

4-1-1969

## The Free Conferences of 1903-1906 and the Concept of Analogia Fidei

Martin W. Flor

*Instituto Concordia, Sao Paulo*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Flor, Martin W. (1969) "The Free Conferences of 1903-1906 and the Concept of Analogia Fidei," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 40, Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol40/iss1/19>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

# The Free Conferences of 1903—1906 and the Concept of *Analogia Fidei*

MARTIN W. FLOR

The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has been charged many times with practicing separatism, and this in almost every phase of its history. The church historian Guericke even judged the Saxon emigration to be a movement of such a nature.<sup>1</sup> One fact which refutes this accusation is that from the very beginning Missouri was eager to hold so-called free conferences, the ultimate goal of which was the establishing of doctrinal unity and possibly of church fellowship.

Such "free conferences" were held with representatives of several Lutheran church bodies at Columbus, Ohio (Oct. 1—7, 1856), Pittsburgh (Oct. 29 to Nov. 4, 1857), Cleveland (Aug. 5—11, 1858), and at Fort Wayne, Ind. (July 14—20, 1859).<sup>2</sup> Carl F. W. Walther's appeal for such free conferences is quoted at length in Richard C. Wolf's book.<sup>3</sup>

Though these conferences produced no immediate results and were interrupted

<sup>1</sup> See the editorial of Heinrich E. F. Guericke in *Zeitschrift für die gesammte Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, quoted in *Moving Frontiers*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 84—86. Hereafter *Moving Frontiers*.

<sup>2</sup> The fifth conference, scheduled for Cleveland in 1860, was for unknown reasons not held.

<sup>3</sup> Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 107. Hereafter *Documents of Lutheran Unity*.

*The author is president at the Instituto Concordia, Sao Paulo, Brazil.*

for several reasons (the War between the States among them), they may have been the initial steps for the foundation of the Synodical Conference in 1872.<sup>4</sup>

The Missouri Synod's refusal to become a member of the General Council, organized in 1867, and the stigmatization of the Missouri Synod as a "Calvinistic sect" (and other epithets<sup>5</sup>) by its opponents in the election controversy brought a break of about a quarter of a century in the synod's efforts to draw nearer to other Lutheran church bodies. Missouri had become suspect among Lutherans, even in Germany.

After the turn of the century new endeavors were made to remove the scandal of division and constant conflicts among Lutherans in America. These efforts led to the *Free Conferences* of 1903—1906.

## 1. THE EXTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE CONFERENCES<sup>6</sup>

### a. *The First Conference at Watertown*

A preparatory conference was held in May 1902 in Beloit, Wis., called by several

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Moving Frontiers*, p. 262.

<sup>5</sup> "Rechthaberei, Eigensinn, Einbildung, Unduldsamkeit, Engherzigkeit, Beschränktheit, bigotry, narrowmindedness, usw." See "Vorwort," *Lehre und Wehre*, I (1904), 2. These words were applied to the periodical *Lehre und Wehre*; but since it was the theological mouthpiece of the Missouri Synod, they were directed against the church body itself.

<sup>6</sup> In part one of this study a historical overview is given regarding the external arrange-

pastors of the Beloit circuit. Apparently the Rev. M. Bunge of the Wisconsin Synod was the driving force of the movement to find ways and means to heal the divisions of the Lutheran church in America. It was resolved to hold free conferences and invite representatives from the several Lutheran church bodies.

The first of the five free conferences assembled at Watertown, Wis., April 29 to 30, 1903. The sessions were held in the auditorium of Northwestern University.<sup>7</sup> Two hundred five persons registered for the conference (pastors, professors, teachers, and laymen), representing eight church bodies: General Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, 85; Missouri Synod, 62; Ohio Synod, 15; Iowa Synod, 15; Buffalo Synod, 2; Norwegian Synod, 2; Michigan Synod, 2; General Council, 1; and several independent pastors. Prof. Augustus Friedrich Ernst of Watertown was elected chairman. Bunge explained in the opening address the purpose of the meeting.<sup>8</sup>

