1973.** The doctrinal issues and problems at the Seminary understandably dominated the meetings.

In his report to the first session, Preus, synod president, made these remarks:

“I want you to understand the gravity of the situation, affecting as it does not only all that you do in this convention but virtually all that we will do as a church body in years to come . . .

“I have said it elsewhere, and I say it to you now, that Synod stands at a doctrinal crossroads at this point in its history. For it cannot continue to profess one position on Holy Scripture while tolerating attacks on that position from those who have another position.”—*J.A.O. Preus, Report to the New Orleans Convention.*

**After reelecting Preus as president by a very large margin, the convention undertook the work of deciding whether to approve the document, *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, earlier prepared by Preus.** In doing so, they were aware that thousands of laymen and workers appreciated it, and that the Seminary faculty and their supporters thought it intolerable.

**Opponents of the resolution focused their attack on its constitutionality or on possible misuse. Yet all it consisted of was a simple statement of historic LCMS beliefs.**

The convention voted 652-455 to approve the Statement in its entirety as “Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions . . . and which expresses the Synod’s position on current doctrinal issues” (*Resolution 3-01, 1973 Convention Proceedings*).

Do you remember how well the liberals orchestrated a chorus of protests to Elder Neal C. Wilson at the time he had to decide whether or not to discharge Desmond Ford? Well, the liberals were busily orchestrating throughout this Concordia crisis.

**As soon as Resolution 3-01 was enacted, hun-**

**dreds of liberal delegates streamed to the podium to have the secretary record their negative votes while they and others sang the first stanza of “The Church’s One Foundation is Jesus Christ Her Lord.” This was the first of several well-planned and highly emotional demonstrations they carried out in protest against convention resolutions.**

Next, the assembly turned its attention to Resolution 3-09. In it, the Committee of Three presented a detailed account of their findings during the interviews. Here is part of the resolution:

“The theological, doctrinal stance of the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, have been shown to be in violation of Art. II of the Synod’s Constitution, specifically on . . . three points . . .

“a. subversion of the authority of Scripture (formal principle);

“b. ‘Gospelism’ or ‘Gospel reductionism’ whereby the authority of Scripture is reduced to its ‘Gospel’ content;

“c. denial of the third use of the Law; i.e., the function of the Law as guide for the Christian in his life.”—*Part of Resolution 3-09.*

**Note that the liberals were even too anti-nomian (anti-law) for the Lutherans! Liberals always want freedom to sin; they do not want to be restricted by any moral codes.**

In the paragraph of Resolution 3-09, quoted below, some of the errors used by liberals to downgrade Scripture were cited:

“Resolved, That the Synod repudiate that attitude toward Holy Scripture, particularly as regards its authority and clarity, which reduces to theological opinion or exegetical questions, matters which are in fact clearly taught in Scripture (e.g., facticity of miracle accounts and their details; historicity of Adam and Eve as real persons; the fall of Adam and Eve into sin as a real event, to which mankind must be traced; the historicity of every detail in the life of Jesus as recorded by the evangelists; predictive prophecies in the Old Testament which are in fact Messianic; the doctrine of angels; the Jonah accounts, etc.).”—*Part of Resolution 3-09.*

The very seriousness of this situation was such that it was thought best, at this juncture, to let three members of the Seminary faculty and Dr. Tietjen

speak.

**But when the liberal faculty members addressed the convention, they confused some of those in the assembly somewhat—because they said none of the accused faculty majority deviated one tiny inch from the historic beliefs of the church. The three majority faculty members said the accusations were not accurate. For example, Dr. Krentz told the convention that no member of the faculty denied the historicity of Adam and Eve.**

After weighing the evidence of the committee vs. the statements just given by the three faculty members and Tietjen, the convention passed Resolution 3-09 by 574 to 451.

**Lucifer had earlier also used false reports in heaven to confuse and win supporters. One majority faculty member, at a pastoral conference a year before, had clearly admitted that the majority of the faculty did not believe Adam and Eve ever existed.**

“I can’t answer the question, ‘Do you believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve?’ Historicity and facticity are not even in my dictionary.

“One thing caught most of us on is, were Adam and Eve historic persons? I don’t know. I don’t think so. It is not important. They caught most of us in some way on most of the points in Preus’ *Statement*.

“I believe that many of my Christian brothers have problems with the birth of Christ.

“Don’t ask me, ‘Do you believe in a 6 day creation?’ . . . I have problems with the virgin birth, real presence, bodily resurrection . . . I can’t bear the burden of Scriptural infallibility.”—*Walter Bartling, statements made at Louisiana Pastoral Conference, April 17-20, 1972.*

Other examples will be cited later in this present report.

**On July 11, a resolution was enacted, calling for the Board of Control to deal with Dr. Tietjen, and if needed to fire him. At the same time, the convention changed the membership of the Board of Control.**

At this point, Tietjen spoke and said that they had wronged him, but that he forgave them for having wronged him. Such talk helped him maintain the sympathies of the Seminary students who were giving these proceedings their careful attention.

**Throughout the convention, there had been well-planned public relations protest demonstrations, black arm bands, ad hoc communion services on the street outside the convention hall, and other theatricals to which the press were called to attend.**

**But more bizarre events were soon to follow,—events which were not mentioned in the Cottrell report. And all of it was faithfully reported in the public press on every continent.**

The antics may have appeared as being carried on by little children, but the present author believes there was an underlying purpose:

**Tietjen knew his days were numbered and so, in consultation with others, not only at the Seminary but outside the denomination, he worked toward two objectives: (1) delay matters so still more students could be caught up in the open rebellion and (2) set an example that would frighten other watching denominations from trying to eject their own liberals.**

The present writer prepared an in-depth report several years ago on the 1925 Scopes (“Monkey”) Trial at Dayton, Tennessee. The purpose of all the theatricals was to so humiliate the State of Tennessee that neither it—nor any other state—would ever again try to bar atheists from teaching evolution in state schools. The method was resoundingly successful.

If you will carefully study the Dayton Trial, you will discover that it was orchestrated by liberals at the University of Chicago and the ACLU, working out of New York City. Newspapers and magazines of the entire world were brought into it. The first major event broadcast over radio was the Scopes Trial.

**The flamboyant circus, staged by Concordia Seminary in the 1970s, was a warning flag to all Christendom: Do not try to expel us from your colleges and seminaries, or we will rip your church to shreds!**

Since then, only the Southern Baptists have dared to carry on the battle—and generally only in regard to administrative posts, not schools.

**Frightened at the thought of having a Concordia on their hands, our own leaders capitulated soon after taking on Desmond Ford at Glacier View, and granted “academic freedom” to all our college and university teachers.**

**The convention decisions regarding Tietjen and his Seminary had climaxed on July 11, and it adjourned on the 13th.**

That same day, *Religious News Service* quoted John Tietjen as saying, “I have no doubt it will not be long before I am no longer president of the Seminary . . . The convention judged itself in judging us” (*RNS release, July 13, 1973*).

Tietjen knew he was through; but, as noted earlier, he still had certain objectives to fulfill: (1) catch as many of the students in his net and take them out with him and (2) fulfill his agreements with lib-

erals elsewhere by producing a cacophony of noise, confusion, protest,—and all of it in full view of news reporters and cameramen.

What agreements? **Arrangements had been made years earlier that Tietjen and his associates would be supported financially when they were cast out. If necessary, they would be given good jobs in liberal seminaries in other denominations.**

**But the great need was to maintain the circus atmosphere as long as possible. And this they faithfully did.**

**Someone may say, “Well, they did all this in order to hold on to their jobs.” If you wanted to hold on to your job, you would not stage demonstrations outside the meetinghouse where the future of your employment was being decided! You would not feed terrible denunciations about your employers to the national press. You would not turn the leading Seminary of a denomination into a carnival atmosphere.**

**No, all this was done to provide a warning to the other denominations: “Do not fire your liberals, or we will do this to you too.”**

**As soon as the majority faculty returned to Concordia, they set to work to carry out a full agenda of preplanned activities. The public protests and demonstrations began.**

One was the July 24 document, “*Declaration of Protest and Confession*,” which was read to the assembled faculty, students, and their families in the chapel.

This document spoke of “breach of contract in judging and condemning us” (no one had been fired); convention “violation of procedures”; “distortion of teaching”; “convention’s use of coercive power”; and, as you would expect, “the convention’s violation of the principle of *sola scriptura* [Scripture alone, as the basis of doctrine] in elevating tradition above Scripture.”

To make this event more dramatic and better publicized, the media had been alerted the day before; and, following the brief chapel service, everyone marched out of the building and onto the lawn between several buildings. **As the cameras rolled, they marched to the imposing Luther statue. Then they waited quietly until the camera crews had taken new positions to get both Martin Luther and Dr. Caemmerer in view, before Caemmerer read from the document.**

**It is of keen interest that their document called for the formation of a denomination-wide protest movement. They called on all the liberals in the church to rise up and join them!**

Aside from other intervening theatrics, **the next major event was the formation, a few weeks later, of Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (ELIM), a separate, nonprofit religious organization. While still employed by LCMS, the majority faculty had now started a separate church organization!**

**One of the six founding board members of ELIM, including John Tietjen, was Martin Marty. Who is he?** Those who read the pages of Pacific Union College’s *Campus Chronicle* will recognize him as a leading Protestant theologian who was honored as such on the campus of that school a couple years ago. He spoke to the students on campus and was vigorously applauded for his forthright comments.

**But who is Martin Marty?** Let me tell you.

Martin Marty was a professor of the history of modern Christianity at the University of Chicago and on the staff of the liberal *Christian Century*. **By 1961 he was publicly urging “the prophets” (a code word for liberal college and seminary religion teachers) to work “from within” their denominations “for constructive subversion, encirclement, and infiltration, until anti-ecumenical forces bow to the evangelical weight of reunion”** (*Christian Century*, January 11, 1961).

The same approach some years later prompted *Christianity Today* to refer to **Marty’s endorsement of “ecclesiastical Machiavellianism”** and to comment:

“Ministers who have taken denominational ordination vows are increasingly faced with the question of personal honesty and integrity as they participate in a movement that explicitly condemns denominations and aims at their merger into the ecumenical church. Applying the borrowed phrase ‘sociological Machiavellianism,’ Dr. Marty counsels a procedure that would actually promote ‘the ultimate death and transfiguration of these forms’ while patiently ‘living in denominations and being faithful to their disciplines.’”—*Christianity Today*, January 29, 1965.

**For years, Marty had been urging the liberals to fan out and join different denominations, so they could work more easily to take them all over. Marty, a strident liberal, had openly united with Tietjen in forming this new church organization.**

The ranking theologian of the orthodox Lutheran churches in Europe, William M. Oesch, in a comprehensive theological analysis, linked Marty with “Missouri’s young intellectuals [who] are founding Jacobin Clubs behind the scenes” (*W.M. Oesch, Memorandum Inter Nos., Part III (1960?), quoted in Crossroads, p. 28*).

For those who have not studied history, the Jacobins in pre-Revolution France founded clubs,

in which they actively planned the overthrow of the government and the takeover of the nation. Within a few years, the storming of the Bastille occurred, millions were slain, and a reign of terror ensued.

**The liberal objective, exemplified by Marty, was for the liberals to strengthen their hold on each denomination, including LCMS, even more, and either get rid of the conservatives in the pews or, lacking that, change the form of government so the liberals would have ultimate control of the denomination.**

**The flaw was the structure of the Synod conventions. They were almost totally in the hands of the local pastors and the laymen. Yes, leadership could feed them erroneous propaganda; but, as long as they were in the majority, the laymen had the power to cast out the scoundrels whenever they wanted to.**

“For something like 25 years prior to 1969, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was controlled by a coalition of liberals and moderates . . . These years of liberal ascendancy ended suddenly and decisively at the Synodical Convention in Denver in the summer of 1969 . . . Having come to power, the conservative party did what the liberals had done a generation before. They consolidated their power and began to divide the spoils.”—*John Strietelmeier, The Cresset, April 1971.*

Strietelmeier, a teacher at another Lutheran school, Valparaiso University, wrote that two years after the conservatives voted in Preus as their president and told him to cleanse the campus at Concordia.

In the above-mentioned article, Strietelmeier said that while he shared with his “fellow liberals a feeling of resentment” over the attack on “what our party might justifiably consider its best gift to the church—the Seminary in its present form,” he did “not share with fellow liberals . . . the feeling that there is anything evil or underhanded in the move against the Seminary. I expect the conservatives to act as conservatives; indeed, I would feel that they had deceived the church if they did not” (*ibid.*).

**Notice that Strietelmeier freely admitted that Concordia Seminary was stacked with “liberals.”** He did not deny the fact, as others did. Also note his remarkable admission: “what our party might justifiably consider its best gift to the church—the Seminary in its present form.” That remark was printed in a liberal journal and intended only for liberals to read.

