

CHICAGO: March 11, 12, 13, 1919

ECUMENICAL CONFSSIONALISM  
VS.  
EXCLUSIVE CONFSSIONALISM

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Church History

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During the decade of 1910-1920 the Synods of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Nebraska worked for closer unity among themselves. By the end of the decade the working unity that had existed since 1892 was an organic unity.

During that same decade other, larger Lutheran bodies were also striving to unite. It is helpful to get an overview of those efforts in order to put the meetings at Chicago in March of 1919 into perspective. The Norwegian Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America had also formed during this period. Thus the varying smaller groups sought and sounded each other out, forming unions according to their confessional agreements or lack thereof, as the case may be.

The many and diverse Lutheran bodies must have presented a strange picture to a country who had paid dearly for unity a generation before in the Civil War. Surely these German immigrants would have to do more towards getting it all together if they were to have any influence in a country that was experiencing an industrial boom the likes of which the world had never seen before.

A different approach to this problem was taken during this decade by C. H. L. Schuette, president of the Joint Synod of Ohio, who looked to 1917, the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, as a target date for unity. In 1912 he proposed free conferences as a means of initiating the needed discussion. The Iowa Synod, the General Council, the General Synod and the United Synod in the South responded positively. The Constitution for the proposed Federation revealed the point that made this effort unique: the unit membership was to be the local synods.

The large general bodies were by-passed in this organizational structure. The project therefore failed. The larger general bodies had struggled into existence and they were not ready to weaken their hold in a giant step towards a national Lutheran church.

The terror of the First World War shook up everything. The crisis dictated courses of action that would have taken years under peacetime circumstances. At least this is the theory of some. Yet it is perhaps more a weakness of groups that are not whole-hearted in their confessional stands. The Missouri Synod did not run scared in the face of this adversity but raised a half a million dollars to support their Army and Navy Board which stands in the shadow of the million and a quarter raised by Knobel for the National Commission for Soldier's and Sailor's Welfare, but did not involve them in violating fellowship principles.

The National Commission for Soldier's and Sailor's Welfare was like a porch that invited those who would have thought it too great an obstacle to struggle up into the high front door of unity. There was good reason for the existence of the Commission. Soldiers were going off to a foreign land to fight for freedom. They needed spiritual care and the government could not allow a number of small Lutheran groups to each send spiritual counselors to tramp around the battle grounds. It was logical to unite in the crisis.

Once on the porch the rest of the process of entering into unity didn't seem so immense. Problems had drawn them together and now some seemed even worse and new ones cropped up so it was logical to continue to work to solve these problems together.

A new structure was needed since the original Committee could only deal with the war and the war was over. Meetings were held in July and August of 1918 in Harrisburg and Pittsburgh to form a national

committee that would do a number of tasks for Lutherans in America:

- 1) gather statistical information
- 2) public relations administration
- 3) deal with problems arising from war and other emergencies
- 4) co-ordinate efforts to solve "social, economic or intellectual conditions or changes affection religious life and consciousness"
- 5) "Fostering. . . a righteous relation between Church and State as separate entities with correlated yet distinctly defined functions."

On September 6, 1918 the National Lutheran Council came into being in Chicago. This action was taken by the presidents of the various synods involved without first being presented to the members of those groups. Represented in the founding of the Council were: General Synod, General Council, Ohio Synod, Iowa Synod, Augustana Synod, Norwegian Lutheran Church, Lutheran Free Church and Danish Lutheran Church.

Some of the presidents had little trouble in convincing their synods that the Council was a good group in which to have membership. But H. G. Stub, although elected the president of the Council, had problems with some of the Norwegians in the Synod he had recently helped to organize and for whom he also acted as president.

There were difficulties already in the merger which put the Hauge Synod, Norwegian Synod, and United Norwegian Lutheran Church into one unit: the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Because these difficulties existed Stub knew that a confessional basis would have to be agreed upon among the Council Member Synods if the Norwegians were to take a co-operative part. This involved settling a number of long-standing Lutheran disagreements. This led to the Chicago meetings in March, 1919.

Before going any further it will be valuable to set down a thumbnail sketch of the two chief men involved in the Chicago meetings - Stub and Knobel.