Prof. Francis Pieper of the Missouri Synod delivered the doctrinal essay on the theme: "The Fundamental Difference in the Doctrine of Conversion and Election." The debate did not lead to any significant doctrinal agreement. The old differences of the preceding 25 years were still present.

ments of these conferences (date, place, participants, and themes). Part two is devoted especially to the discussion of the concept of *analogia fidei*, the central theme of the conferences. Part three consists of some tentative conclusions, which may have a great importance even for our time.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Die freie Konferenz von Watertown," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLIX (1903), 142—43. Since 1910, Northwestern University has been known as Northwestern College.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

But there must have been good hope for a future attainment of unity, for the conference resolved to have another conference of the same kind in the fall of the same year.<sup>9</sup>

Though the delegates agreed that no party should exaggerate its contribution in its reports, much less attribute victory to itself, several church papers of the opponents disfigured the facts and raised the affirmation that Missouri had changed its doctrinal position. They also claimed that Missouri required too much, more than is necessary for church union, and that Missouri nurtured the delusion that it alone followed the Word and that it alone had the true spirit.<sup>10</sup> So Missouri felt compelled to produce some notes and an article in its own defense.<sup>11</sup>

#### b. *The Conference at Milwaukee*

The second conference took place in Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 9—11, 1903. It had a reported attendance of 700 persons, of whom 494 registered: Synodical Conference, 377; Norwegian Synod, 13; Ohio Synod, 64; Iowa Synod, 16; United Norwegian Synod, 6; Buffalo Synod, 3; Michigan Synod, 3; United Danish Church, 1; Pennsylvania Synod, 1; New York Ministerium, 1; English Synod of the Northwest, 3; Pacific Synod, 3; and General Synod, 3.<sup>12</sup>

The Rev. H. A. Allwardt of the Ohio Synod had been entrusted by the arrangements committee with the presentation of

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Friedrich B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Missouri fordert mehr, als zur Kircheneinigkeit nötig ist," *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Die freie Konferenz in Milwaukee," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLIX (1903), 304.

the chief topic of the conference. The doctrinal essay was to be an exegetical exposition of all Scripture passages which relate to the doctrine of election. In the introduction to his paper the author explained the hermeneutic principles which guided him in the execution of his assignment. Here arose the question of the right understanding and application of the *analogia fidei* in one's approach to Scripture, which called forth a long and vehement debate.<sup>13</sup> Allwardt stated that every doctrine is to be explained from its own *sedes doctrinae*. But when difficulty regarding the exposition arises and when the harmony with other clear doctrines of Scripture cannot be achieved, the obscure passages must be explained in the light of the clear and lucid passages. Missouri did not agree with the position of Allwardt, but defended the point that doctrines must always be taken from their *sedes doctrinae*.<sup>14</sup> Besides other implications, Missouri feared the identification of *analogia fidei* with the "totality of Scripture" (*Schriftganze*), a contemporary phenomenon in European theology and considered a danger to pure doctrine.

### c. The Preparatory Conference in Chicago

In order to prepare and condense the material for the next conference and in this way save time, the conference elected a committee which met in Chicago on Dec. 29—30, 1903.<sup>15</sup> The members of the com-

<sup>13</sup> F[ranz] P[ieper], "Gebrauch und Missbrauch der Analogie des Glaubens," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLIX (1903), 322.

<sup>14</sup> Bente, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> The members of the committee were: Dr. Franz Pieper and Dr. George Stöckhardt,

mittee agreed to base the discussion on the theses of the doctrinal essay of the Northern District of the Missouri Synod in the year 1877, which were acceptable to all. Only the first two of the eight theses were discussed.<sup>16</sup> During the discussion it became evident that the representatives of the Synodical Conference took the theses in a different sense from that in which the members of the Ohio Synod took them. Since agreement could not be reached, it was resolved that each party should set down its own judgment as to which were the points of agreement between the two parties and which the points of disagreement. The two documents were to be sent to the chairman of the committee, Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, so that they could be submitted to the conference in Detroit.<sup>17</sup>

So even in a smaller circle of representatives the discussion could not achieve agreement and doctrinal unity.