**Why was the Seminary so special to the liberals? Because it is through the schools—especially pastor schools—that the worldlings take over the church! In every age it is the same. Have you not studied the history of the Jesuits, founded in 1534 by Ignatius Loyola? Their greatest success in winning back much of Europe in the Counter-Reformation was not merely their intimidation of monarchs (through threats of perdition during the confessional) or their assassination of recalcitrant ones;—it was the fact that they founded schools throughout Europe for all ages, and the flower of Europe was sent to them for education.**

**For the liberals, the Bible is a point of departure. They read a verse and then expound their bewildering theories and attractive worldly ideas. At the heart of it all is the love of sin. Their basic message is that it is all right to sin after all. Everyone who desires that is a ready candidate.**

Martin Marty was a book award judge for Abingdon when *Sense and Nonsense*, by Sten H. Stenson, was selected for the Abingdon award.

That book “defended” the validity of Christianity equally with other world religions, because of the “pun-like character of miracle stories and religious legends” they all had. There is no such thing as religious “truth,” only puns or “witticisms” which “are irrelevant to truth and falsity in the usual propositional sense.” Stenson wrote that the Apostle John produced his biography out of his imagination “while making free use of the tradition that creates a figure of Jesus entirely from faith!” That reflects the atheism of Bultmann.

Writing about the book, Marty gave it his highest praise. “It is a fresh presentation of the Christian faith and of faith itself. I would be proud to hand it to bright people up and down my block and to my colleagues in worlds of media or academy!”

**Marty was John Tietjen’s close associate in carrying out the Concordia rebellion.**

**Cottrell maintained that the mistake of LCMS was in ejecting anyone from Concordia Seminary. I tell you the mistake of LCMS was in waiting so long to kick them out—and then not doing the job even more thoroughly!**

Following the July 24 demonstration, Ralph Bohlmann, then executive secretary for the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) issued a mild statement of reproof. That was generally what leadership had been issuing for years.

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

*– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

*Part Eight*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

“The faculty of the St. Louis Seminary continues to demonstrate its lack of sincere commitment to a course of action that will honestly confront and deal with the issues that divide our troubled church.

“ . . . [They should] listen to what the Synod has said to the Seminary and seek a forum that might aid in achieving reconciliation.”

**Church leaders were still offering reconciliation,—all the while that Tietjen and his associates were winning over more students and destroying their souls.**

Time passed, and then the Board of Control issued a one-paragraph statement.

“*Resolved.* That the Board report to the faculty and staff [of the Seminary] its dissatisfaction on the part of certain members of the faculty and staff in their ‘*A Declaration of Protest and Confession.*’ ”

At about the same time, the faithful faculty minority issued an “*Appeal*” to the Board of Control to solve the problem at the Seminary. They knew, on a daily basis, what was going on there. This paragraph was included:

“We consider this ‘*Declaration of Protest*’ [by the faculty majority] to be an act of rebellion and defiance against the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and its theology. The faculty protest not only seriously distorts the actions of the New Orleans convention, but challenges the very authority of a synodical convention to pass resolutions regarding the Seminary and the theology of our church body.”

Then, in a taped interview for a St. Louis radio station, Martin Scharlemann, one of the five minority faculty, said this:

“Secondly, we thought it was about time to start correcting a massive distortion that has been going on for the past few years. The faculty majority has been trying to make people believe that nothing seriously doctrinal was going on here at the Seminary. There have been repeated and consistent attempts to persuade people that the New Orleans action regarding the faculty majority made them the innocent victims of some great injustice.”—*M. Scharlemann, KFUGO interview.*

**A full-scale rebellion was in progress, and still the leadership was slow to act—although the**

**1969 convention had empowered them to do so and the 1973 convention gave them the needed balance of power to complete the task.**

**It is for such reasons that Christians generally lose in many of the battles of life. Imagining that it is “unchristian” to do so, they fear to reprove wrong or, when it is in their power, separate wrongdoers from the ones they are trying to pollute.**

At its monthly meeting, the Board for Higher Education issued a statement, in which it “censors the action of the St. Louis Seminary president . . . and faculty and staff . . . and calls on the Board of Control . . . to take forthwith appropriate action . . .”

On August 17, after lengthy discussion and repeated attempts by the liberal board minority to postpone discussion or adjourn the meeting, **the Board of Control voted to suspend Dr. Tietjen.**

**Immediately, as if by carefully planned timing, Richard Duesenberg contacted the Board of Control. He said he was the attorney representing Dr. Tietjen and threatened a lawsuit,** to be filed in civil court on Monday morning, August 20, if the suspension was carried out at that time.

So the Board of Control met again and decided to wait until it had received legal opinion.

**The next event was a major gathering of liberals, called the *Conference on Evangelical Lutheranism*, which met in Des Plaines, Illinois, near Chicago, on August 28. It was attended by liberals of various stripes from both LCMS and other denominations. Tietjen and most of the majority faculty were in attendance. During the several sessions (some of which were chaired by Tietjen) the participants drafted a number of resolutions, aimed primarily at “errant actions” of the majority at the New Orleans convention, held only a month earlier.**

The gathering also laid plans for a separate religious organization, which they called a “confessing movement.” **The LCMS leadership was charged with a variety of terrible evils, including “legalism.” By that they meant “sticking to the letter” of the Bible instead of interpreting it to fit all kinds of theories.**

**However, none of the doctrinal issues raised at the New Orleans Synod convention were dealt with. Liberals always try to hide their ungodly practices and anti-Biblical beliefs.**

This separate “movement,” when it was later formed, would be called the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and officially annex ELIM, which Tietjen and Martin Marty had incorporated shortly before. Tentative bylaws and fundraising machinery for this still-larger organization were voted into place, and a communications network was begun.

**Everything was working according to a well-oiled plan. While all the denominations watched with horror, the liberals were dangling LCMS on the line as the evil monster. The press, which itself is generally quite liberal, was gleeful. The affair was dutifully reported in newspapers, radio, television, and news magazines. If LCMS was going to harass the liberals, they would start a new denomination, in preparation for splitting LCMS!**

In the September 16 issue of *Lutheran Witness*, Preus published a statement of sorrow at the convening of that Des Plaines meeting and offered to meet with any who should wish to have reconciliation.

**All the while, Herman Otten was still publishing news sheets, in an ongoing effort to arouse the laity to resist liberal elements in the denomination. He had been doing this since January 1961, and his efforts were probably significant in slowing, and then reversing, the liberal takeover. Otten did not mince words, but declared liberalism to be the terrible evil that it was. Those who believed in his work shared those papers with church members throughout the denomination.**

In later years, he noted that, throughout the 1969 to 1974 crisis, no official LCMS journal would take a stand either way, but waited on the sidelines until the 1974 “exodus” before siding in their editorials with the conservatives.

**Meanwhile at Concordia Seminary, the students were being brought into line. Students holding to the minority position later revealed that, by the beginning of that school year, many students still did not understand the issues. If Tietjen and his cohorts had been fired before that school year began, how many souls might have been saved!**

In a letter dated September 24, 1973, the Student Administrative Council wrote the Board of Control, that it was improper and unjust to sus-

pend Dr. Tietjen.

**We would expect such a statement from student leaders, for Tietjen’s men were careful to exclude all conservative students from holding any offices.**

Before sending the letter, it was carried around to all the students, many of whom had only been on campus less than three weeks; and, with rousing pep talks, they obtained over 300 signatures.

On September 17, the Board of Control met and decided to postpone the suspension action against Tietjen until a ruling could be obtained from the Synod’s Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM). ]

**On September 25, the CCM ruled that it upheld the validity of the Board of Control’s action, but that the church should go “the second mile” and give Tietjen time to formulate a reply to the suspension decision.**

**And all the time more students were being won over.**

**On September 29, the Board of Control met again and voted to grant Tietjen time to prepare a reply to the specific charges brought against him.**

**The Board was also troubled by the fact its most private discussions were being leaked to the public press. So the Board voted to begin preparing its own news releases.**

ELIM (Evangelical Lutherans in Mission), Martin Marty and John Tietjen’s new religious organization, was formally granted a state charter in October. That same month, the first issue of their new publication, *Missouri in Perspective*, was mailed out.

**Tietjen now had his own rival religious organization, with its own journal. He also controlled the Seminary, its student body association, and student body journal.** From its beginning, ELIM was a clergy-dominated group, with an extensive administrative structure. If the liberals could not take over the church, they would set up a rival one, preparatory to receiving the drop-out liberal congregations—which they already knew would be coming their way in the height of the coming split.

**Things were looking good for the worldlings while the Christians occupied themselves with being worried whether they were giving Tietjen enough time to reply to charges, charges which he had refused to reply to since 1969.**

In late September, a letter prepared by ELIM was given wide circulation throughout the denomination, and included this:

“We are in grave danger of sacrificing our evan-

gical heritage because of mistrust and because of a desire on the part of some for complete conformity in interpreting every detail of the Holy Scriptures. This misguided desire is rooted in the fear that without conformity we cannot have unity. It led the majority to pass resolutions at New Orleans binding consciences in a way contrary to our constitution and contrary to the nature of the Gospel.

“Furthermore, the Synod took actions which virtually assure the suspension and expulsion—wrongly—of many of our gifted teachers of theology, and which call into question the orthodoxy of a large percentage of our pastors, teachers, and lay-members . . . [This is a] vivid illustration of the crisis of legalism we face . . .

“We cannot simply, because we detest controversy, sit back and do nothing, in the hope that it will all go away. Those who have been reluctant to speak out before will have to make their voice heard now.”—*Board of Directors of ELIM, letter dated September 25, 1973.*

**That same month, church leaders were surprised to learn that Tietjen had been busy at work, incorporating still another organization: Fund for Lutheran Theological Education, Inc. (FLUTE).** Three faculty members (Betram, Damm, and Krentz) were listed with Tietjen as the incorporators.

They were getting ready.

**On September 26, the synodical Board of Directors directed the Board of Control “to make inquiry and report” back to it on what this latest organization was all about.**

**All the while the faculty at the Seminary was working to fashion still more students into the liberal mold. This included the entire freshman class, the majority of whom were probably good Lutherans before being thrown to the faculty lions that school year.**

As for the inquiry, the Board of Control later reported back that it was unable to learn anything. (Several years later, it was concluded that FLUTE was incorporated to add to the tension and threat; it apparently never was used to channel money to the faculty after its departure from Concordia. Instead, ELIM, which was very capable of doing so, was used for that purpose. The incorporation of FLUTE had been a device to both stall for time and put more fear into the hearts of conservatives at the eventual outcome—if they continued to press for the ouster of the liberals.)

**By this time, both faculty and student body leaders were working feverishly to influence undecided students, keep minority students and faculty in the background, and extend their influence to local congregations.**

The new ELIM paper, *Missouri in Perspective*, was useful for this purpose, as well as the student newspaper, *Spectrum*.

But that was not good enough. Beginning in mid-September, preparations for a nationwide “Outreach” were made.

Then, **during the week of October 21-29, fifteen professors, comprising a third of the faculty, left their classrooms (during the school year!) and took part in 35 meetings all over America.** Local LCMS liberals gathered friends and sympathizers together for the gatherings, designed to drum up more support, both financial and otherwise, for the beleaguered Seminary. Not one word, one hint, of this activity was given to the Board of Control until the meetings were in progress.

At Houston, William Danker said this at the rally:

“If President Tietjen is dismissed, it will send shock waves around the Christian world . . . He prayed with us before we left, saying, ‘Lord, give us not so much safety as boldness.’”—*D. W. Danker, quoted in the Houston Post, October 27, 1973.*

Danker also maintained that the faculty did believe in Adam and Eve. You will recall that Dr. Krentz made a similar statement to the delegates at the New Orleans convention, confusing some. He said that no member of the faculty denied the historicity of Adam and Eve.

**During faculty interviews it had been documented that faculty members did, indeed, disbelieve in Adam and Eve:**

“The Adam language is typological language, and how necessary the historicity of Adam is to the validity of that typology I don’t know.”—*Report of the Synodical President, p. 93.*

“That is right [out of the mass of ape-like creatures running around], God picked two and called them Adam and Eve; he chose a segment of that earlier creation and made it into the human race, right?”—*Report of the Synodical President, p. 94.*

“Others in our Synod maintain that Genesis 2-3 is not an eye-witness report or a historical account similar to modern historical annals. They contend that the evidence within the text itself indicates that it is an ancient theological document which uses the narrative form. This text is more like a sermon than a news report. Anthropomorphisms, symbols, and theological reflection are integral to the character of these chapters. Thus any effort to press the details of this narrative according to the yardstick of modern historians is not consistent with the intent of the passage. The writer of Genesis 2-3 is proclaiming the truth about every man (Adam, ‘the man’) and every woman (Eve, ‘Mother of all that live’).”—*Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord, Part 1, p. 16.*

The spreading of these falsehoods all over, across the nation, only added to the confusion. Sa-

tan probably recalled those exciting days back in heaven, when he was busily deluding angels with lies while professing to love and serve God.