Hans Gerhard Stub was born in Muskego, Wisconsin on February 23, 1849. His parents sent him to Norway where he went to school from 1861-65. Returning to America he continued his education by attending Luther College, Decorah, Iowa and Concordia College, Fort Wayne; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis completed his formal training and he was ordained in 1877. With this conservative background he worked his way up from a pastorate in Minnesota (1872-78), to professorship at Luther Seminary, Madison, Wisconsin and Robbinsdale, Minnesota (1878-96), to pastor/professor at Decorah (1896-1916) and into the vice-presidency of the Norwegian Synod 1906-11. As was said before he was instrumental in organizing the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America in 1917 and served as president of the group until 1925. Stub made use of his Norwegian heritage to edit Norwegian theological journals and also wrote historical works dealing with pioneer days. His death came August 1, 1931.

Frederick Herman Knobel was born May 22, 1870 in New York City, New York. Graduating from Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary in 1895 he went to the University of Leipzig for graduate work. He was ordained in 1896 and that year founded the Church of the Atonement in New York City, acting as pastor there until 1923. His union efforts led him to the position of first president of the newly formed United Lutheran Church, a post he held from 1918-1936. He was also active in the work of the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society, as well as being one of the early leaders in the Lutheran World Convention. He died October 16, 1945.

These two men typified the groups they represented. The Midwest conservative and the progressive man from the east coast found themselves working together in the National Lutheran Council. They

corresponded frequently. A few of these letters, along with letters to other officials, as well as the minutes of the March, 1919 meeting make up the source material for this paper. Thanks to Luther Seminary Library, St. Paul, Minnesota these materials were made available on microfilm.

The guiding principles set down by the National Lutheran Council were broad enough to cover nearly anything the leaders felt was important. Perhaps the fourth point listed above could be used to defend the moves toward co-operating in home mission work. After World War I many people had moved to industrial centers. This would fit under "social, economic or intellectual conditions or changes affecting religious life." Therefore members of the Council could rightfully join together in this work. As Nelson writes "Clearly this ought to be a cooperative enterprise because the home mission boards of individual church bodies were unable to cope with the situation."<sup>1</sup> It would be more truthful to say that they never tried. They looked at the task and decided it would be easier to use the Council as a means for doing the job together.

To begin this work a meeting was held at Columbus, Ohio December 18, 1918 which brought the executive committee of the Council together with the home mission representatives of the participating church bodies. These men agreed that the work should be done jointly under the direction of one program, rather than each group working for itself. The logic is unshakable, but the whole picture was not taken into consideration. The original publicity for the founding of the Council was that cooperation would be only in external affairs. Exactly what was to be included under the term "external" was never clear to anyone, but home mission work was definitely an internal matter.

This did not greatly disturb a large percentage of the Council members, but there was enough pressure within the Norwegian church to cause their president Stub to insist that a meeting be held to consider the old questions of doctrine and practice that had hindered union before the crisis caused by the war had pushed them all together.

Stub's concerns are spelled out in a letter which he wrote to Knubel on February 20, 1919. The letter was prompted by a telegram from Knubel in which he apparently urged Stub to get on with nominating commissioners for carrying on reconstruction of the Lutheran church in Europe. Stub tells him that he has doubts about whom he should pick. The men he feels could handle the work cannot be spared from their present posts.

The real problem, however, runs deeper. Stub says, "There has been more or less dissatisfaction among pastors on account of the organization of the Council, which they thought should have been left to the Church conventions to decide. Prof. Boe yesterday told me that at a conference in Northfield, Minnesota (Rev. Boe himself was not present, being in Wisconsin) the Council, and especially my position, was strongly criticised for having usurped an authority which I did not have. But I will have to fight it out. But as Boe told me, there is a propaganda going on against the Council."<sup>2</sup>

The reference to usurping authority was, of course, due to the fact that the Council was organized and approved only by the presidents of each church body, not by official action of the bodies themselves.

These factors prompted Stub to say, "I hope, my dear Dr. Knubel, that you will now better understand my reasons for holding back and my specific reasons for having advocated so strongly the meeting in Chicago on doctrine and practice. If I had not insisted so strongly

on this meeting which so many regarded as entirely superfluous. I would have made myself subject to the charge of unionism."<sup>3</sup>

The influence of the Missouri Synod in the midwest was largely responsible for this healthy attitude towards unionism. Stub goes on to list a number of instances where the Council had already assumed too much in the area of fellowship: "I may also state, between us, that I received a letter from Dr. Richter in which he states his earnest scruples. He stated that: 'Dr. Smith speaks and writes as if we already were in unity of faith with the French Church. We ought to remember that we as a Council do not have church fellowship and consequently cannot establish church fellowship with others and act as if we all were in complete unity with them. "Hier droht uns eine Gefahr, die das Konzil sprengen muesste, wenn wir ihr nicht begegnen."  
. . . We must be on our guard in order that we may not be led into ways which we cannot go, if we want to be true to our great principles."