---

Missouri Synod; Dr. Adolf Hoenecke and Prof. August Pieper, Wisconsin Synod; Dr. F. Richter and Prof. Maximilian Fritschel, Iowa Synod; Dr. Hans Gerhard Stub, Norwegian Synod; Dr. H. A. Allwardt, Dr. Heinrich Ernst, and Prof. Frederick W. Stellhorn, Ohio Synod. See "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Vorconferenz in Chicago," *Lehre und Wehre*, L (1904), 35.

<sup>16</sup> Thesis I: The word "analogy" is of Greek origin and means similarity or harmonious relationship. It was transferred to the teaching of the articles of faith to indicate that all these stand in a harmonic relationship, both mutually and also with a view to the attainment of their goal, the honor of God and the salvation of men.

Thesis II: That which is understood by the analogy of faith is the summation of all the teaching which the holy writers expressed at certain places in the Holy Scriptures with clear unmistakable words. These shine like the bright sun and everyone can easily understand them.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

#### d. *The Conference in Detroit*

Three hundred and five representatives of eight Lutheran church bodies gathered on April 6, 7, and 8, 1904, in Detroit (Synodical Conference, 148; Ohio Synod, 97; Iowa Synod, 23; Michigan Synod, 18; Buffalo Synod, 3; United Norwegian Synod, 1; General Council, 10; and General Synod, 5).<sup>18</sup>

The arrangements committee suggested a debate on the two questions: (1) What is the analogy of faith? (2) How shall we use the analogy of faith? After two days of debate no positive results toward an eventual agreement had been reached. For this reason on the third day the question was raised whether the free conferences should be continued. Since many of the participants confessed that they had learned much in these meetings and debates, it was resolved to have another meeting in the late summer of the next year (1905).

The motion to begin the sessions of the conferences with joint prayer was voted down (or opposed) by the representatives of the Synodical Conference with the allegation that public joint prayer would create the impression that all the participants of the conference were in doctrinal agreement and church fellowship.<sup>19</sup>

#### e. *Intermediate Regional Free Conferences*

There was a regional conference, with 13 pastors of the Missouri Synod and 11 pastors of the Michigan Synod attending, at Jackson, Mich., July 12—13, 1904. The

<sup>18</sup> G[eorge] St[öckhardt], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Freie Konferenz in Detroit," *Lehre und Wehre*, L (1904), 174—76.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

report states that complete doctrinal agreement was reached and that a fraternal spirit reigned among the participants. It was resolved to have a similar meeting on a regional basis at Saginaw, Sept. 13—14, 1904.<sup>20</sup> There is no notice or report that this scheduled conference took place.

There is, however, a report from a similar conference in Bay City on April 24 to 25, 1906. It seems to belong to the same series of informal conferences since Bay City is geographically close to Saginaw and since the participants were the same parties: pastors of the Michigan District of the Missouri Synod and pastors of the Michigan Synod. Here identical results were obtained: in a climate of fraternal understanding total agreement was reached between the two groups in all matters discussed.<sup>21</sup>

#### f. *The Free Conference in Fort Wayne*

The fourth of the series of free conferences took place in Fort Wayne, Ind., Aug. 8—10, 1905. About 200 to 300 pastors, professors, teachers, and laymen registered their presence. The central theme was the study of Scripture passages which the Lutheran Symbolical Books quote for proof for the doctrine of election. The discussions did not advance beyond Ephesians 1. This means that the debate was no longer centered around the concept of *analogia fidei*, but returned to the predestinarian controversy, though the concept of

<sup>20</sup> F[riedrich] B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Bericht der ersten freien Konferenz . . .," *Lehre und Wehre*, L (1904), 420—22.