After the Outreach rally in Cleveland, Ohio, the local newspaper carried this report:

“The three profs gave the distinct impression that they believed in Adam and Eve and all the miracles of Jesus. If that is true, what is all the disagreement about? The professors indicated they believe all these Bible stories verbatim. They sounded to me as orthodox as their accusers. But still I couldn’t be sure. Were they telling everything?”

“If the professors really are teaching that the Bible is not literally true on such pivotal issues as the creation of man and miracles, it’s about time we know that.”—*George Plagenz, Cleveland Press, October 27, 1973.*

The statements, quoted above under “*Report of the Synodical President*,” came from interviews with the faculty. In an earlier statement, Tietjen himself had said this:

“The business about historicity is a similar problem. As you’ll see from that little sermon I wrote, I affirm the historical character of the action of God in His work of redemption. But the Bible doesn’t use the term historicity. It’s a very 20th century technical term. I don’t think the Bible speaks clearly that Genesis 1-3, and that Jonah, and that Job are historical writings. I’m not thereby questioning the historical dimension in any of these writings. But I’m saying that I don’t know that it’s so clear that these writings are history.”—*Evidence released in 1974, by John Tietjen.*

**In an October 11 letter to the Board of Control, Pastors Buelow and Harnapp reported back to the Board of Control that their meetings with Dr. Tietjen had been fruitless. But, they said, they would try to meet again with him later that month.**

**Time continued to pass, and Tietjen was thankful for it. He needed it to keep gathering more people—in the Seminary and out in the local churches—to his side.**

**This reminds us of Desmond Ford after October 27, 1979. Suspended for that attack lecture on our basic beliefs, he was then given abundant, fully paid, opportunity for the next eight months to travel around the East Coast speaking in churches and winning friends, financial supporters, and converts to his views.**

In order to make certain that additional delaying meetings would be held, Tietjen gave the two pastors several questions to study over and reply

to at a forthcoming meeting. This they agreed to do. That was a clever thing to do.

“At the conclusion of our discussion Dr. Tietjen asked each of us whether we were satisfied with his responses to our charges. Each of us stated that we were not satisfied. Dr. Tietjen gave each of us a set of questions which he would like us to consider in further discussions.”—*Pastors Buelow and Harnapp, Report to the Board of Control, October 11, 1973.*

The Board voted to accept this delay.

On October 22, *Missouri in Perspective* published an editorial that helped lengthen that delay still more. They accused the Board of having already decided to kick Tietjen out, and would soon do it. This caused the Board to be still more cautious about actually doing it.

A second meeting was held with Tietjen on October 26—which occurred in the middle of the nationwide “Outreach.”

**Throughout the fall, there was a continual flow of news releases to the press from the Seminary and its supporters. An October 27 *Cleveland Press* article cited Tietjen as “the chief protagonist” in the LCMS crisis, which the *Press* declared to be the top news story of the year.**

**The liberals made sure that it would be.**

**The next night, Tietjen appeared at a rally in downtown Cleveland and said the leadership of the Synod were guilty of “distortion and slander.” He also said, “It simply is not true that the Concordia faculty is teaching false doctrine.** Some of the distortion of the Seminary’s position has to be deliberate on the part of our opponents.” He also defended his speeches at rallies across the nation with the significant comment, “Public pressure is a significant factor in the life of an organization.” (*Cleveland Press, October 29, 1973*).

**On November 13, Buelow and Harnapp gave up trying to accomplish anything with Tietjen, and reported to the Board that fact. Included with their letter were 20 pages of supporting evidence.**

**Meanwhile, at the Seminary, the tension was heightening, if possible, even more. The Student Administrative Council (SAC), various class leaders, and others—worked feverishly to prepare the entire student body for what was coming.**

**A new student organization was started, called “*Students Concerned for Reconciliation under the Gospel*” (SCRUG), and it became by**

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**far the most vocal and aggressive of the student organizations. Its president also served as an advisory member of the new church organization, ELIM, relaying back and forth between it and SCRUG, which kept its own funding as well as its own lawyer (probably provided free of charge).**

**The students were being organized into an army, ready for battle at a moment's notice. Yet still more students needed to be brought in—and it would later be discovered that many were.** Tietjen was also on the board of directors of both SCRUG and ELIM.

**It is significant that members of SCRUG included not only on-campus students, but ministerial interns (called “vicars”) scattered around the nation. Think not that liberals were confined to the Seminary; they had been graduating them for years and sending them out into the field. Liberal pastors in the field were busy at work, converting as many of their flocks, so they could take part in the forthcoming “exodus.”**

**The long-range planning behind all this was fantastic, and all the while church leaders were wondering, from month to month, what they should do next.**

**By early November, SCRUG had submitted to SAC (the Student Administrative Council) a set of, what it called, “contingency plans.”** Included here were complete arrangements for the forthcoming demonstrations (there was a committee being readied just to handle that), the eventual moratorium, and more.

To help prepare the undecided students, Tietjen at a November 28 student body meeting, told them that the Board of Control was planning trouble for the school and the students; and, unless they united, they would not fair well.

**This helped encourage the wavering, that they had better unite with Tietjen or they would totally lose out in the final crisis.**

Recall the words of Satan, in heaven, to the angels: “It is too late to return to God. He won't forgive

you. You had better stick with me” (PP, 40-41).

There were students willing to help this attitude along. The Seminary student newspaper, *Spectrum*, carried this open letter:

“In a veil of silence with an appearance of legality, the Board has acted with a demonic persistence in executing these unfair, uncharitable, unLutheran, grossly unchristian acts.

“In reality, the Board has perpetrated these injustices against all the faculty, against all the seminary community, and against all Christendom.”—*Student Kim Campbell, letter to the student body, Spectrum, November 30, 1973.*

In order to convince the students that disaster was ahead if they did not unite with Tietjen and keep the tensions running high, this statement also appeared in that same issue under the title, “*Indecency and Disorder*”:

“The Board has begun the destruction of Concordia Seminary and the destruction of our denomination . . . There was a day when decency and order were the watchwords of Missouri. Today, these words have been replaced by their antonyms, and the students of Concordia Seminary must act accordingly.”

**Still trying to obtain a reconciliation with the entrenched liberals at Concordia, E.J. Otto, chairman of the Board of Controls, asked Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and Dr. Tietjen to meet together in still another attempt at reconciliation.**

**Somehow, those faithful Lutherans still did not realize that there can be no reconciliation with liberals. Are they then hopeless? No, what the liberals need is conversion.** Offer them Christ as their only Saviour; do not try to have a halfway meeting of the minds. Their worldview is totally different, and their Bible is different too. Their thinkings are their own bible.

Otto told them to come prepared to meet as long as needed. The hope was for fraternal friendship, but Tietjen brought an attorney (Richard Duesenberg) with him. That electrified the atmosphere, producing a brief meeting.

**On December 4, student body president, Gerald Miller, issued a call for all the undecided**

**to fall into line behind Tietjen their leader.**

“Those of you who are in full support of the faculty majority would do well to address yourselves not only to the question: ‘How much can we do to support them?’ but also to the questions: ‘What types of actions would best show our support?’ and ‘When might such supporting actions best be carried out?’ Those of you who are not exactly sure of where you stand with respect to the faculty majority or to the issues which are at stake would do well to admit that on Wednesday. It’s not a day for daydreaming.”—*Gerald Miller, Spectrum, December 4, 1973.*

A special faculty-student meeting was held the next day, and the students were presented with a paper, “*With One Voice: An Appeal by the Students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.*” **This was the first of a number of protest documents which were presented to the students to adopt, before being mailed to the Board of Controls. The obvious purpose was to galvanize the students and pull in the stragglers.**

“As members of the body of Christ and students at Concordia Seminary, we stand with the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.”—*from the paper, With One Voice, et. al., December 5, 1973.*

But there was more to this paper than at first met the eye. **It concluded with the statement that, if the Board of Control did not reconsider its ruling about Tietjen, it “will have to proceed against all the members of the student body.”**

**It is a pitiful thing to reject God’s Word, but it is even worse to pull innocent young people into your rejection.**

Classes for the rest of the day were canceled so students could listen to theological position papers by the faculty majority.

**Minority students later disclosed that, by the end of the day, still more students, which had been on the fence, had united with Tietjen’s men. Yet church leaders continued to dither and wring their hands.**

**A meeting of the Board of Control had been planned for December 17, and Tietjen and his associates fully expected that he would be suspended that day. So they made final preparations for the beginning of their “contingency plans,” to begin immediately afterward.**

But then something unexpected occurred. Dr. Arthur C. Piepkorn, a member of the faculty majority, suddenly died on December 13. Therefore, the Board meeting was postponed.

Because, as part of the “contingency plans,” very close alliances had already been worked out with leaders of various liberal denominations, and also

the Jesuit college in St. Louis, a “*Requiem Eucharist*” was held in Dr. Piepkorn’s honor in the chapel of Concordia Seminary, with members of various liberal and Catholic leaders in attendance. They all participated in the communion service (something orthodox LCMS pastors would not do; LCMS is anti-ecumenical and anti-Catholic).

**A student “outreach” across America had been secretly planned for Christmas vacation.** The ECSC minutes for December 11 were later found in office files, revealing that SCRUG had already planned for that event—since it was fully expected the Board action of December 17 would result in the suspension of Tietjen.

**The faculty-student leaders moved the “plans” up to the next Board meeting, which was due in January.**

One little-mentioned group was in charge of making all the contacts and pulling everything together. Larry Neeb, one of the faculty majority, later described how the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) carried on its work during the ongoing crisis:

“Often unheralded during this period and in the months following President Tietjen’s suspension was the crucial leadership of a Faculty Advisory Committee, elected by the faculty at the inception of the investigation (1970) . . .

“Functioning as a ‘corporate presidency’ the group utilized dialogue, group process, and shared responsibility achieving consensus among students and faculty on virtually every issue, preparing both groups for the events that would take place following the suspension of Tietjen in January.”—*Larry Neeb, “The Historical and Theological Dimension of a Confessing Movement with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,” unpublished doctoral thesis, p. 162.*

**On December 20, a joint FAC and ECSC meeting was held, during which Tietjen announced he was certain that the January Board of Control meeting would be the one which would push Concordia into activating its “contingency plans.” He also stated that he believed the Board would, at that time, initiate severe reprisals against the faculty and students. But, he assured them, if they remained with him, their leader, everything would ultimately work out all right.**

The faculty and student leaders all knew what he meant about “things working out all right.” **Liberals outside of LCMS had set up a fund through ELIM to take good care of their fellow liberals after they had left Concordia.**

Some other points were also reviewed: Dr. Bertram mentioned that the faculty were planning a walkout following the suspension. Dr. Mayer noted

that the students who left during Christmas vacation should stay close in touch with the school, since none could know what might happen.

Leading up to the January Board meeting, more Board delays occurred. On December 27, Board chairman E.J. Otto, in calling for a special Board meeting for January 7, 1974, wrote this:

“To discuss possible action on Dr. Tietjen’s failure to comply with the Board’s directive of November 19, 1973, to explain in writing by December 10, 1973, how he reconciles his position as seminary president with five concerns of the Board.”

Tietjen had not written out his positions as requested (what should be difficult about doing that?); instead he had written the Board in December, that he would give an oral presentation at the next meeting. But this was not what they requested.

At the January 7, 1974, meeting, the Board considered disciplinary action, but then voted to ask him to orally answer five points. Following that, they voted to request him to present his positions in writing for the next Board meeting, to be held on January 20.

**Tietjen felt certain that January 20 would be D-Day, and he returned to his confederates and told them to set the final preparations of the “contingency plans” in motion.**

On January 19, SCRUG, working with the faculty, said it was time to present a special paper to the student leaders the next day.

**On the morning of January 20, the student leaders met and ratified “A Student Resolution.” That document called for a moratorium on classes. This idea had been originated many months before.**

**Then they waited word that their leader, Tietjen, had been suspended—before bringing it before the student body.**

The special decision was finally made!

**At the January 20, 1974, meeting of the Board of Control, Dr. John Tietjen was “temporarily suspended from his position”** under the provisions of Bylaw 6.79, which provides for such action when the unresolved charges are of a serious nature.”