The Dr. Smith mentioned in the quote above was a zealous promoter of the Council's work. He comes in for fire again later in this same letter when Stub takes him to task for spreading incorrect information regarding the conditions in France. Smith had been one of the investigators sent to France by the Council in order to determine a course of action. He returned with stories stressing the deplorable conditions in France and his audiences, as well as the public press, eagerly swallowed them. For example, he said there were 300,000 Lutherans in Alsace who were being served by 300 ministers from Germany whom they did not like. These pastors were to be sent back to Germany and then Alsace would have no ministers at all. He also said that the financial conditions were bad.



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Stub countered all this with information from the official organ of the French Lutheran Church (Le Temoignage) which said that there were no less than 220 pastors, the majority of whom were native to the country. The publication stated that due to several large donations the treasury would finish the year in the black.<sup>3</sup>

Further evidence of the need for discussion of doctrine and practice is given in this same letter when Stub tells of concern within the ULC: "One of the best known professors in your own Church, the United Lutheran Church, writes me: 'I am glad that you will have a meeting for the discussion of the difficulties that are in the way of real union. A strong testimony of Lutheran conscience against lodge and unionism without exaggerations and without going too far into 'Konsequenz<sup>ret. & k.</sup>umarhereien' will aid the best element in the Merger.'" "

Stub had also objected to admitting the Danish Lutheran Church and explains that it is because, "altho it has the name of being a Lutheran Church, has a different conception of the Holy Scripture and we do not believe in the regenerating power of the Word (A power which is only attributed to baptism.)"<sup>4</sup> Similarly Dr. Brandelle had refused to allow the Swedish Waldenström Society or "Mission Friends" to be invited "because they have an entirely different conception of the Atonement than we in the Lutheran Church, altho the Waldenströms in the Protestant Directory of Missions are designated as Lutheran."<sup>5</sup>

Yet Stub's concern for true confessional Lutheranism does not seem to be the main motivation in these dealings, but rather political expediency, for he goes on to say, "If the bodies that were really represented in the organization of the Council can unite, then we may later on invite these smaller more sectarian bodies, who, with more or less right, claim to come under the heading of Lutherans."<sup>6</sup>

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He further shows his stand when he explains, "If you, my dear Dr. Knubel, had been in my position, I know that you would have taken my position in these matters. I know our people and I know how careful I have to be. I am prepared for severe criticism at our Church meetings, but I hope that I may be able to defend the position taken so far."<sup>7</sup>

Stub had gained the confidence of the governing body of his own church for he reports to Knubel that the ten District Presidents and ten laymen who sat on their Council had agreed:

"1. That we heartily endorse and approve the organization and work of the National Lutheran Council.

2. That we urge all our Church people to respond to the call for funds in the present drive in the same loyal, wholehearted and generous spirit which they manifested in the National Lutheran Commission drive a year ago."

This group did not approve of any cooperation in home mission work until the Chicago meeting worked out a safe foundation for unity in faith and practice. Therefore Stub laid great stress on the success of that meeting to determine the future effectiveness of the National Lutheran Council.

The meeting was held at the LaSalle Hotel in Chicago the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth of March, 1919. Dr. Stub was elected chairman. Present for the opening session were the following representatives:<sup>8</sup>

United Lutheran Church

Dr. F. H. <sup>Knubel</sup> ~~Knubel~~  
Dr. H. E. Jacobs  
Dr. G. H. Bauslin

Iowa Synod

Dr. F. Richter  
Dr. M. Fritschel  
Dr. M. Reu

Augustana Synod

Dr. S. G. Youngert  
Dr. O. J. Johnson  
Dr. G. A. Brandelle

Norwegian Church

Dr. H. G. Stub  
Dr. J. N. Kildahl  
Rev. C. J. Eastvold

Joint Synod of Ohio

Dr. C. H. L. Schuette  
Dr. R. C. H. Lenski

United Danish Synod

Rev. I. Gertsen  
Dr. P. S. Vig

Free Church

Rev. S. Risloev  
Rev. P. Winther

Four of these men had been assigned papers which were to be representative of the point of view of their respective bodies. These were: Richter (Iowa), Schuette (Ohio), Jacobs (ULC), and Stub (Norwegian). In addition Knubel (ULC) was to prepare a paper of the "Essentials of a True Catholic Spirit".