<sup>21</sup> F[riedrich] B[ente], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Die freie Konferenz in Bay City," *Lehre und Wehre*, LII (1906), 417—19.

the analogy of faith, or rather the two concepts, was always present.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of the apparently negative results of this fourth conference, it was resolved to continue the series. The representatives of the Synodical Conference, however, did not show much interest in the continuation of the free conferences and quoted several reasons, which were published in their reports soon after.<sup>23</sup> The chairman and the secretaries of the conference were authorized to make the necessary arrangements for the next meeting.

#### g. *The (Second) Free Conference in Fort Wayne*

Fort Wayne was again the place for the next conference, the fifth and last of the series. The date was Oct. 24—25, 1906. All the time of the four sessions was devoted to the theme established in the previous year: Whether and how far the behavior (*Verhalten*) of man is to be considered in conversion. Profs. Friedrich Bente and George Stöckhardt were the essayists. This conference offered the same

<sup>22</sup> G[eorge] St[öckhardt], "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches: Freie Konferenz in Fort Wayne," *Lehre und Wehre*, LI (1905), 368—72.

<sup>23</sup> "Our opponents have thoroughly killed our interest in these conferences. In what way? (1) Through the untrue and slanderous reports which have been spread in America and Germany concerning the position of the Missourians after each conference. . . . (2) Through the sad fact that . . . despite the free conference our opponents have only grown more firm in their old errors. . . . (3) Particularly that for the Ohio *Kirchenzeitung* the free conferences have been an occasion to decry and to slander Missouri before her people. . . . (4) That the Ohioans . . . have made the leaders of our Synod personally hated in the entire world." (*Lehre und Wehre*, LII [1906], pp. 1—2)

results as the former: no doctrinal agreement was attained, not even in the determination of the fundamental or central point of controversy. At the end of the last session Dr. Stöckhardt, one of the representatives of the Synodical Conference, declared that his group was no longer interested in the continuation of this kind of conference, for the reasons published in the leading periodicals after the last conference. The representatives of the Wisconsin Synod said the same. So the general opinion, even among opponents, was that no further attempt should be made to continue this kind of doctrinal discussion.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF *Analogia Fidei*

### a. *The Synodical Conference Position*

In the reports of the free conferences and additional doctrinal articles in *Lehre und Wehre*, the Missouri Synod theologians (chiefly Pieper and Bente) presented repeatedly the point of view defended by the Synodical Conference, the concept of *analogia fidei*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "The intersynodical Conferences have, at least in their traditional form, fortunately come to an end. They have antagonized the opposing parties, rather than bringing them nearer together. Yet they have served to make the issues clear. In this direction the last conference has become one of the more meaningful ones." (G. J. Fritschel, *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, XXX [1906], 275)

<sup>25</sup> The resource material used in part two includes not only the reports of the conferences but also doctrinal articles in *Lehre und Wehre* and other periodicals of the same time which refer to points of floor discussions in the reports and give explanation and additional information about the points of controversy. Most of the information on the free conferences was collected from *Lehre und Wehre* and *Der Lutheraner*, but *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* of the Iowa Synod and *Theologische Zeitblätter* of the Ohio

According to this concept, every doctrine must be deduced or derived only from those Scripture passages which refer to or which deal with this doctrine, even if the doctrine seems to contradict, in the eyes of human reason, other revealed doctrines. The analogy of faith is not a subjective construction of a doctrinal system or a logical unity of teachings; it is not an insight into a rational connection of the individual Christian doctrines; rather, *analogia fidei* is an objective matter, the clear Scripture passages themselves, put side by side, even if there seems to be an apparent contradiction. Therefore, no one can abolish or put aside any clear Scripture statement with the allegation that the quoted statement contradicts other clear Scripture passages. An apparent conflict between two passages does not destroy the *analogia fidei*. Faith accepts two different Scripture statements, even if they seem to reason to be in disagreement. It is *analogia fidei* and not *analogia rationis*. Faith sees harmony even where reason does not see it.

According to this conception of *analogia fidei* all "dark" or obscure passages have to be explained in the light of the clear and lucid passages. The hermeneutic rule still stands: *Scriptura Scripturam interpretat*. This means: the ambiguous and obscure passages have to be interpreted in the light of the clear and lucid statements, so far as it is possible (for many will remain incomprehensible to us).