“Be it further resolved that the Board of Control shall, and it does hereby, suspend, Dr. John H. Tietjen from all of his duties as president, and as a member of the faculty, of Concordia Seminary, effective immediately.”

This was only a temporary suspension, and Tietjen’s full salary and other benefits, including housing, continued in effect. **According to Bylaw 6.79, this was not dismissal, nor did it mean the**

**accused had been found guilty.**

**The next morning things began to get wild. As the students gathered at the chapel early that day (Monday, January 21, 1974), some students were angry in the extreme; but, apparently, many students were confused as to what they should do.**

This was expected, and student leaders set to work to care for that. **With the press there, and cameras rolling (yes, they had been called in), the 8 a.m. meeting began with a bang. The first item on the agenda was “A Student Resolution,” calling for a moratorium on classes.** After copies were handed out, student body president, Gerald Miller, read it and then asked that Dr. Tietjen step forward.

**Tietjen then said that some kind of devious “deal” had been offered him, and he had righteously turned it down—and this was the reason he was suspended.** The “deal” was “immoral,” “and plays with people’s lives.”

“The members of our Synod must become aware of the moral bankruptcy of the actions of the present leadership of our Synod, and of the Seminary’s Board of Control. Such evil, if allowed to continue, will bring the judgment of God’s wrath on us all.”

**Tietjen’s lengthy speech greatly affected the students. Each one knew he had to make a decision which could affect his entire future,** and Tietjen’s pep rally was intended to push everyone to follow him.

**Once again, Miller stood up and read the wording of the moratorium resolution they wanted the students to accept:**

“To declare a moratorium on all classes until such time as the Seminary Board of Control officially and publicly declares which members of the faculty, if any, are to be considered as false teachers, and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated.”

Then the floor was thrown open for discussion, but it seemed that few had much to say. By this time most were probably emotionally exhausted, trying to decide something which could radically affect their future employment and lifework.

**A standing vote was then taken; 274 students agreed to accept the resolution, 92 opposed it, and 15 abstained from voting.**

**At 11 a.m., Miller took a copy to the office of the Board of Control while the students were herded outside to the imposing statue of Martin Luther so, together, they could cry out, “Here I stand; I can do no other!”—indicating that they were more like Luther for having united with Tietjen**

in essentially rejecting God's Word.

Luther had been a champion of Bible literalism, something quite foreign to Tietjen and his associates.

**Another copy of the resolution was taken to the headquarters of LCMS, which was located in downtown St. Louis.**

**At 2 p.m., the Board of Control immediately met and asked the faculty and students to return to classes.**

It is known that the faculty majority met for the rest of the day, but their discussions are not known.

**Late that evening, the faculty majority met again and voted to go on strike—and refused to teach any classes. In effect, they were suspending themselves.** They declared that, in suspending Tietjen, the Board was “silencing the Word of God”; and that, by suspending Tietjen, the Board “has suspended all of us from our duties as teachers and executive staff members.” They also voted to issue a formal statement to the Synod and Preus the following day.

**Every aspect of the day's proceedings was covered by reporters and cameramen.**

Hugh Fitz, a first-year student, later recalled what he thought of that day:

“I abstained from the voting partly because I was against the moratorium and saw it as being merely a cover-up. The student leaders claimed that they wanted to know what profs were guilty of false teaching before they returned to classes. But that had absolutely nothing to do with the actions of that day.

“When the Board informed us that it could not do that immediately, the students rejected this explanation. It was strange that the moratorium resolution was passed without alteration. It was introduced by the student government at the beginning of the session rather than being a resolution from the floor of the student body meeting.”

It is an interesting fact that, according to minutes later found in an office, the ECSC student leaders, when presented with a possible moratorium of classes at a meeting on December 12, had voted to have no part in it—even if Tietjen was suspended. Later, they were successfully urged to change their minds.

On the morning following the initiation of the moratorium and strike (January 22), the headline on the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* read, “*Striking Students Shut Concordia, Back Tietjen.*” The af-

ternoon newspaper (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*) headlined, “*Majority at Concordia Suspend Themselves.*”

**Neither the Board nor the Synod headquarters knew that the faculty had gone on strike until they read it in the *Post-Dispatch* that afternoon.**

**At this juncture, we might once again ask ourselves, Why did they do that? Actually, the liberals would have been far wiser to remain at the Seminary and keep feeding their liberalism to the students. They could have continued doing so for years, until they were gradually picked off by Preus and the Board. In fact, leadership was so slow to eject Tietjen,—it might never have fired many of the other faculty members, especially after all that happened in January 1994.**

**The reason for provoking such a crisis of such proportions, that the entire Seminary was effectively closed down—was probably to send a shock wave through all the leadership offices of Protestantism, as the evolutionists had done to the states in 1925 at the Scopes Trial.**

**The liberals were willing to walk out and leave the Seminary behind, if it would teach all the other denominations to not do what LCMS had done.**

**On Tuesday morning, January 22, the Board appointed Dr. Martin Scharlemann (one of the five faculty minority) as acting president of the Seminary.** Immediately the faculty majority drafted a paper, demanding that he resign and declaring that they would not accept him as acting president. **Then the faculty launched a media attack against him as a person and a Christian.**

Dr. Scharlemann announced that classes would be suspended until the end of the week, but that they would resume on Monday, January 28; and that a faculty meeting would be held the next morning in order to answer their inquiries and objections.

**During the week of January 22-25, about 60 percent of the students met each day in the chapel to discuss the next part of the “contingency plan”: the student “Outreach” which had been planned for Christmas vacation.**

**“Fact sheets” had been distributed to the students, and nearly 250 students fanned out across America to drum up support for Tietjen and the faculty majority.** On Friday, the cameras rolled

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again as the students drove in cars past them from one Seminary parking lot to another as they “left on their Outreach.” Then they parked and went in to eat lunch in the cafeteria.

**On Monday morning, only 40 students showed up for classes, and the available faculty minority taught them.**

In a letter dated January 28, 1974, Dr. Preus wrote this:

“You are educated and learned men and masters of the use of words in many languages. But the Word which the church is longing to hear from you it does not hear.

“The church does not want to be told that you forgive it because it does not know what it is doing, or to have students commissioned like the twelve apostles, to go out into the congregations with the Gospel according to Concordia Seminary.

“The church has waited for years to hear words like: ‘We repent, we ask the forgiveness of the church, we have been wrong, we are sorry, we have been arrogant and self-righteous, we have tried to change the theology of the church without telling the church what we are doing.’”

In that letter, Preus also said these words: “The church stands ready to forgive you, to honor and love you, to hear and learn from you.”

Unfortunately, that position is not the best. **The rebels at Concordia were died-in-the-wool liberals. They did not believe the Bible! They refused to take it as it reads.** Their own minds, and the theories learned in outside universities, were accepted as the highest authority. They had become their own god.

**They were as unfit to teach LCMS students as a graduate of a Jesuit university would be to teach our own students.** Yet Preus was kindly offering to let them resume their teaching of the future ministers of the LCMS Church!

This idea of “Christian love and tolerance” is carried too far in our day. There can be no compromise with error. It is a deadly evil which we must have nothing to do with.

Bigots may denounce this as unkind, narrow,

prejudiced, and intolerant; but it is life-saving. The faculty majority at Concordia were not qualified to teach kindergarten or cradle roll. Their words, their attitudes, the very atmosphere about them was deadly. It mattered not if they signed a statement of beliefs, which they did not. They had too often shown that they could not be trusted.

Appended to Preus’ letter was a statement entitled, “Appendix Six,” which consisted of comments by the student minority who said, “For years we have been harassed and bullied by those who call themselves evangelical.” They listed 19 items charging the faculty majority with unethical actions.

In reply, the student leaders sent this message to Preus:

“By allowing this letter to go to sixty thousand in our synod, President Preus has sinned against the Church and the Lord of the Church. He has encouraged rumor to be introduced from the pulpits where the forgiveness of sins should be preached.”—*Student leaders to Preus, February 13, 1974.*

According to the liberals, facts presented by the conservatives were called “rumors” while suppositions presented by themselves were termed “facts.” Error by the liberals was given the name “justice” and “Biblical freedom”; truth by the conservatives was declared to be “intolerance” and “immorality,” calling for the soon judgments of God.

In another letter, sent out close to the same time, the faculty majority made this interesting statement:

“President Preus and Martin Scharlemann have collaborated in mass distribution of anonymous slanders against unnamed professors. Matthew 18 was no part of the process which they adopted.”—*Faculty majority, letter, dated February 1, 1974.*

**An appeal to “Matthew 18” is always used by those who want their sins hidden. But the Bible says that open sin is to be openly rebuked in the church.**

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”—*1 Timothy 5:20.*

“That which had been reproved publicly was public wrongs which threatened the prosperity of the church and the cause. Here . . . is a text applicable to the case: 1 Timothy 5:20.”—*2 Testimo-*

nes, 15:2 [read the entire passage on pp. 15:1-16:0].

**Whenever the cause of God and His people are threatened by evil, public rebuke of sin must be made.**

**On February 8, student leader Miller wrote Scharlemann and the Board of Control, that the student moratorium/strike would continue indefinitely.**

“For that reason, we will restructure teacher-student relationships in a manner consistent with our moratorium. Only when the Board answers our resolution will the moratorium be ended and will the decision be made whether to re-enter the classrooms of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.”

**Final arrangements for a “seminary-in-exile” were made at this time.** There is evidence that the plans for such an extreme action had been laid in early 1973 and probably earlier.

Administrators at both Eden Seminary and St. Louis Seminary later disclosed that arrangements had been worked out far in advance of the actual “exodus.”

**On February 6, the student leaders broke the news to the students: They were all going to leave the Seminary at one time**—and totally vacate it! The students were not asked to make a final decision at that time, but were herded into smaller groups so they could express their hopes and fears and be assuaged by liberal leaders.

At the Scopes Trial, atheists, in various universities who were working with lawyers, made an international spectacle of the Tennessee State law that evolution could not be taught in its public schools. Working closely together, liberal theologians, in various denominations and universities, determined to do the same to Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod: hold it up to ridicule before the world, so no other denomination would ever dare try to dislodge their unbelieving teachers.

**The liberals, the atheists, the Communists, and the Jesuits all know the same basic truth: Control the schools and you inherit the future. This is a fact which Christians are slow to learn.**

The LCMS officials were consistently quite willing to invite the liberal teachers and students back, as long as they asked for forgiveness. But they did not realize that the situation had gone beyond forgiveness. Those men were corrupted by atheistic principles: Man is his own god, the arbiter of his own fate, the decider of doctrine, the inventor of truth.

**On the evening of February 6, the returning students from the nationwide “Outreach” returned to a hero’s welcome held at Christ Church**

**Cathedral, a liberal Episcopal congregation in St. Louis.**

For years, LCMS kept itself separate from other denominations, in order to maintain its doctrinal purity. But the liberals cared not for such strictures. Did they not all believe alike anyway?

**At that meeting, Dr. Bertram, spokesman for the Faculty Advisory Committee, announced to all the students that a five-point program had been set in place which would enable them all to complete their training elsewhere and receive accreditation for their coursework.**

The liberals take care of their own; it matters not whether they be Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Catholics. They are all in it together, working to liberalize the churches and bring them together to the great mother church at Rome. (See the author’s earlier studies on the ecumenical movement, particularly *The Ecumenical Objective [WM-109]*, now in *Ecumenism/Hungary Tractbook*.)

**Bertram also pledged that the graduating students would be certified as prospective pastors** on May 1, and vicars (ministerial interns, we would call them) on March 22;—this in spite of all the time lost during the student strike!

And, for the first time, **Bertram announced to the general public that the faculty majority was “considering establishing a ‘Concordia Seminary in Exile’** to make possible the continued education of students who support the moderate faction of the faculty and administration.”

Already, he said, “the synod’s Atlantic district, which includes New York City and upper New York State, had pledged \$50,000 to the project, but that much more financial support would be needed.”

**From February onward, supporters of the Seminary rebels have declared that those persecuted brethren “were thrown out,” but that did not happen. They chose to leave and, frankly, it was a great blessing for the denomination! The lump cast itself out (1 Corinthians 5).**

The liberal press was gleeful. Headlines far away in Portland, Oregon, read, “Majority Feel Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Will Split Up.” (Portland *Oregonian*, February 2, 1973). Up in Chicago it was headlined “A Church Divided—and Dying?” Below that was a subtitle, “Conservative-moderate clash threatens to destroy Lutherans-Missouri Synod.” Notice that Chicago press called them the liberals “moderates.” Throughout the ongoing battle, the liberals in LCMS consistently referred to themselves as “conservatives” or “moderates”—never as the rank liberals they actually were.

