

THE OHIO SYNOD

AT THE TIME OF THE 1930 ALC MERGER :

INCIPIENT UNIONISM

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A candid look at the ALC today is not very pleasant. Matters have gone from bad to worse, speaking from a conservative Lutheran standpoint, on almost every issue. Especially is this true in the area of unionism. A brief glance at virtually any issue of the "scandal sheet" (Christian News) of the past few years will reveal the blatant view of the ALC toward "agreements to disagree." Although the ecumenical movement of the 20th century is certainly a close relative to this paper's topic, the real issue is unionism among Lutherans, so I'll stick to that.

It's my contention that the present state of affairs in the ALC is not at all surprising. In fact, with a look back into the past, I hope to show that today's unionism in the ALC is to be expected. Although the new ALC is not equivalent to the ALC of this paper, the conclusions and proofs do apply. For the bulwark of the ALC today is the old ALC, and as far as confessional Lutheranism is concerned, the bulwark of the old ALC was the Ohio Synod. Of the three synods which in 1930 merged to form the original ALC, Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio, Ohio has to be considered the strongest confessional influence of the three.

The way a member of WELS could look at the current situation in the ALC is this: "The doctrinal influences of the two major bodies in the original ALC, Iowa and Ohio, have apparently done a 180° turn. Originally it seemed as though the theology of the

Ohio Synod was the dominant influence in the ALC. Today it seems as though the more liberal old Iowa influence is on top." Certainly that paraphrase of current thinking in our circles is accurate, but I believe such a statement is really too superficial, for it fails to acknowledge what I believe to be the real reason for the current state of affairs in the ALC. I really don't think it is a case of good vs. evil, Ohio vs. Iowa, with first one side ahead in the battle for doctrinal supremacy, and then the other. I believe that Ohio sold its birthright of "orthodoxy" from the very beginning. I believe that by consciously trying to be the "uniting, middle-of-the-road" force in Lutheranism, Ohio had to bend its biblical stand on fellowship. And when unionism and false fellowship practices are adopted, a whole Pandora's box of false doctrine is unleashed on such a church.

To demonstrate that the fateful seed had been already planted in the Ohio Synod by the days of the 1930 merger, I will use primary source materials of the Ohio Synod at the time which are available in our library, namely the official Ohio Synod-ALC publications: "The Lutheran Standard" and "The Pastor's Monthly." Although I found Fred Meuser's book, "The Formation of the American Lutheran Church" quite reliable and comprehensive, I've decided that the nature of this paper would militate against using a historian's, however good he might be, compilations and thoughts on the early ALC's formation. I've decided to stick to what the average layman and pastor would have been exposed to in official publications of the day and divide this resource material into four sections: Synodical spokesmen and the like, C.C. Hein, parish pastors, and laymen. With such a division of the material, I would hope to give

evidence that the germ of unionism was spread throughout the Synod, and not confined to and known of just a few. The average layman and/or pastor of the day will have read much of what is quoted in this paper, depending on how diligently he read his synod's publications.

President C.C. Hein is somewhat of an enigma. His Christianity cannot be questioned. He seemed to stand up for what we would want him to, as far as doctrine was concerned. But his blind spots, magnified by his position of leadership, have had disastrous results. For example, in his first New Year's message to the ALC, in 1931, he sounds so good when he writes:

But our Church needs more than prayer: she needs also that faithful, wholehearted cooperation of all her members in every field of church activity, without which genuine progress and success is utterly impossible. The indications as they have appeared thus far at the various assemblies and meetings are that this cooperation will not be lacking. For that reason our Church may now joyfully begin her work and look confidently into the future. She stands firm and secure on the everlasting rock of the Divine Word. She marches forward with united front under the banner of the Lutheran Confessions. May God keep her faithful to the Truth and grant her at all times pastors and congregations who are moved and guided by the Spirit of Christ. Then our Church will prosper. The Lord will bless her and she will be a blessing to many.¹

He is also the same person who expressed "misgivings" over attending the Lutheran World Convention in Copenhagen in 1929.² He is the same C.C. Hein who penned "The Distinctive Contribution of Lutheranism to Christendom" in which are found quotes like these:

In contrast to the Church of Rome and to that of Zwingli and Calvin, in contrast to the spirit of sectarianism and fanaticism which on more than one occasion has played fast and loose with divine truth: where true to her principles the Lutheran Church distinguishes herself from all others by taking her stand squarely upon the formal principle of the Reformation---the Word of God, the whole word of God, and nothing but the Word of God."³

Whenever, on the other hand, the Word of God speaks, the Lutheran Church demands a full, complete, unconditional, and whole-hearted acceptance. She protests against any and all authority of the human reason in the premises. She denies to human reason the right to sit in judgment upon the Scriptures, to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials, and to determine what shall be accepted and rejected. Scripture transcends reason. Reason must bow in submission to the authority of Christ, for neither itself nor science nor the so-called religious experience, nor ecclesiastical group consciousness ever dare set themselves up as tribunals qualified to pass judgment upon the teachings of Scripture in regard to their credibility and truth. No, faith in the whole of Scripture is the postulate of Lutheran Christianity.⁴

But why this attitude toward the Scriptures? Because to the Lutheran Church the Bible as a whole as well as in all its parts is the pure and infallible Word of God, for the reason that the Holy Spirit has inspired it. The Lutheran Church does not distinguish between Scripture and the Word of God. She knows the Holy Spirit as the author of the Bible. The prophets, evangelists, and apostles were organs taken into service by the Holy Spirit in the formulation of the Scriptures. What they wrote has the Holy Spirit for author in point of both form and content. Although the mode of inspiration is not revealed in Scripture and hence is a mystery beyond the range of reason and theological science, the Lutheran Church, nevertheless, accepts the miracle of inspiration on the strength of the testimony of Scripture itself and regards whatever Scripture says as the infallible Word of God, whether it refers to things pertaining to salvation or to matters of other import. That was the position of Luther, and also of the fathers who formulated the Lutheran Confessions. That no special article was devoted to the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures in the Confessions is explained by the fact that these were not controverted questions. The Confessions take both the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures for granted.⁵

Contracting the Lutheran Church with the remainder of the Christian world, we shall recognize a second distinctive feature of Lutheranism. In distinction from the Church of Rome, from that of Zwingli and Calvin and from all sects and fanatics of every age, the Lutheran Church shines forth in the midst of the Christian world as the only church that holds securely to the material principle of the Reformation---justification by faith alone.⁶

Doesn't that all sound great! Reprint something like that in the Quarterly and nobody would bat an eye. C.C. Hein's personal

W. H. ...
M. ...
H. ...
A. ...

Christianity, humanly speaking, is beyond question. Yet where was this paper first delivered? The footnote in Pastor's Monthly tells us that it was delivered at the Copenhagen World Lutheran Convention. His very presence there, despite his "misgivings" betrays his wishy-washy attitude in the area of unionism. The word "Lutheran" to Hein seemed to mean as much as the word "Christian." Here was a devout Christian leader who let himself be duped, who led his church body and affiliates into more unionism, seemingly unable, or better, unwilling, to admit that the middle-of-the-road stance in Lutheranism was not upholding Biblical doctrine.

Speaking of footnotes, this is the same man who allowed the Ohio Synod position on the aforementioned Word of God, "inspired and inerrant," be footnoted into the original ALC constitution. Compromising to unite, playing the conscious middle position in American Lutheranism, he, however unwittingly, more than any other person in authority in the ALC, by his words and actions allowed the seed of unionism to germinate in the new ALC. Nowhere is this more evident than in his final speech to the separate Ohio Synod, in 1930:

The Lutheran Church has a different conception of a union pleasing to God and beneficial to the Church. In this Jubilee Year of the Augsburg Confession Lutherans throughout the world should remember that in this genetic confession around which all those rallied who accepted the faith of Luther, our fathers have laid down those principles which forever should guide all true Evangelicals in matters of fellowship and union. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession says: "To the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." Wherever this agreement is found there is true unity and the proper basis for union. The requisite for external union is internal unity, unity as to "the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments,"---no more and no less.⁷

Notice Hein's stress on "The Lutheran Church," without further definitions. Notice his use of the Augsburg Confession without actually explaining the wide scope of the words "the doctrine of the gospel" in both doctrine and practice. His is a message for unity. Unity not of all church bodies, but, in principle, just as bad, unity of all church bodies that have the name "Lutheran" affixed to their organization:

Many of our Lutheran people have unceasingly prayed for peace in the Lutheran Zion and many, among them our own Synod, have labored for unity. What are the results? in my estimation two things divide the Lutherans of America, separatism on the one hand, and unionism on the other. As long as some synods refuse to recognize certain other synods as Lutheran, unless these others accept their method of presenting Biblical truth as the only method permissible in the Lutheran Church, and as long as they carry this spirit so far that they will not even pray with these others; and as long as other synods fail to apply the Galesburg Rule, "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran communicants only," and continue to tolerate pastors who are affiliated with Masonic lodges and permit pastors and congregations to engage in unScriptural practices, a union of the Lutheran forces cannot be brought about. The Lutheran Companion is right when it says: "If the broadest wing of Lutheranism in our country would cease its unionism with other creeds, discipline its clergy as to secretism, and stand for a genuine Lutheranism, it would hasten unity." Separatism and unionism divide the Lutheran Church and to remove both must be the endeavor of every Lutheran Christian and Lutheran Synod.⁸

In essence, Hein is calling for a unity under his brand of Lutheranism, strictly middle-of-the-road Lutheranism. But his is a narrow-minded view, not only failing to see that the Synodical Conference position is Biblical, but also failing to see that the new ALC was just one small step in the right direction from the Eastern Lutherans. If every Lutheran would have the same kind of personal faith as Hein, "a genuine Lutheranism" might be a possibility in American Lutheranism. But with rationalism and humanism having

such a foothold in other Lutheran bodies, to want to become oblivious to all but the magic name "Lutheran" has become a black mark in the legacy of C.C. Hein to the ALC. This is a comment concerning the 1928 Ohio Synod convention: "Dr. Hein fittingly responded by expressing the hope that the day will soon come when there will be no German Lutheran church, nor Norwegian, nor Swedish, nor Danish, and the like, but an American Lutheran Church."⁹

The stance taken by Hein is more or less the same position as that of the other "official" spokesmen for the Ohio Synod. Under this category I lump Seminary professors, staff writers for the Lutheran Standard and the Pastor's Monthly, and anyone else who seemed to have a call other than to the parish ministry. Pretty much the same story line for these ~~men~~^{MEN} as for the leader Hein: When speaking about the "Word" or our "Confessions" things generally sound great. But the moment Lutheran union is the topic, the blinders are on and it's full speed ahead toward achieving Lutheran unity.

Much of what is said sounds so good, as for example this excerpt from an article entitled "The True Visible Church":

The reader should note that all along in these things the decisive factor is the Word of God. Not what I may think for myself, nor what my wife or husband may think, nor what the preacher may say, but what the Word of God teaches. One sees here readily how people, who no longer believe the Bible to be God's inspired and infallible Word, can become broad-minded and can accept or allow any view or teaching that commends itself to their reason or way of thinking.¹⁰

But such statements are far outweighed by others which point toward a consciousness of Lutheran unity. This is evident in the efforts to achieve the original ALC ~~union~~^{Union}. From a 1926 issue of Pastor's Monthly:

This same aspect of the case has its bearing upon our church's relation to the world without. People judge by appearances. The Lutheran Church in this country is divided into a considerable number of organizations. Especially since one of them has made it a practice to add its synodical name to the name of its constituent congregations whenever these advertise their services, we cannot well blame the man in the street if he makes up his mind that there are as many kinds of Lutheranism as there are synods. It is but one step further to the argument which we so confidently use with reference to the enemies of the church of Christ: that the very differences among themselves prove the weakness of their case. Surely, we can ill afford to expose the non-Lutheran words to such a danger.

Later in the same year more groundwork for the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo merger was laid in the Pastor's Monthly:

The first section of this Confession, as adopted and recommended by the Joint Merger Commission, reads: "The Synod accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as 'the inspired and inerrant Word' of God, and 'the only source,' norm, and guide of faith and life." The change is not great. The statement suggested by the Iowa Synod is not unacceptable. But, whether you will or not, the question immediately arises, "Why this Change?" Up to the close of the convention no official statement of its reasons for requiring this change had been received from the Iowa Synod, although it had, in response to a request on our part, sent an official representative to our convention in the person of the Rev. Mr. Emil Rausch. No one will be surprised to learn that the feeling prevalent in our circles was nothing short of consternation at the turn events had been given. What the result will be remains to be seen.¹²