Synodical Conference theologians argued against the concept of *analogia fidei* as a new element independent of and above the *sedes doctrinae*, from which alone a

---

Synod were also consulted. The author did not have access to periodicals of the other participating Lutheran church bodies.

doctrine is to be developed. There was a real danger for exegetical procedure, represented by the concept of the "totality of Scripture (*Schriftganze*)," which since Schleiermacher and von Hofmann had dominated modern theology. This "totality of Scripture," according to the explanations of the Missouri Synod theological professors, was not an objective summary of Scriptural teaching but a subjective and logical construction of a doctrinal unity, constructed at will by the ego of the theologizing subject.

The opponents were charged with identifying the *analogia fidei* with the "totality of Scripture" of modern theology and with using it for the rejection of clear Scripture teaching. They were using *analogia fidei* as a new element for Scripture exposition which stands above the *sedes doctrinae* and can modify them.

An example cited for this method of exegesis was Nestorius, the fifth-century heretic who denied that Christ was true God and that God's Son could suffer and die. Nestorius appealed to the *analogia fidei* (according to his concept of it), which for him was a single kind of Scripture passages: those which attributed to God immutability and absolute life.

Zwingli was another example. He propounded the principle of ἀλλοίωσις. Where Bible passages speak of the suffering and death of the Son of God, "Son of God" always is to be understood as "human nature" (of Christ). Even the passage: "The Word was made flesh" he inverted this way: "The flesh was made Word." From the doctrine of the person and the work of Christ he proceeded, by the same method of Scripture interpretation, to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

So the Synodical Conference theologians formulated the rule:

Clear passages of Scripture must not be set in opposition to other clear passages of Scripture, that is, clear passages of Scripture must not be rejected or reinterpreted because reason cannot discern how they are in agreement with other clear passages.<sup>26</sup>

After these explanations and the two examples, the application was made to the method of the opponents, particularly in their handling of the doctrines of conversion and election. The argument of the Ohio Synod and the Iowa Synod theologians had been that the doctrine of a particular election to eternal life contradicted the universal gracious will of God (*der allgemeine Gnadenwille Gottes*). Missouri answered that there was no real contradiction. Of the universal way of salvation, Scripture teaches that man is saved by grace alone on account of Christ and through faith. By grace God gave His Gospel to man; by grace God created faith in him; by grace God preserves faith in man until the end. The doctrine of election does not contradict or overthrow God's universal will of grace, but only adds one new aspect. All that God is doing in this present time for the persons who are saved, he resolved to do for them from eternity.

The antithesis also was raised by the Synodical Conference theologians. They suggested that the doctrine which points to a better behavior (*besseres Verhalten*) of the elect is in contradiction with the clear Scripture and the true analogy of faith and collides with the doctrine of sal-

vation by grace alone and also with the essence of the Gospel. They charged their opponents with letting their doctrinal decision be guided by reason in opposition to Scripture, in the same way in which Melancthon was led to write his famous sentence: "Necesse est *in nobis* esse aliquam discriminis causam."

As a summary of the position of the Synodical Conference there are the 12 articles or principles that Pieper published during the controversy of 1903—1906. Seven of them suffice to exhibit the right understanding of the position that Pieper took:<sup>27</sup>

(1) By *analogia fidei* or *regula fidei* we, with the Confessions, understand the "clear Scripture" itself. (2) "Clear Scripture" with reference to the articles of Christian faith we find in *those* passages of Scripture which treat of or deal with the individual doctrines expressly; these are the so-called *sedes doctrinae*. (3) A right compilation or summary of the Christian doctrine can be obtained only in this way: the individual doctrines have to be drawn from the *sedes doctrinae* and must be judged by them. (4) Any doctrine which is not drawn from the Scripture passages which expressly deal with this doctrine is no Scripture doctrine but a human idea (*Menschengedanke*). . . . (8) Any exposition of Scripture which collides with the article of justification is erroneous, and a closer examination will show that it is not an exposition but a perversion of the words of Scripture. (9) Though the article of justification is the central article of Christian doctrine, the other articles of faith dare not be construed from the article of

<sup>26</sup> F[rantz] P[ieper], "Gebrauch und Missbrauch der Analogie des Glaubens," *Lehre und Wehre*, XLIX (1903), 329.