**On February 8, the Council of Presidents met in an earnest endeavor to bring the liberals back!**

**Two days later, on February 10, the synodical Board of Directors met “to find a suitable way that would enable students to return to classes.”** A forum was appointed to be held on February 15-16, with the intent of bringing the liberals back under the denominational umbrella. But it did not succeed.

To do so would be like bringing rattlesnakes into a family camping tent at night! Why should LCMS want those troublemaking, error-filled, men back?

**Fortunately, the faculty majority snubbed all efforts at reconciliation. They would have done very well for themselves to have returned, but a public, worldwide, example must be made of LCMS!** Besides, they had the Jesuits to help them! On the 11th, a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article, entitled “*Dissenters Plan for Seminary,*” disclosed this:

“All preliminary arrangements—including tentative permission for Lutherans to worship in a Jesuit chapel—have been completed for ‘seminary-in-exile’ for boycotting students and professors of Concordia Seminary.”—*James Adams, religion editor, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 11, 1974.*

The faculty and students at Concordia were willing to leave Lutheranism and belief in the Bible for worship services with the Jesuits.

What was the pretext used, by the faculty majority, to reject the generous overtures for peace offered by the Synod? It was the demand that, henceforth, the Seminary must be a law unto itself! **The only condition they would accept for their remaining must be that absolutely no outside controls or religious authority could henceforth prevail at that school.**

**They wanted “academic freedom,” the very thing we gave our own men, in October 1984, at our Annual Council** (*Theological Freedom [WM-110]* now in our *Schools Tractbook*). On that date, the Annual Council specified that henceforth each teacher in our colleges and universities could teach whatever he wanted, as long as the administration approved of it. In our institutions of “higher education,” which are liberal, there has not been a single firing of one of our college or university teachers since that date (with the exception of certain events at Southern College [now University], brought on by demands of one of the wealthiest family donors to the denomination).

On February 12, the faculty majority issued a statement to Synod leaders, that, unless their demand was accepted by February 19, permitting them to teach whatever they wanted,—they would begin instructing the students again. The faculty must become its own board of control, or else.

The regular Board meeting had been scheduled for the evening of the 17th and all day on the 18th. In order to attend it, Board members had to travel from afar to meet that appointment. Tietjen arranged that the Board would have only one day to decide.

**When the Board met,** it immediately began discussing whether it would submit to the ultimatum. In addition, they must figure out how to provide new pastors to the denomination. The Seminary must continue functioning, and vicarage (ministerial intern) assignments must be made in March and candidate assignments in May. Classes must be resumed at once.

The faculty had refused to honor their contractual agreements since January 21, yet they had continued to be paid their salaries. **The careers of the students were at jeopardy. The churches needed more pastors to replace retiring ones. This was, indeed, a crisis for the conservatives, and the liberals enjoyed it thoroughly.**

**What should the Board have done? The present writer suggests that they should have asked retiring pastors to continue on for an extra year and brought in responsible laymen to help man the churches for a time. —Far better to let conservative laymen preach in the pulpits than have ungodly, liberal, professional clergy do it!**

**The church in all ages does not need accreditation, certification, or diplomas. It needs godly men who will submit to the Word of God and share it with others.**

**On the 18th, the Board of Control made its decision:**

“We had the faculty majority letter of February 12 before us on Sunday night, the 17th, when the Board met. We viewed it for what it was, namely, an ultimatum. The letter said that if we did not rescind four previous Board actions, then on Tuesday, the 19th, they would be teaching, but they would be teaching at another location and not under our auspices. Whatever else one might think of the letter, at least it had the merit of being clear and unambiguous English.

“The Board’s reaction was, ‘all right, we have two choices. One, we accede to these demands. We meet these requirements. In which case the faculty really will have taken over the function of the Board of Control. They would be setting the policies.’ The Board could have gone that route.

“The other route would say, ‘No, we will not undo those actions. We are the Board of Control, you are the faculty. We each have our sphere. You stay in yours, we will stay in ours.’ That was the position we took as responsible servants of the church. We

could not in good conscience bow to their ultimatum. Therefore, we in effect said to the faculty, 'You will be in the classrooms on Tuesday the 19th. You already have not worked for a month. If you are not in the classrooms on Tuesday, you will have terminated your connection with the Seminary.'—*Board Chairman E.J. Otto, statement made to the Synod's radio station, KFUO.*

**On the 18th, the Board decided that any faculty member who refused to resume his responsibilities on February 19 would be considered as having breached his contract, and would be terminated from employment by the Seminary.**

**By noon of February 18, no faculty members had responded. They had no intention of doing so, for they were busy preparing for their move—and taking the students with them.**

The Tuesday, February 19, edition of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* bore the headline, "Concordia Students Vote to Join 'Seminary-in-Exile.'" The news traveled throughout the nation, with the press calling it "the climax to the top religious news story of the past few years."

**On the morning of February 19, the Student Association convened a crucial meeting. Learning that this gathering was going to take place so the students could vote to join the "exodus," Dr. Herbert Mueller, secretary of the Synod and a member of the Synod's Commission Constitutional Matters, offered to come and explain to the students that any, and all, of them could still be accepted back; none of them had been rejected or discharged from Concordia.**

**But the faculty/student majority refused to let him speak. If Tietjen was such a good man, as Cottrell stated, why did he want to jeopardize the future of hundreds of men and their families?**

Although refusing to let Mueller speak, they were quite willing to plan for a protest march the next day, in full view of the cameras, to their new home at a Jesuit university.

"The [student] leaders were so certain of the outcome that last night they planned an elaborate symbolic 'funeral' for Concordia and a protest march from the campus to St. Louis University, where the seminary-in-exile will begin tomorrow [February 19]."—*Post-Dispatch, February 19, 1974.*

**At 8 a.m., the meeting began in the Seminary gymnasium. There was only one item on the agenda: the decision whether or not the stu-**

**dents should walk out of the school "into exile."**

Part of the brief resolution read this way:

"We believe this response of the Board of Control to be both unchristian and immoral. For this reason, we find it impossible in good conscience to continue our education under the present seminary Board of Control."

**Introducing the resolution was a lengthy speech by Dr. Bertram, in which he flatly declared that, if they did not join in the walkout, the students would share in the condemnation of God to be meted out to the Board of Control for "silencing the Word of God" and "unchristian and immoral" actions. The only alternative, Bertram shouted, was to "march into exile!"**

**The emotional excitement ran high as the vote was taken, and the great majority of students voted to forsake their campus studies for an unknown future.**

David Strohschein, a first-year student who was present that morning, later wrote this to the Synod office:

"I attended the meeting which decided to go into exile. I knew it was another setup, for Dr. Herbert Mueller [Secretary of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod] had wanted to meet with students, but was told it was not necessary, only the pro-exile view was to be presented at this farcical meeting."

**For nearly the entire school year up to that point, and for years earlier, the students had been subjected to only liberal teachings and liberal propaganda. It is little wonder that many of the impressionable young people were swayed.**

**It would have been far better to kick out the liberals in 1969, when the synod convention initially requested it.** The lives of many people would have been protected from the ravages of men trained in theological gobbledygook at outside universities.

Once again, the full press had been invited to be present—and you can know they were. This was the hottest religious news item of the season.

**As the students prepared to leave the meeting hall, they were told that each one should take small wooden cross; write his name on it; and, when they arrived at the Seminary quadrangle, stick it into the lawn.**

This was good salesmanship: Get the students to perform an action that symbolized their commitment to sever the old connections and not return, and launch out into the unknown with the liberal

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

*– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

*Part Eleven*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

faculty.

It was also excellent news fare, for such a sensational story would be printed and broadcast everywhere.

**For the occasion, the faculty was dressed in its Ph.D. academic robes. As the assembly emerged from the gymnasium, the great doctors of theology who were destroying the young people led the way, just behind a crucifer and religious banners. The students followed, each carrying his little white-painted, two crossed, slats** (each was about 12 x 18 inches).

“As we entered the quad, hundreds of crosses were placed in the turf. We gathered at the Luther statue for the rites of exodus. Jones [Prof. Holland Jones] read from Jeremiah, Caemmerer [Dr. Richard Caemmerer] from Lamentations. After prayers and the Common Doxology, the bells rang out a dirge—in the same dirge we heard at Piepkorn’s death and funeral. But just as my wife said, ‘Why don’t they ring something happy,’ the bells went into a 49-bell peal of joy. It was another moment of high drama, and again . . . I wept. The students boarded up Walther Arch and wrote ‘Exiled’ across the entrance. One thing I remember about all these actions—the bells. They were a part of our protest July 24th [after the synodical convention]. They rang out at Piepkorn’s death. They rang out February 19th. They have not rung since.”—*Dr. Carl Volz, one of the faculty majority, in Christian Century, April 17, 1974.*

It was a cold, damp, day for such a great occasion. **Out onto the quad stepped the students, pushing their crosses, tilted at various angles, in helter-skelter fashion into the ground.** It all looked quite nonsensical. But remember, a similar pattern of foolishness was played out during the Scopes Trial.

“Despite bad weather today, students held a symbolic ‘funeral’ for Concordia. Forty-eight crosses bearing the names of dismissed Concordia personnel were to be placed on the campus, at 801 De Mun Avenue, Clayton. Student leaders were granted a paraded permit yesterday to march in procession from the campus.”—*St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 19, 1974 [afternoon edition].*

**Students took pre-painted plywood boards and pressed them into place against the large double-arched stone doors, called the Walther Arch.** The boards were painted black, with intentionally sloppy lettering garishly painted in white across them: “EXI” on one, and “LED” on the other.

**After boarding up the arch, students carrying the banners and crucifer walked over to the large Luther statue and stood in front of it, so the cameramen could photograph them.**

“From the Gymnasium on the west side of the campus, the students and professors then marched to a park east of the campus. Along the way, they left signposts—small, wooden crucifixes bearing the names of the students and professors planted in the seminary’s quadrangle to give it the look of a graveyard.

“The statue of Martin Luther which dominated the circular driveway in front of the quadrangle was draped with black crepe.

“Two large plywood sheets, painted black with the word ‘EXILED’ scrawled across them in white, blocked the arched entrance to the quadrangle.

“As the crowd assembled briefly in front of the statue, Dr. Richard Caemmerer, former faculty secretary, read aloud from the Bible about Moses ‘not being afraid of the king’ and leading his people into exile.

“The crowd sang ‘Mighty Fortress’ before filing in a procession to the De Mun Park, east of the campus. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, academic dean and professor of scripture at Eden Seminary, greeted the students and professors there.

“Eden, a United Church of Christ institution, and the Roman Catholic St. Louis University will provide classroom space for the ‘Seminary in Exile,’ which begins classes Wednesday morning.”—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 20, 1974.*

Hugh Fitz, a first-year student, dryly commented later, in a letter on file at the Synod:

“I wondered about the sanity of those who acted as they did, the crosses in the quad (obviously not a spontaneous move), the boarding up of the Walther Arch (with appropriate television and other reporters around), and the phoney march into exile for the sake of publicity. It was utterly ridiculous, and hard to believe.”

**After planting the crosses and boarding up**

**the arch, the students marched along behind the robed, learned, doctors with the banners going before. As the cameras rolled, they “were marching into exile.”** Across the street they went and into De Mun Park, which bordered the Seminary campus.

At that point, the cameramen were asked to stop shooting film, and were told that the theatrical performance was finished.

As the press and camera crews drove off, most of the faculty and students walked back into the school, into the dining hall, and ate lunch.

Ted Mayes, a second-year seminary student, was surprised to see them coming back.

“I actually thought they had gone. Several of us began to pick up the crosses that had been planted in the quad and place them over by the dining hall. Then we noted that a good number of the students had returned to eat lunch in the dining hall of the Seminary whose funeral they had just participated in. Several students came over to the place where the crosses had been put and tried to find their own individual ones.

“In fact, for the remainder of the school year many of the students continued to use the dining hall facilities, the library facilities, and the field-house for athletic purposes. Except for classes, you could hardly tell that they had gone.”

The whole event created an immense sensation in the press all across the country, and was reported overseas as well. Luthern Church-Missouri Synod was made to be a laughing stock.

When Walter Cronkite discussed the whole affair on the evening news, he spent most of the time on the fact that the faculty and students were leaving a *Lutheran* seminary—in order to go to a *Catholic* seminary, to continue their studies. He thought that remarkable.

**“Seminex” was the name given to the new liberal seminary. With the help of non-Lutherans and Jesuits, they carried on their liberal studies. For this purpose, they received financial aid from a number of liberal organizations.**

Remarkably, the Synod administration took a very motherly attitude toward the defiant ones who had gone “into exile.”

Housing for the former faculty was officially terminated as of February 28, yet the faculty were permitted to remain on until the end of March. Some continued in the housing, rent-free, for months until they could find suitable housing elsewhere.