The results "to be seen" ended up to be the footnote incident already referred to. The door was opened a little and the crack gradually opened wider, leading to a compromising, undermining constitutional stand. By 1928, a couple of years before the official merger the cause for unity had conquered all official doctrinal fears:

The ground had been cleared and the approach to the great question had been made largely by the addresses of the fraternal delegates of the two synods, as also by the address of the president of the Norwegian Church and also in part by the

laymen's meeting on Friday evening. There was really little else yet to do but to take the yeas and the nays, and as a matter of fact there was very little further discussion when the question came up. It will be recalled that the hitch two years ago, when the union was to have taken place, was caused by a difference, at least in expression, as to the inerrancy of the Scriptures. But now every assurance was given that there is no difference among the three synods on that point. The Iowa Synod, at its very recent meeting, had adopted propositions dealing with the matter, they are perfectly satisfactory to our own Synod and also to Buffalo.¹³

A man whom by his title I presume to be a member of the Columbus faculty, Rev. H.J. Schuh, D.D., has an essay in the September 1929 issue of the Pastor's Monthly with a very suggestive title:

"What Can Be Done To Bring About More Fraternal Relations Among The Different Branches Of The Lutheran Church Of This Country ."

Not only is that a mouthful to say in one breath, it is also a title which presupposes that such "relations" are acceptable and expedient. The general drift of the article is this: "There's more of a natural bond between separated Lutheran church bodies than between a Lutheran Synod and another Protestant sect. So instead of quibbling about minor matters among ourselves, why don't we Lutherans form a united front to the rest of Christianity? We'll be more effective if we pool our resources and energies." Some of the ideals espoused in this article are sound, but there is always the contaminating influence of "striving for Lutheran unity" hovering in the background. Every chance is to be given, or more accurately, taken, when pursuing this grand goal of Lutheran unity:

Let us be honest to our opponents. Give even the Devil his dues. Do not impute to a man what he expressly repudiates. You may think that certain principles which he confesses necessarily imply certain other principles, but when your opponent expressly repudiates these conclusions you should accept his statement and thank God that he is so inconsistent. Take a man at his word and let him speak for himself. He knows better than you what he believes. Put the best, not the worst construction on everything, is the rule which Luther lays down in the catechism.¹⁴

In the context of this essay, however, I can only put the worst construction on such reasoning and concluding, a conscious effort to ignore the plain facts of doctrine.

As mentioned before, one of the key events during these years was the Lutheran World Convention in Copenhagen. Although Hein was not gung-ho on the idea of attending, he was in the minority, for convention and committees endorsed his attendance along with other Synod representatives. The over-all favorable attitude toward this Copenhagen gathering in the Ohio Synod, as shown by the following quotes, was surely a big factor in influencing Hein to once again lay aside his personal feelings on the matter. Before the Convention, this excerpt from a longer staff article in the Lutheran Standard set the all too favorable tone toward such efforts:

In its labor of love, the members of the Executive Committee have ever recognized the fact that the Lutheran World Convention movement is essentially spiritual in character. It looks to the discovery of existing inner unity, to its development, to the alignment of those who are truly one in the faith. It stands frankly for conservative Lutheranism, for positive Christianity. Whether one thinks of Stockholm or Lausanne, it becomes increasingly clear that our most hopeful outlook for making an essential contribution to ultimate Christian unity lies along the way of the mobilization of the forces of the church through the Lutheran World Convention movement.¹⁵

After the convention, the editor of "Lutherische Kirchenzeitung," who was a delegate to the convention and a member of its Secretariat, had these glowing words to say:

Even now, except in the case of those who for some reason or other claim the name Lutheran and with mental or vaguely worded reservations subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions although they are Reformed or Modernists or Rationalists, there is more unity among Lutherans the world over than in any other denomination, including the Roman Catholic. This has been shown time and again. It is the natural result of subscription and adherence to the two principles of the Lutheran Reformation.

But we are not as conscious of this unity as we should be; we do not stress it before our own people and before the world as we should. Sometimes it seems as though we took greater pleasure in parading our differences before outsiders. We do not regularly and unitedly give expression to our common full adherence to the teachings of Holy Writ and our subscription to the Lutheran Confessions in works of love that should flow from such faith. We have made a beginning, as the history of the Lutheran World Convention movement from 1923 to 1929 shows, and this is cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving; but we must move forward. The Executive Committee, into whose experienced hands the Convention has again laid the administration of its work, will show us the way, and all of us should follow.¹⁶

So in no uncertain terms did the leaders of the Ohio Synod hierarchy and press press for "Lutheran unity" even before the 1930 merger.