<sup>27</sup> F[rantz] P[ieper], "Gebrauch und Missbrauch der Analogie des Glaubens," *Lehre und Wehre*, I (1904), 26—27. The translation is the present writer's.



justification, but only from those Scripture passages which deal with the individual doctrines. (10) . . . The analogy of faith, rightly used, is not a watchman for Scripture but for the exegete.

b. *The Position of the Synodical Conference's Opponents*

The differences between the two parties sometimes seem to be irrelevant. Terminology and definitions run together up to a certain point and are similar in many aspects. A good explanation of the opponent's position or a summary of their point of view perhaps can be drawn from a report of Prof. Maximilian Fritschel, which he wrote on the third free conference (that of Detroit). The report or article is a very fine one, objective and irenic; nevertheless it offers a strong criticism of the Synodical Conference position. The following exposition is a free rendering of Fritschel's remarks.<sup>28</sup>

He states that according to the conception of the Synodical Conference theologians, the harmony of Christian doctrines is not an object of our knowledge, at least partially not, but only an object of faith. Such a harmony (or the analogy of faith) can therefore not be used for Scripture exegesis. For them the summary of the doctrines of faith is only a collection, a juxtaposition (*Nebeneinanderstellen*) of the doctrines. The analogy of faith is identified with the so-called parallelism. But Fritschel states that the theological fathers of the Lutheran Church distinguished between analogy and parallelism; even Lu-

ther wrote that no exposition can be accepted as right or legitimate if it does not agree with the *regula fidei*.

In continuation, Fritschel admitted that the analogy of faith is evidently the Scripture itself, the summary of the chief articles of faith drawn from the clear passages of Scripture. (Here they were in agreement with Missouri.) But this *harmonious whole* (*das harmonische Ganze*), he continued, is recognizable (*erkennbar*) for the Christian, especially for the theologian. This harmonious whole is not a compilation made by man but is given by Scripture itself. If it is given by Scripture itself, it shall, it must be used. Reason evidently has to be watched, for it wants to know and to harmonize the secrets of God in their depth (*Tiefe*) and likes to set itself as judge over and above the doctrines and articles of faith.

In this way Ohio and Iowa defended the thesis that the *analogia fidei* not only has to be used for Scripture exposition but must be used as a touchstone for *all* correct Bible exegesis. Exegesis has to begin with the *sedes doctrinae*, with the passages that deal with the individual doctrines, and from them a doctrine is to be deduced, construed, or defined. But as a final act, exegesis has to be examined and tested on the analogy of faith as to its validity. If the results disagree with the *analogia fidei*, it is certain that a mistake has occurred somewhere, and the exegete has to reexamine his exegesis of the *sedes doctrinae*. Only in this way can an expositor have the assurance that he is correct in his procedure and that Scripture is really being interpreted by Scripture; for the analogy of faith is not a part of Scripture, nothing above,

<sup>28</sup> Maximilian Fritschel, "Die intersynodale Konferenz in Detroit," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* (Iowa-Synode), XXVIII (1909), 177—88.

besides, or outside Scripture, but the clear Scripture itself, the whole Scripture, the summary and the essence of the articles of faith.

Though a doctrine can be developed only and correctly from its *sedes doctrinae*, the *analogia fidei* testimony is necessary for a final test, according to the view of Iowa and Ohio. This is true because experience has shown that even clear passages of Scripture have received diverse interpretation; either something has been added to them or put into them or something has been omitted from them.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

It is first of all necessary to recognize some features which distinguish these conferences from some others that were held in the interests of church unity in other parts of the world and even in America:

1. The participants struggled for unity in spirit: for harmony in doctrine and not only for an external merger, since both sides were convinced that a God-pleasing unity could be reached only if the doctrinal differences are settled.