Students were permitted to occupy Seminary housing until April 30, and many stayed on till the summer.

**Ninety percent of the faculty and 85 percent**

**of the students were gone, but the Seminary continued to function. The few remaining students and faculty members resumed their classes. But it was difficult; for many of the Seminary files, student records, and other papers had been stolen. Nice people, these liberals.**

**Before the walkout, the student body numbered just over 300. Now about 40 were left. An immense amount of tuition had been lost, and the Seminary’s accreditation with the American Association of Theological Schools was in doubt.**

**Immediately, the administration set to work to encourage as many of the liberal students as possible to return.** All the while, former faculty and students continued to hurl written attacks at the Synod and Seminary.

**In addition, efforts were made to bring back former faculty members onto the staff.** But the liberals replied with a number of stalling tactics, primarily questions about the mediation “guidelines” to be used.

At the April 21-22, 1974, meeting of the Board of Control, the fact was discussed that it had to initiate the process of identifying qualified and experienced men for possible calls. It was voted to not fill its faculty vacancies in March, but instead continue to try to get some of those liberal rebels back to teaching at the Seminary.

**One would think that, by this time, the denomination had learned to avoid liberals, but apparently it had not.**

A little after the beginning of May, the LCMS Board of Higher Education (BHE) sent a letter to the Board of Control, requesting that it give top priority to regaining some of those recreant liberals who had walked out in February!

“In filling faculty positions, we ask you to give serious consideration to the former faculty members of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for faculty appointments in accordance with the Bylaw provisions 6.53.

“The Board for Higher Education believes that there are among those former faculty members those who can be of valuable service to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.”

**Yes, it was true that doctrinal discussions would be involved in rehiring any of the liberals; but, surely, after all those men did, why would anyone expect them to so easily change their ways—simply by giving verbal or written assent to Lutheran doctrines!**

In mid-April, Dr. Scharlemann turned in his resignation as president of the Seminary. He was on the verge of nervous collapse after all the pressure

and verbal attacks he had received from the liberals. Dr. Ralph Bohlmann was appointed to take his place.

The 9th or 10th attempt at reconciliation with the former faculty occurred in a meeting held on May 29. But Synod leaders were surprised when, on June 5, a letter from the "Seminex faculty," attacking the motives of reconciliation attempts, was sent throughout the denomination. Yes, friendly people those liberals are. The attitude was "See how hard they're trying to get us back? It just shows how we were in the right and they were in the wrong."

**Ultimately, not one former faculty member ever returned. Although church leaders mourned over this fact, they were actually blessed by it.**

**Seminex did not officially incorporate until June 1974. The legal name selected was "Concordia Seminary in Exile."**

**The next step was to split off as many local districts and congregations as possible from LCMS.**

**Throughout the spring and summer, Tietjen spent considerable time traveling to various parts of the country (Milwaukee, Omaha, Chicago, Cleveland, etc.), trying to rally pastors and laymen to his side.** At Detroit, he said this:

"Lay people don't want the kind of church we have with the spirit of oppression, repression, and injustice."—*John Tietjen, quoted in Detroit News, March 30, 1974.*

Tietjen had not changed. He scathingly denounced LCMS in a talk at an ELIM assembly in Chicago, late in the summer:

"The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod we have known is dead. The institution that has given us life is no more. Its structures are hopelessly corrupt. Its leadership is morally bankrupt. Its rank-and-file members have chosen to ignore and overlook evil."—*Tietjen, quoted in Time, September 9, 1974.*

Amazingly, since Tietjen had only been placed under "temporary suspension" on January 20, he continued to receive a full salary from LCMS and all the benefits and subsidies. **From January on into the fall of that year, church leaders continued to wheedle with Tietjen, asking him to come to reconciliation meetings.**

**Finally, at the October 11-12, 1974, meeting of the Board of Control, after considerable thought and discussion, it was decided to terminate John Tietjen's employment with LCMS as of October 12, but to grant him an additional "gratuity" in an amount equivalent to salary till November 15, 1974 and housing until December 31, 1974.**

The next day (October 13), Tietjen released a

rather lengthy statement to the press, in which he expressed his intense anger at being fired the day before! One would think they were supposed to keep salarizing him for the next ten years!

"I was notified yesterday that at a meeting on October 12, 1974, the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, removed and dismissed me as president and as a member of the faculty, effective the date of the meeting! . . . The structures of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have become hopelessly corrupt . . . and the leadership of the present synodical administration is morally bankrupt."

**By the end of April 1975, Seminex had been in operation over a year, yet those in charge still did not know what their professed theological position should be.** They knew what they themselves believed, but they were constantly changing their stance in the presence of others.

**There is a reason for this: Liberals do not really know what they believe!** It is as varied and changeable as tomorrow's weather report. Christians have the Inspired Writings; liberals only have their conflicting opinions.

The liberal journal, *Forum Letter*, commented on some of the confusion when Seminex officials attended an April LCMS theological convocation:

"As one Seminex prof remarked, 'I'm not sure from day to day what our approach is. One day we're going to candidly state our differences and let the devil take the hindmost. The next we're trying to demonstrate that we believe the same 'old Missouri' always believed about inerrancy and all the rest.' Seminex reps at the convo tended to take the second tack, as they did at New Orleans in 1973. Of course Seminex has a continuing concern about placing people in LCMS parishes . . . But Seminex credibility is strengthened by candour, not by pretending there are few if any significant differences. If, for example, the historical-critical method doesn't make that much difference in what one believes about the Bible or how one does theology, why bother everybody by insisting on using it?"—*Forum Letter, May 1975.*

**After the walkout, Seminex officials demanded that the Synod accept their graduates into the ministry!** Even more astounding, at its March meeting, the Council of Presidents voted to accept all second-year Seminex graduates to vicarages (that is, to become new pastors)!

This would be like taking all the tubercular cases and having them breathe in the faces of everyone else, to spread the contagion.

**Fortunately, many of the local district presidents (equivalent to our conference presidents) refused to hire Seminex graduates.** On May 22,

sidestepping normal channels, the Seminex sent letters directly to all presidents and local churches, encouraging them to hire Seminex graduates.

**By that time, a second major crisis in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was about to occur. Some conference presidents let it be known that they would defiantly hire Seminex graduates, whether or not the Synod approved of their actions!**

When Dr. Preus learned of this, in a letter dated June 7, he urged the Council of Presidents not to place, ordain, or install Seminex graduates, unless they had first made arrangements through the Seminary for proper certification.

The faculty of the Seminary and its president, Dr. Bohlmann, spent much time that summer, and throughout the next school year, interviewing and processing 1974 Seminex graduates.

**As a result, about 25 Seminex students were accepted. Few Seminex students ever applied after the summer of 1975.**

**But the defiant hiring by certain district presidents of uncertified Seminex graduates led directly into this second crisis.**

In May 1975, at a Council of Presidents meeting, most of them promised to abide by an anticipated resolution to be voted at the forthcoming July Synod convention in Anaheim, not to ordain uncertified Seminex graduates. But **eight district presidents refused to sign the pledge.** They said they would vote against the forthcoming Anaheim resolution.

**In July, the conservatives were once again in the saddle. At the synod convention in Anaheim, California, they approved Resolution 5-02, prohibiting the ordination of uncertified candidates and requiring district presidents who could not in conscience abide by the regulation to resign. The resolution also called on the Synod president to discharge any district president who ordained uncertified Seminex graduates.**

**The eight reiterated their intention to ordain Seminex graduates. By February 1976, four district presidents had done so. But Preus, knowing they were likely to take their liberal churches out with them, was concerned lest it split the denomination. So he hesitated to take action.**

In a joint response to Preus, eight presidents said they refused to change their position.

"All eight of us stand by the statement we made

at the Anaheim convention when Resolution 5-02 was adopted . . . The resolution is contrary to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the true spirit of our Synodical constitution, and we therefore do not intend to comply with it."

**The feared split was rapidly nearing.**

But it brought anguish to Preus and he hesitated to oust those recalcitrant presidents. He stalled for months; but finally, in April 1976, he fired the four presidents who had hired noncertified pastors, and replaced them with new presidents.

But their local district boards refused this action, and said they would stand by the presidents whom Preus had discharged.

Immediately, the other four rebel presidents voted to stand with the four who had been fired.

**At their spring 1976 meetings, six of those districts voted to pull away from LCMS.** These actions were made by decisive majority votes; for example, 206 to 146 in the Northwest District, 147 to 58 in the Atlantic District, and 114 to 58 in the New England District.

**The split had occurred. In each breakaway district, a number of district directors and local churches pulled away from the liberals and rejoined LCMS.**

**Near the end of April 1976, *The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC)* was incorporated in Illinois, and ELIM was merged into it. It provided a general organization for the breakaway districts.**

**How big was this split? Cottrell's report implied that it was immense. But really was it?**

**During the fall of 1976, 42 of the 6,160 LCMS congregations in the United States and Canada voted to leave the Synod. In addition, about 100 other LCMS congregations voted to unite with AELC—without formally separating from LCMS (or were represented by splinter groups which did so).**

**That was 142 (later close to 160) out of 6,160 LCMS congregations which split off from the parent denomination. In forthcoming years, LCMS grew all the stronger because it occurred!**

On December 3-4, 1975, representatives of five newly formed districts met in Chicago and formally organized themselves into the AELC; William Kohn, a Milwaukee pastor, was elected president. By January 1977, there were 175 congregations in the new denomination.

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

*– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

*Part Twelve*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

**Of course, the breakaway districts and local churches did so because a majority of their members were as liberal as Tietjen's faculty. So, what was thought to be a great crisis was actually a blessing to the newly purified Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.**

**Well, what about Concordia Seminary? How did it fare? Did not the walkout nearly destroy it? Not at all; within two years, it had more student than before the crisis struck! Local churches were glad to have a Seminary where they could safely send their sons for ministerial training!**

**From an enrollment of about 300 just before the walkout in February 1973, the Seminary was down to 40 or so afterward. By the fall of 1974, 193 were enrolled. In 1975 there were 284; and, in 1976, 365. By May 1975, the Seminary had more faculty members than before.**

In its September 9, 1974, issue, *Time* magazine said that Concordia's fall enrollment was "well above the most optimistic predictions after the split last winter. The Synod's conservatives have recovered remarkably."

Casting about for some kind of message to keep the excitement from slumping, the newly formed Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, at its second convention in April 1978, issued a "call for Lutheran Union." But they could not agree on what they were to unite on.

**Not only did the Missouri Synod grow and prosper because of the departure of the liberals, all its several schools did also. It increased in membership because people found they could trust its solid beliefs, which were less tainted by modern liberal reasoning than most of the Protestant denominations.**

For example, in January 1977, the Religious News Service reported on Pastor J. Kincaid Smith who, with part of his congregation, left the liberal Lutheran Church in America denomination—and united with the LCMS.

He spoke of the destructive and subtle heresy

in LCA, which ridicules a literal interpretation of the Bible. He said the 7th- and 8th-grade teacher's guide for the LCA Sunday School stated that the purpose of the course was to help children understand that it was no longer necessary to believe in the miraculous elements of the Bible.

The RNS report said that Smith "found himself empty after two years in the ministry. He went on to say that he then found Christ as His Saviour,—but, to do so, required accepting the Bible as it reads. He said it was foolish for the Lutheran liberals to say they were "moderately liberal," when they rejected the Bible as they did.

"To say that you are moderately liberal is like saying you are moderately pregnant," he said . . . 'I believe that those differences between conservative Lutheran and liberal Lutheran positions is infinitely greater than the differences which have historically divided us from other mainline denominations,' Pastor Smith stated. 'It is an impassable gulf.' "—*RNS, January 27, 1977.*

Postscript: In the years after the Concordia Seminary crisis and church split, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod regained all that it had lost in numbers, plus far more. A new solidity was seen in its ranks. Unfortunately, however, there were still liberal pastors, members, and teachers at work. "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom," was the statement of one of the pioneers who gave America independence.

Unfortunately, there was warfare against Herman Otten, the independent publisher who so greatly helped the members to eject the liberals. It was he who had provided the warnings they needed. In the process, he was probably responsible for the saving of many souls.

But LCMS church leaders continued to oppose him. J.A.O. Preus, who prior to his elevation to the presidency had secretly helped Otten, turned against him afterward.

Somehow, organizations never like an independent press. Whether they be secular, governmental, or religious, organizations want a controlled press.

By the 1980s, the leadership of LCMS, while continuing to vilify Otten, was quietly avoiding any

conflict with liberals, such as Paul Bretscher, Don Abdon, and some professors at Valparaiso University who accept evolution and defend the teachings at Seminex.