One of the cleverest stratagems of those on the staff of the Lutheran Standard who were pro-Lutheran unity was its selection of articles. Of all the reading I did, not once did I come upon any sharp rejection or criticism of Lutheran unity and its progress. There were lots of unanswered questions raised and more than a few articles which urged caution, but the Ohio Synod's constituency was fed a solid diet of the same brand of Lutheran unity goulash. One group of articles especially caught my attention. Beginning with the July 6, 1929 issue and continuing for the next seven weeks, the lead, front-page article dealt with a look at the Diet of Spires in 1529. It was quite convenient also that the proposed merger was soon to go into effect, as well as the fact that this was the Diet's 400th Anniversary. Now, a few times the lead article continued from one week to the next, but for seven weeks in a row Ohio relived the glorious days of the unity of the Lutheran princes against the papal decrees at Worms. Yes, such glorious Lutheran unity as was to be had then was the touchstone of the early ALC's consciously middle-of-the-roaders!

The parish pastors of the Ohio Synod also seemed to be generally behind the 1930 ALC merger, as well as the new ALC's mediating position in American Lutheranism. Since articles in the Standard and Monthly do not always completely identify the author if he is a "local boy," I had to go by what seemed to be the usual way of designating articles submitted for publication by parish pastors. At any rate, even if there is some overlapping with the previous section, the cause remains the same: "Lutheran unity" with the ALC leading the way.

As stated before, clearly C.C. Hein was not a man who set off on his own to blaze new paths through Lutheranism. He evidently had the support of the great majority of those who had voted him into office:

We Lutherans of the Joint Synod have need to examine ourselves with reference to what has just been set forth. It is always a step in the right direction when we see the beam that is in our own eye before we look for the mote in the eyes of others. It is certainly in conformity with the spirit of Luther when the president of our Synod (and he deserves not only our commendation but our support) makes bold to say:

"The outstanding sin of the Lutherans of America, a sin crying to heaven and a crime against the Church, is the lack of unity among the Lutheran forces of this country. What is the remedy? Surely not to stand before God, saying: 'God, I thank Thee that my synod is not as other synods are,' but rather to ask oneself in the presence of God: 'Is there something in my synod's doctrine, its practice, its life, its spirit, its seminaries, its publications, its polemics, its attitude toward other religious bodies, etc., that disrupts Lutheran unity and prevents union with other Lutheran bodies on the basis of the Scriptures and the Confessions?' Unity among Lutheran forces is necessary if the Lutheran Church is to exert the influence to which she is entitled.¹⁷

The stress on Lutheran unity to the exclusion of "petty" doctrinal issues, especially as concerns the Synodical Conference, is quite evident.

Probably the key feature of this unity which attracted it to the average pastor was referred to in the last words of the preceding quote: "Unity among Lutheran forces is necessary if the Lutheran Church is to exert the influence to which she is entitled." In other words, "unity=strength and influence." Or in other words, "for the doctrines of Luther to overcome and be a recognized power in America there must be unity." Or in still other words, "we've determined that the most efficient way the Holy Ghost wants to use the Lutheran Church in spreading the gospel is through Lutheran unity." Sound a bit crassly put? Well, let's hear from the horses' mouths:

The coming union of our Synod with the Iowa and the Buffalo Synods is one of the most important events in the history of our church. None of us is able to realize at this time, the far-reaching effect of this union, or estimate the value of it to the life and activity of the church. The future will gradually unfold the purpose of God as it is being accomplished through this event.

The great task of setting our house in order, before the union is effected, must claim our attention now. All our energies and efforts must be directed to this task in order to make the union possible in 1930. Unless we plan well and cooperate whole-heartedly in a united effort we cannot succeed. There must be unity of spirit and purpose. We must stand shoulder to shoulder to win the victory. Unity of heart and hand gives tremendous strength. That is what made the Apostolic Church so strong in withstanding the persecutions of that time. It is recorded in the book of Acts no less than eight times that they were of one accord, of one heart and mind. That made them conquerors over every foe. The magnitude of the task demands that we do the same.