2. For this reason the debates did not center on secondary matters but on the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

3. The differences were not denied, covered, or diminished, but expounded clearly and faced openly.

4. The deliberations started from the presupposition that Holy Scripture is the only source and rule for doctrine and life and that the Lutheran Symbols are in agreement with Holy Scripture.

Why then the general complaint that no agreement was reached between the two parties, and even that according to

some observers the gap was widened between the two groups?<sup>29</sup>

It was pointed out previously that neither party correctly understood the essential point of difference. According to the available literature, one group repeatedly charged the other with distorting the first group's viewpoint and with failing to do justice to the truth of the matter. An observer from the Iowa Synod put his finger on this problem when he stated that it never was possible to "define the *status controversiae* exactly and in a manner which would receive the agreement of both parties."<sup>30</sup> A strong proof for this statement is the fact that even the preparatory conference at Chicago,<sup>31</sup> a small circle consisting of a few selected participants of the chief groups, could not reach agreement, not even in the matter of the *status controversiae*.

Both parties agreed that there is an *analogia fidei*, that this *analogia fidei* is the summary of the clear Scripture statements about the Christian doctrines, and that a doctrine must always be derived from its own *sedes doctrinae* and never from the *analogia fidei*. But they disagreed as to the nature of the *analogia fidei*. Either the analogy of faith is identical to Scripture parallelism (Synodical Conference), or it is to be distinguished from parallelism and

<sup>29</sup> A correspondent and observer from a Canadian periodical is quoted by F[riedrich] B[ente]: "Moreover, because of the free conferences, the rift between the various synods has been continuously becoming broader instead of narrower." "Wo liegt . . . die Differenz." (*Lehre und Wehre*, I [1904], 273)

<sup>30</sup> Maximilian F[ritschel], "Die intersynodale Konferenz in Detroit," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* (Iowa-Synode), XXVIII (1904), 180.

<sup>31</sup> *Supra*, p. 220.

considered as a separate entity (Ohio and Iowa).

As to the right or wrong use of the *analogia fidei*, the disagreement was more apparent. The Synodical Conference theologians taught that the *analogia fidei* was primarily a matter of faith, for reason many times would not see the harmony of Scripture teaching. For the opponents it had to be known to reason; for them *analogia fidei* was also a matter of intelligence, since the exegete had to use it as an instrument for testing the correctness of his exegetical procedure. But it was just this last point which the Synodical Conference theologians vehemently contested. They battled for the "uniqueness" of the *sedes doctrinae* in giving birth to and proof for a doctrine. As was pointed out before, there was the fear and perhaps the real danger to identify the *analogia fidei* with the "totality of Scripture" of European theology. They also sensed a danger that human reason would have too great a part in the elaboration of a doctrine. But it has to be said also that the theological fathers of Missouri (or the Synodical Conference) sometimes paid too much attention to the minor differences which divided them from other church bodies, and paid less attention to the great and overwhelming affinity in doctrine and practice which connected them. Hence the charges of in-

tolerance, narrow-mindedness, and the like arose.

The public position of the Missouri Synod remained the same until 1932, for *A Brief Statement* of that year reads expressly:

With the Confessions of our Church we teach also that the "rule of faith" (*analogia fidei*) according to which the Holy Scriptures are to be understood are the clear passages of *the Scriptures themselves* which set forth the individual doctrines. . . . The rule of faith is not the man-made so-called "totality of Scripture."<sup>32</sup>

In the *Common Confession* of 1949 the old problem seems to have been settled. In the section "Means of Grace" there is only the classic phrase of the Smalcald Articles: "And this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith."<sup>33</sup> In the section on "The Church and Church Fellowship" the emphasis is put on the Gospel:

Ultimately all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures have an organic connection with the central theme of the Scriptures, which is the Gospel. A denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, a departure from, the complete Gospel.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Documents of Lutheran Unity*, p. 382.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.