On August 13, 1994, J.A.O. Preus died. The funeral was held in the Concordia Seminary chapel, where, over a decade before, Tietjen convinced the students to unite with him in his diabolical plans.

— PART FOUR —

THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD

***In his analysis of the Missouri Synod crisis, Raymond Cottrell stated that Tietjen and his fellow liberals were actually conservatives and the historical-critical method of interpreting the Bible, which Tietjen used, was actually the method we all use.***

***Let us now find out exactly what this historical-critical method is—so we can guard ourselves and our loved ones from it!***

Cottrell quoted this statement by Tietjen:

“It would not be possible to operate a Department of Exegetical Theology at a graduate school without the use of the historical-critical method” (quoted in Tom Baker, *Watershed at the Rivergate*, p. 9).

**But those liberals do not believe what you and I believe,—even those who say they do.**

“In a nutshell, what the Missouri liberals are saying is that it does not matter if the Bible contains error, since error does not invalidate the message of law and gospel. God can also work through error. Whether what happened was historical makes no difference. Theirs is a theology that ‘sees all the intention of Scripture in a Gospel understanding only, thereby making unimportant the historicity of the narrative described.’—Harold Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, p. 80.

Walter A. Maier, was a well-known Lutheran speaker and writer of 50 years ago. He was also a solid believer in taking the Bible as it reads. He fought the earliest inroads of liberalism into the LCMS church; and, in a short article entitled *The Historical-Critical Method of Bible Study*, long before the LCMS crisis, Maier wrote this:

“Most of the scholars who use the historical-critical method base their analysis of the Biblical text on certain rationalistic, anti-scriptural presuppositions, anti-supernaturalism, for example. They flatly reject the possibility of divine intervention and miraculous action in human affairs. They also operate with various arbitrary, unwarranted assumptions, such as the unreasonable bias that many Biblical accounts, which purport to, do not really present factual history.

“As a result, their interpretations often subvert the obvious meaning of clear Scripture passages, and the theological views they express often do not conform to the Word of God.”—W.A. Maier, *Historical-Critical Method of Bible Study*, quoted in *Affirm*, June 1971.

Then Dr. Maier gave several examples:

“(1) When the New Testament evangelists composed their Gospels, they simply took over traditional short stories about Jesus which had been circulating in Palestinian Christian communities and worked these into running Gospel accounts. Practically all references to time and place . . . are of the evangelists’ invention and do not supply authentic information about the life of Jesus. (2) The miracles reported in the Gospels did not actually occur . . . (3) Many of the sayings attributed to Jesus were never spoken by Him at all . . . (4) The Gospels contain many legends and myths, pure fabrications, which were given form ‘in the interest of the cultus’ and for the purposes of edification. Mythological and legendary material, which is the product of ‘pious fancy’ and ‘active Christian imagination,’ is the narrative of Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, the transfiguration narrative, the narrative of the Last Supper, the passion narrative, and the resurrection narrative.

“Liberal theologians regard it as one of the functions of form critical investigation to help the twentieth-century reader to de-mythologize the New Testament Scriptures and thus get down to ‘what really happened’ at the time of Christ and early Christianity. Additional incredible and, indeed, blasphemous views arising from the modern, scholarly use of historical-critical methodology could be cited.”—*Ibid.*

**The historical-critical method is dangerous! Those who use it want you to cut pages—and entire books—out of your Bibles.**

**Unfortunately, we have this in our own denomination, and even in the Independent Ministries. There are writers and traveling speakers who are actually “Spirit of Prophecy liberals.” They will tell you that you need to cut pages—and entire books—out of your Spirit of Prophecy library!**

**Have nothing to do with such men!**

**When someone comes to you and tells you to cut pages out of God’s books, tell him to leave.**

“I believe that there are a good many scholars in these days, as there were when Paul lived, ‘who, professing themselves to be wise, have become fools’; but I don’t think they are those who hold to the inspiration of the Bible. I have said that ministers of the Gospel who are cutting up the Bible in this way, denying Moses today and Isaiah tomorrow, and Daniel the next day and Jonah the next, are doing great injury to the church; and I stand by what I have said. I don’t say that they are bad men.

They may be good men, but that makes the results of their work all the worse. Do they think they will recommend the Bible to the finite and fallen reason of men by taking the supernatural out of it? They are doing just the opposite. They are emptying the churches and driving the young men of this generation into infidelity.”—*D.L. Moody, quoted in William R. Moody, Life of D.L. Moody, pp. 495-496.*

“What we need today is men who believe in the Bible from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet: who believe in the whole of it, the things they understand, and the things they do not understand.”—*D.L. Moody, quoted in Richard E. Day, Bush Aglow, p. 98.*

Prior to World War I, the Lutheran churches in America generally held to belief in the Bible. They abhorred that devastating questioning attitude which tore pages out of God’s Word. They presented a “solid front against the claims of critical study of the Bible” (*E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutherans in America, p. 384*). “On the whole, Lutheranism in America looked upon scholars who used the historical-critical approach to the Bible as subversives” (*Op. cit., p. 12*).

But, by 1920, the United Lutheran Church of America (ULCA) issued the “*Washington Declaration*,” which “refused to speak of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures,” in opposition to the “exclusivist confessionalism” of the midwestern synods (*Op. cit., p. 72*).

“By 1927-1930, individual professors of theology were taking positions incompatible with an orthodox view of scriptural inerrancy. They used the method of historical criticism and carefully distinguished between the Scriptures and the Word of God without separating one from the other.”—*Ibid.*

From 1936 to 1938, the Missouri Synod and the United Lutheran Church of America held discussions with the possibility of uniting; but the meetings broke off because the ULCA commissioners refused “to accept the statement of the Missouri Synod, that the Scriptures are the infallible truth ‘also those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters’ ” (*Currents in Theology and Mission, January 1939*). They declared “inspiration” to be a man-made theory.

**After World War II, a “neo-Lutheranism” took over U.S. Lutheran seminaries. What brought it on? Conservative analysts believe it was acceptance of Barthianism.**

**Karl Barth, of Switzerland, was the modernist theologian who seemingly favored inspiration and conservatism; yet he wove a strange double-talk into all that he said, so that he first con-**

**fused, and then swept, precious souls into the liberal camp.** Other liberals also used double-talk, but such men as Harnack came out more openly in defiance of the Bible. So they were more easily recognized.

Read this thoughtful presentation of the teachings of Karl Barth. **His two-faced talk is like the men in our own ranks who come to us with sugary words of “confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy” while casting doubt on the accuracy, truthfulness, and authorship of those precious books.**

“Barth’s system seemed more biblical than it was. The Swedish scholar Wingren observed dryly: ‘Barth has the ability to a very large degree of being able to employ the language of scripture in a system that is totally foreign to the Bible.’ Barth realised that the historical-critical method could produce nothing but a few dead bones. But he thought that one could—indeed must—keep the method, and then pack living flesh and sinews onto the dead bones by means of ‘theological interpretation,’ hence the ‘*New Hermeneutic*.’

“Barth demanded ‘that we endeavor to see ‘through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible,’ and then offered an interpretation that did not inquire about Paul’s message to his original readers, but related the biblical text directly to the situation in which modern man finds himself. Since for Barth, however, the actual biblical text was fully human and therefore full of errors, his ‘interpretation’ necessarily meant reading his own ideas into the text.

“And Barth’s basic idea was the ‘dialectic’ or tension, a restless back-and-forth between two poles, time and eternity. Nothing earthly, concrete, historical—hence no doctrine, statement, or book—could ever be absolute, since God remained ‘wholly other’ and His Word ultimately inexpressible. According to Barth, therefore, the Bible ‘never stiffens into positive or negative finalities . . . It always finds as much and as little in the Yes as in the No; for the truth lies not in the Yes and not in the No but in the knowledge of the beginning from which the Yes and the No arise . . . Biblical dogmatics are fundamentally the suspension of all dogmatics.’ This deeply anti-incarnational thinking was a radical adaption of the philosophical notion basic to Calvinism, as J. W. Montgomery has pointed out in a most incisive essay on ‘*Lutheran Hermeneutics and Hermeneutics Today*.’

“Barth’s high-octane flow of words caused befuddlement among lesser lights, and encouraged an unclear style which evaded precision and definition with an over-heated pietistic rhetoric. Theology had fallen into a confusion of tongues. Old words were used in new and vague senses. Even liberals on occasion felt threatened by the all-enveloping double-talk.”—*Kurt E. Marquart, Anatomy of an Explosion, pp. 110-111.*

**What Barth essentially did was to confuse the mind with a juxtaposition of words, strange notions, false charges, an appeal to sources not available to the rest of us,—all the while mingled with expressions of utter loyalty to the Bible.**

**That is exactly what Herman Hoehn, Charles Wheeling, and others are doing to the Spirit of Prophecy writings! They claim to believe in it while they instill doubts based on hearsay from 90 to 120 years ago.** “Did you know that Ellen White cannot be trusted?” “How do we know that?” “She ate clams.” “How do we know that?” “Someone back then said she did.” And on and on it goes, insidious planting of doubt based on lying reports which cannot now be verified. On one hand, we have supposed witnesses who are dead; on the other, we have definite statements in the Spirit of Prophecy to the contrary. But the doubt has been planted, and we dare not trust them.

**Men will be judged by those books, for the witness of truth found within them is too powerful for our destiny to be otherwise. The Spirit of Prophecy was given to the Advent people to protect them against deception and prepare them for the time of trouble, the close of probation, and the Second Advent. Those who accept the errors of Hoehn and Wheeling will someday deeply regret it, too late.**

By the late 1940s, the atheistic doubts were fully in control in the United Lutheran Church of America. The seminary teachers had done their work well. The entire denomination had been converted to the new view. Quite openly, Joseph Sittler could write in his 1948 ULCA book, *The Doctrine of the Word*, released under the auspices of the ULCA Board of Publications:

“For if we equate the Word of God with the Scripture, we are confusing things heavenly with things historical. The Unconditioned is by such an identification delimited by the conditioned . . .

“The cosmology of the Bible was shattered by the work of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. Its chronology was brought under severe question by a critical science of history and the pursuit of critical paleontology . . .

“To assert the inerrancy of the text of Scripture is to elevate to a normative position an arbitrary theological construction.”—*Joseph Sittler, The Doctrine of the Word*, pp. 11, 52, 68.

One thing leads to another. By 1954, Sittler had also rejected Christ as the Saviour (“*A Christology*

*of Function*,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, May 1954). **Once faith in God’s Word is lost, there is nothing to keep a person from drifting out into the world and down into perdition. There is no standard other than his own ideas.**

In 1955, the German Lutheran theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, wrote:

“Some [liberals] are accused, among other things, of not believing in the virgin birth of Jesus or in his ‘physical resurrection’ or ascension. Are these beliefs really tests of the quality of faith? Does any church which insists upon them really do justice to the quality and character of faith as an encounter between God and the soul? Does it understand the symbolic character of a great deal of religious truth? . . . All symbols of the eternal, particularly those which assert the divine validity and revelatory power of events in history, must be taken seriously but cannot be taken literally. The well-known German theologian Rudolf Bultmann has made this issue central in theological thought both in Europe and America.”—*The Lutheran*, December 1955.

**Extremely subtle statements are made, always trying to make the speaker look conservative and an earnest believer in God’s Word while gutting it by their other teachings.**

“The Bible is the Word of God as the human record through which the Holy Spirit bears witness to God’s redemptive act in Christ.”—*Statement by 16 ULCA seminary professors [made in defense of certain accused liberals who had spoken a little too strongly in outright denial of Christ]*, *The Lutheran*, February 1956.

Such statements can be made by the liberals because, for them, the “Bible” is not what is written in it!

“The ALC holds that the inerrancy referred to here does not apply to the text but to the truths revealed for our faith, doctrine and life . . . The infallibility of the Scriptures is the infallibility of Jesus Christ and not the infallibility of the written text.”—*F.A. Schiotz, president of American Lutheran Church, The Church’s Confessional Stand Relative to the Scriptures*, p. 148.

We have noted that, by the late 1940s, the United Lutheran Church in America had been converted by their liberal-trained pastors to agnostic attitudes toward Scripture.

The America Lutheran Church followed in the 1950s, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was teetering toward the edge by the late 1960s.

*A Thirteen-part Documentary –*

# *The Concordia Crisis*

*– A Crisis that Affected Our Own Church*

*Part Thirteen*

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

Conversations between the old American Lutheran Church, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the large Norwegian-originated Evangelical Lutheran Church resulted in their combining in 1960 into the American Lutheran Church. But the newly added seminaries and their liberal teachers doomed the ALC.