This unity of purpose must then be accomplished by a definite, workable plan of operation. Individual and independent efforts will not accomplish the task we must pull together. A multitude of men does not make a winning army even though all are agreed on the issue. They must be organized into regiments and companies under competent leadership, then they are ready for hard battles and can win glorious victories. It is just as necessary for our church to be organized in order to move forward with sufficient strength to accomplish its purpose.¹⁸

And also:

There is encouragement in numbers; it helps overcome that inferiority complex of which we hear so much. When there are just a few congregations of one synod in a place, they naturally feel somewhat inferior to other organizations who are represented by larger numbers. You know, three feel safer going down the street late at night than if one is alone; if we go for a trip into the northern wilds we feel a little better if there are several of us; it will be advantageous in case some difficulty turns up. It is human, and often sinful, to trust too much in numbers, but that is not what I mean; I mean that there is a great comfort and encouragement in the fact that you have many Christian people near you who work for the same cause and belong to the same organization. It is said that pigeons will gather in places where there already is a flock of pigeons. Sometimes we wish that our Lutheran pigeons would flock together more than they do, it might do us good to see how many we really are. In many parts of the country it will not be possible to form conferences like this, where formerly there were not enough people of one synod for that purpose.¹⁹

In fact, unity was laid upon the consciences of the Synod's constituency:

We have the duty of becoming one. We have heard of the difference in the waters of the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers. The water of the latter is whitish, that of the former comparatively clear. The two streams join at St. Louis. But for miles and miles you can see the two currents flow side by side. Finally when they flow into the sea they are thoroughly mingled and you recognize but one stream. It will be like that in the American Lutheran Church; for a while the different synods will still exist, at least in our minds, and will assert themselves; we shall find it hard to think of pastors and congregations without asking first what their former associations were. That is natural, but we must learn to overcome it; the waters must not flow forever as separate streams. The Jt. Synod of Ohio, the Synod of Buffalo, and the Iowa Synod are things of the past. We have been at home there, we have labored and sacrificed there, we have received great blessings there, the church bodies from which we have individually come must ever hold a place of gratitude in our hearts; but as to the future, we must know only the new synod, the American Lutheran Church. It will take years to accomplish that. Ten years after the United Lutheran Church in America had been organized some of the leaders said, "We are beginning to merge now." We shall very likely have similar experiences.²⁰

About the strongest unity statement by a parish pastor that I located was from a Miami Valley Conference paper delivered in 1951. In no uncertain terms is a unifying, middle-of-the-road position acclaimed as the ultimate solution for American Lutheranism:

We consider the formation of the American Lutheran Church, and The American Lutheran Conference as the most significant movement toward maintaining the truly evangelical spirit not only of the Lutheran church, but of the whole Protestant church of America. For the Lutheran church, they shall be under God the means of drawing the more conservative Missouri on the one hand, and the less conservative United Lutheran church on the other into one truly great American Lutheran Church; and on the other hand, they, together with the other Lutheran synods, will play a large part in helping save the other denominations from the modern rationalism, modern liberalism so-called, that threatens the very destruction of these denominations.²¹

I'll conclude this paper with a brief, fourth section. I did locate a couple of pertinent articles which were penned by laymen ~~of~~ of the synod. Naturally, what they had to tell the Lutheran Standard's readers was all positive as far as making Lutheran unity the number one objective in the new ALC. One hesitates to label another church body's official paper as "propoganda" for the masses, but with only the wrong side of a controversial issue being placed in favorable light, year after year, it's no wonder that the inundated constituency succumbed to such pressure. Since "everybody else" seems to be for it, their doubts and misgivings must be foolish and ill-founded.

From "A Layman's View of the Merger" are these quotes:

May the Holy Spirit guide me and use my words to the advancement of our dear Lutheran Church. I hope no Lutheran will be offended, but will put the best construction on one layman's views of the merger. I have been watching the division of synods in the Lutheran Church since the eighties, and in all these years it has been my wish and prayer that we Lutherans could worship the Triune God as one great body. In regard

to what has been done and is being done to bring about this union, I find there are many who are working hard for it, that others are indifferent, and it seems that some even try to hinder the cause...