“By 1956, when the proposed constitution of the new American Lutheran Church was voted on by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, several if not most of its professors of theology were teaching a view of Scripture at variance with the statement on the Bible in the new constitution. That is, while church administrators sought to uphold ‘old Lutheranism,’ many college and seminary professors were teaching ‘neo-Lutheranism.’ ”—*E.C. Nelson, Lutherans in America, 164.*

**It matters not how conservative the laymen in the churches may be, if their colleges and seminaries are churning out liberals—the denomination will ere long be taken over!**

**By 1968, only 23 percent of ALC clergy accepted the full inspiration of the Bible while 76 percent of the LCMS pastors still held to it (1968 survey by Jeffrey Hadden, quoted in Herman Otten [ed.], *A Christian Handbook on Vital Issues*). If LCMS had not gotten rid of those liberal teachers, it would, by the late 1980s, be as dominated by unbelieving leaders and teachers as the other Lutheran churches!**

**If we do not get rid of our liberal teachers and leaders, our own denomination will be effectively taken over as well. Some say, “Fear not, God will not let that happen!” *He will let it happen, if men are careless and unwilling to defend His Inspired Writings and the teachings found in them!***

Yes, the Final Crisis will purify the church; but, because the liberals were not cast out when they should have been, whole congregations will be swept away as chaff on the summer threshing floor. Yes, a remnant will go through to the end. But, if men had done their part, that remnant which enters the Final Crisis of the marking time could have been much

larger. The loss of souls is always a tragedy.

**By the late 1960s, a majority of teachers in all the Lutheran colleges and seminaries were liberal. Why? because their faculties had all received their doctorates at outside, worldly, universities.** Writing about the Lutheran denominations in America, Nelson said:

“Many of these men who found their way into teaching positions in major colleges and seminaries of the Lutheran churches, including Concordia Seminary (St. Louis), had been exposed to contemporary biblical research (Dodd, Hoskyns, Wright, Albright, Bultmann, G. Bornkamm, von Rad, et al., to contemporary theologians such as Nygren, Aulen, Barth, Brunner, Tillich, and the Niebuhrs) and to the Luther researches of Swedes, Germans, Englishmen, and Americans (notably Wilhelm Pauck and Roland Bainton). One result was that in the course of time students were exposed to a new brand of Lutheranism that was remarkably similar in all schools, whether in Chicago, Philadelphia, the Twin Cities, or St. Louis.”—*E.C. Nelson, Lutherans in America, 164-165.*

Sometimes Karl Barth’s hidden agenda slipped out, as when he wrote, “The Bible is full of errors; that is the Incarnation!” That mysterious statement is supposed to translate as “You have come upon a wonderful new idea when you discover that the Bible is not trustworthy.” **But the initial confusion of these mysterious statements from the mouth of Barth fascinated and gripped minds who, in trying to wrestle out their meanings,—were caught in a web of deceit.**

**—That is exactly what such men as Herman Hoehn, in British Columbia, and Charles Wheeling, down in Alabama, are doing with their unverifiable charges. They profess great confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy while they mail out attacks on those life-saving books.**

In 1959, an article praising Barth appeared in LCMS’s official youth journal:

“But this man is different. This is Karl Barth, the Einstein of theology. More than any man since Luther he has guided and plotted the course of Christian thought . . .

“Barth has solid ground under his feet. He whole-

heartedly accepts the inspiration of Scripture and in this respect he is a solid conservative . . .

“Greater or lesser Barthians teach at almost every Protestant seminary in America, including our own.”—*Walther League Messenger*, May 1959.

Decades earlier, Dr. Walther had vigorously opposed liberal encroachments in LCMS, and now the magazine named after him was touting it.

Here is an example of the kind of fantastic foolishness which liberal thought can produce. This is a liberal definition of “to know” and “truth.” It is done by misstating the true meaning of their Hebrew and Greek equivalents:

“Thus ‘to know,’ *iadah* or *ginosko*, does not concern the comprehension of fact but the experiencing of and absorption into the One known. ‘Truth,’ *emunah* or *aletheia*, does not concern the veracity or factuality of a given idea, but it concerns the trustworthiness of God in bringing His plan of salvation in Christ Jesus to come true in the lives of individuals.”—*LCMS Curriculum Committee, annual report to the Board for Higher Education, November 1, 1958.*

**Underlying this theological masterpiece of Satan, called the historical-critical method, is the concept that man’s mind is the basic authority; it stands superior to all else, including any revelation the God of heaven may make to him.**

Kurt Marquart has provided a number of excellent definitions to help us better understand it:

“The historical-critical method arose out of the rationalistic Enlightenment and differs from traditional Biblical scholarship in that it insist on treating the Bible not as an unquestioned authority, but as one ancient book among others.”—*K.E. Marquart, Anatomy of an Explosion, pp. 119-120.*

That is exactly what the new theologians in our colleges and a number of supposed conservatives in the Independent Ministries are doing to the Spirit of Prophecy!

Marquart continues:

“All Biblical statements are therefore open to challenge before the court of sovereign human reason. Historical criticism understands itself simply as the general scientific method applied to past events, namely history. This means that the critic and his reason are judge and jury, while the Bible, like all other ancient documents, is on trial, whether as defendant or as witness; for even as a witness its credibility depends entirely on the findings of the critical court.”—*Op. cit., p. 120.*

**Darwin started the phony trend toward transforming atheism into “scientific investigation.” Yet, if you will read the present writer’s books on the subject, evolutionary theory is not in the least scientific. So it is with the historical-critical method.**

**The German Biblical destructionists used the same tactic. They pretended to apply the “scientific method” to the study of God’s Word. They placed their minds as the authority to sit in judgment on Scripture. —And this is exactly what the Spirit of Prophecy critics are doing today in our own ranks!**

The historical-critical method is put forward as a pretended “science.”

“It is important to see that the uncompromising supremacy of ‘scientific’ human reason in the historical-critical method is not an excess or an abuse which can somehow be tempered. On the contrary, it is of the essence of the method; indeed it is its basic point.

“Science has neither use nor room for privileged authorities or sacrosanct texts. It recognizes only observations, experiments, logical inferences based on them, and, reluctantly, whatever axioms or assumptions are necessary to sustain these operations. That is why, in Krentz’ statement, ‘the method tends to freedom from authority.’ Historical criticism cannot successfully ape scientific objectivity if it is caught flirting with writings in preference to others.

“Here lies the historical-critical method’s ‘innermost impulse of scientific questing and questioning,’ which it cannot give up without thereby surrendering its scientific pretensions, in short, its very reason for being.”—*Op. cit., p. 120.*

Liberals cannot accept the idea that the Bible is accurate, even in its historical statements. As far as they are concerned, every part of it is in error and must be “interpreted.”

“If one’s view of history is such that he cannot acknowledge a divine plan of salvation unfolding in historical events, then he cannot accept the witness of the Bible. The point we are stressing is that the historical-critical method denies the role of transcendence in the history of Jesus as well as in the Bible as a whole, not as a result of scientific study of the evidences, but because of its philosophical presuppositions about the nature of history . . . The historical-critical method excludes by definition that which I believe.”—*George E. Ladd, paper read at 25th anniversary of Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, January 1971.*

Liberals place man at the summit of the cosmos. He is king of all he surveys, including any books purportedly given us by our Maker. They place their minds in judgment on everything in Holy Writ.

“Historical criticism, to be true to itself, must keep itself unfettered by any authority save that of human reason. But this very feature has condemned the method to ultimate sterility and bankruptcy. This approach to the Bible [is] based on unbridled human rationality alone.”—*Marquart,*

*Anatomy of an Explosion, p. 121.*

**Liberals in our own ranks sit in judgment on the “historicity” of *Great Controversy* and question the validity of its later editions. All this is as Satan would have it. He wants to place that special book in doubter’s corner.**

**Liberals require absolute freedom to think anything, believe anything, do anything—untrammelled by laws, codes, or outside authority.** Any attempt to limit or restrain their theorizing “must involve some sort of plain old traditional Bible study” (*ibid.*).

Here is a nice analysis of how devilish this method of “Bible study” is:

“In sum, the historical-critical method cannot, without committing suicide, accept any restrictions except those imposed by the rules of scientific inquiry itself. Any method, therefore, which submits in principle to the divine authority (inerrancy!) of sacred texts is simply not the historical-critical method.

“On the other hand, any method which in principle waives the inerrancy of Holy Scripture cannot claim to be operating with Lutheran presuppositions. The loose, status-symbol usage of the term ‘historical-critical method’ to mean simply ‘competent, scholarly procedure,’ should be combatted as a sematic humbug.”—*Op. cit., p. 123.*

**Liberals pretend to be “historians” trying to find something truthful in the Inspired writings.**

“The historian,’ says Lotz, ‘must cross-examine, test, weigh, probe and analyze all written records of the past. If he fails to do this he de facto [in reality] surrenders his claim to the title of historian!’ In short, one cannot honestly practice historical criticism and be ‘under the Scriptures.’—*David Lotz, quoted in the liberal Forum Letter, May 1975.*

**Abandon the idea that there is any way for conservatives to harmonize or fellowship with liberals or “moderates.” It cannot be done.**

“The differences between the doctrines on Scripture of the ‘moderates’ and the ‘conservatives’ are absolutely irreconcilable.”—*Dialog, Spring, 1974 [a liberal Lutheran journal].*

In order to carry out their destructive work, the liberals claim they must separate facts from faith and Scripture from the Gospel. They will loudly cry, *sola Scriptura* [Scripture alone], but they believe none of it. To accomplish their purpose, they claim that the Bible is something different and quite separate from God’s Inspired Word.

**Their method is to cut the heavenly records apart with the sharp knife of their own hatred-driven doubts and then let them lie there, quivering, as they bleed to death.**

“Historical criticism, as we have seen, seeks to

separate fact from fiction, wheat from chaff, by an impartial cross-examination of all historical sources. But if the Bible is essentially different from all other writings, if as the inspired Word of God it is divine truth unmixed with human error, then it is in principle beyond the reach and scope of historical criticism. If the critical method is to have anything to work on, a wedge must first be driven between that which is Word of God in the Bible and that which is not. Once a more or less independent ‘human side’ has been isolated, then criticism can operate on it without let or hindrance, while ‘faith’ is left to tender its courtesies to an ever vaguer ‘divine side.’”—*Marquart, Op. cit., p. 124.*

They must also get rid of the miracles in the Bible. Everything must be falsified, everything rejected.

“If the miracle stories of the Bible are to have a meaning today, it must be sought for on a different plane of reality . . . It makes a difference to the way one thinks of Jesus. Is he a mighty being of super-human power . . . or is he an ordinary man who did nothing like this at all and never wanted to . . .

“For miracles cannot be retained on the level of historical fact . . .

“Criticism means separation, division, and also distinction. Those elements which are probably historical are divided and distinguished from the ‘unhistorical’ ones . . .

“The [historical-critical] method releases us from the necessity of believing the incomprehensible and the improbable . . . for it makes proper understanding impossible.”—*E. and M. Keller, Miracles in Dispute, pp. 176, 217, 224.*

“Christ will never lead His followers to take upon themselves vows that will unite them with men who have no connection with God, who are not under the controlling influence of His Holy Spirit. The only correct standard of character is the holy law of God, and it is impossible for those who make that law the rule of life to unite in confidence and cordial brotherhood with those who turn the truth of God into a lie, and regard the authority of God as a thing of nought.

“Between the worldly man and the one who is faithfully serving God, there is a great gulf fixed. Upon the most momentous subjects—God and truth and eternity—their thoughts and sympathies and feelings are not in harmony. One class is ripening as wheat for the garner of God, the other as tares for the fires of destruction. How can there be unity of purpose of action between them? . . .

“I lately read of a noble ship that was plowing its way across the sea, when at midnight, with a terrific crash, it struck upon a rock; the passengers were awakened only to see with horror their hopeless condition, and with the ship they sank to rise no more. The man at the helm had mistaken the beacon light.”—*2 Selected Messages, pp. 127, 128.*

## CLING TO THE WORD OF GOD AND BEWARE OF THE THEORIES THAT MEN WOULD PRESENT TO YOU

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.”—*Isaiah 8:20*.

“Jesus said . . . It is written.”—*Matthew 4:7*.

“What saith the Scripture?”—*Romans 4:3*.

“What is written in the law? how readest thou?”—*Luke 10:26*.

“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”—*Luke 16:29*.

“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.”—*John 5:39*.

“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.”—*Jeremiah 17:5-6*.

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.”—*Psalms 118:8-9*.

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”—*Psalms 146:3-4*.

“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?”—*Isaiah 2:22*.

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”—*Hebrews 3:12*.

“[The Bereans] These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”—*Acts 17:11*.

“The Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation which is in Christ Jesus.”—*2 Timothy 3:15*.

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto My path.”—*Psalms 119:105*.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”—*John 3:19*.