How can our laymen help to promote the merger? I think first by going to our heavenly Father in earnest prayer and supplication for the cause, asking Him to remove all ill feelings toward one another, and to fill our hearts with brotherly love. If all Lutherans, from president to layman, would sincerely do this, I firmly believe a merger would soon take place of all synods who are one in faith and practice. Another important thing for all Lutherans to do is to study and inform themselves of conditions existing in our Lutheran Church: what is being done, and what could be done to win souls for the kingdom of God. It has been my lot to be on the Kansas-Nebraska District Committee since synod adopted this new system, and I must confess I have received a great deal of information on the existing conditions and the workings of the various synods. I fear in many instances much time and money are wasted, which are needed so badly in other places, where our Lutheran brethren are being lost to our Church and possibly to the kingdom of God...

Much more could be said on merging, but I shall close with this wish and prayer: May the All-wise God, if it be His will, hasten the day when our dear Lutheran Church shall worship together in true inward faith, which alone will stand the test of time. Then and then only will our Church be in a position to do real evangelistic work.²²

The real kicker in this section was the U Rah! Rah! lead article in the September 28, 1929 issue of Lutheran Standard:

Already as a little boy when I attended Sunday School and later religious instruction preparatory for Confirmation, I could not understand the matter of different synods in the Lutheran Church. My dear sainted mother, who, by virtue of the fact that she attended parochial school in Germany, was well versed in all matters of her Church and its history, did not succeed in making it clear to me why there were so many synods, with so little difference in their opinions on church matters, instead of all being united into one great body. This condition caused me not a little concern and I spoke to my pastor about it, when I was still only a young man. He told me many things that caused these divisions and always terminated the conversation by saying that it is apparently impossible ever to effect a reunion of all the synods or even a part of them.

Neither did this satisfy me, because I could see no reason whatever, except fanatical obstinacy or ordinary, narrow-minded hard-headedness on the part of individuals, that kept them apart. That it should be impossible for really devout, God-fearing men, to get together and prayerfully consider

and adjust their differences of opinion and establish a common ground on which to meet, I could not understand.

Thus it was with great delight that I hailed the first news of a contemplated merger of at least a few of the synods, and more especially, because it included the synods of Ohio and Iowa...

My discourse is too long, but I am so enthusiastic and happy about it, that I bubble over and can hardly await that happy day when this merger, by the grace of God, will materialize.

I see Divine guidance and blessing in this undertaking, the last great task for our beloved Ohio Synod to undertake.

Every pastor and lay member should be thankful to God and most happy to support this move prayerfully, morally and materially, to bring it to a successful issue.²³

Without being redundant: From its very beginnings, even the Ohio Synod section of the old ALC from top to bottom was inherently pro-Lutheran unity. To be surprised at post-1930 developments in the ALC is disregarding its previous track record.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹Lutheran Standard, Jan. 3, 1931, p. 3.
- ²Pastor's Monthly, Oct., 1928, p. 584.
- ³Pastor's Monthly, July, 1929, p. 402.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 403.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 404-5. ⁶Ibid., p. 406.
- ⁷Lutheran Standard, August 2, 1930, p. 6.
- ⁸Lutheran Standard, August 9, 1930, p. 2.
- ⁹Lutheran Standard, September 8, 1928, p. 568.
- ¹⁰Lutheran Standard, July 28, 1928, p. 470.
- ¹¹Pastor's Monthly, March 1926, p. 141.
- ¹²Pastor's Monthly, October 1926, p. 588.
- ¹³Lutheran Standard, Sept. 15, 1928, p. 585.
- ¹⁴Pastor's Monthly, Sept. 1929, p. 524.
- ¹⁵Lutheran Standard, Jan. 21, 1928, p. 36.
- ¹⁶Lutheran Standard, Sept. 21, 1929, p. 8.
- ¹⁷Lutheran Standard, Oct. 5, 1929, p. 6.
- ¹⁸Lutheran Standard, March 16, 1929, p. 1.
- ¹⁹Lutheran Standard, June 13, 1931, p. 6.
- ²⁰Lutheran Standard, June 27, 1931, p. 5.
- ²¹Pastor's Monthly, Sept. 1931, pp. 529-30.
- ²²Lutheran Standard, Jan. 4, 1930, pp. 7-9.
- ²³Lutheran Standard, Sept 28, 1929, pp. 1-2.

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