It was resolved that Knubel present his paper first. When he finished Jacobs presented his and this completed the Tuesday morning (March 11) session. The minutes make no comments nor supply anything on the content of either of these papers at this point.

The afternoon session began with Schuette's paper which was in the form of a set of articles of agreement which were designed to aid in coordinating the work of the churches which belonged to the Council. These articles were prefaced with a preamble which said that it was assumed that all Council churches acknowledged without reservation the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and agreed to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. It further states that the articles proposed are intended to be "Of an advisory and not of any legislative or mandatory force."<sup>9</sup> It concluded that since the differences involved had to do with "The life of the Church and its work, it is hoped that wherever shortcomings are met with, these will be ascribed to some aberration of the mind rather than to a refractory heart; and this in accord with I Cor. 13."<sup>10</sup>

The first of the articles quotes the Akron/Galesburg rule;

"Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only; and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only". The second article anathematizes lodges ("oath bound secret societies") as being "wholly incompatible with membership in a Christian congregation". The third of the articles is a commentary on the first two and says that they expressed the ideal rather than the actual situation. Prayer and persistence are recommended in working toward the standard and sympathy is to be had for brethren working to correct the errors.

The remaining articles deal with practical problems that would naturally arise with a more organic union that would result if these bodies were to work together in such internal matters as home missions. When two or more congregations exist in localities that do not warrant such concentration mergers of these churches should be worked out. This situation was not uncommon in the midwest where a ULC church would be across the street from an Ohio Synod church with possibly an Iowa church a few blocks away. Propaganda attempts which might arise if members from one of the churches tried to draw members from the other churches into their general body were to be discouraged. The mergers were to be handled by committees appointed by the presidents of the general bodies involved.

The last article provided for provisional enforcement of these Agreements until they could be submitted for final approval of the synods who belonged to the Council. No action was taken on Schuette's paper during this session.

The next report to be heard was that of Dr. Richter of the Iowa Synod. He was mentioned above in the Stub-Knubel letter of February 20, 1919. Stub quoted Richter as being wary of assuming that there was unity of doctrine and practice before it had been firmly established.

Unfortunately he withheld his prepared statement which listed "the points that needed adjustment before the home mission and other work of the churches could be properly coordinated"<sup>11</sup> because he didn't want to have too many papers before the committee for discussion. Perhaps he was counting on Stub to sufficiently cover those points.

Dr. Stub's paper was next on the agenda. It is his paper which became known as the Chicago Thesis (not to be confused with the Intersynodical Chicago Theses of 1925-28). There are several pages of "Introductory Remarks" worthy of consideration. The importance of these remarks is that they are Stub's justification for the actions taken thus far by Council.

Point I. explains that the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare was just what the name says: a war emergency effort for the benefit of the American Lutheran soldiers and sailors who were trained at camps far from their home churches and sent abroad to fight. Since the government would deal with Lutherans only as a unit and not with the various divisions the Commission had to operate the way it did.

Point II tells why the National Lutheran Council came into being after the Commission had served its purpose. The Council was an after-war organization, he explains, "required both by the conditions in our own country and in Europe which placed our Lutheran Church face to face with problems which had to be solved at once, or at least in the near future."<sup>12</sup> The war time Commission was not structured to handle these problems, nor could money given to the Commission rightfully be used to finance the work of the Council.

The problems that they felt necessitated the formation of the Council are enumerated. The things he lists are the concrete reasons behind the general principles set down at the founding of

the Council (which are given earlier in this paper on page 3). There was the matter of public relations: "The Lutheran Church in our country was more or less under a cloud on account of the quite common charge of disloyalty repeated again and again in the newspapers, a charge that even to some extent was believed in official circles in Washington. Our Church had to speak in its defense at headquarters."<sup>13</sup>

Then there was the problem that the men sent to France during the war had come upon. The Lutheran Church there appeared to be in desperate need of help both materially and religiously. The material needs, of course, were obviously due to the damage a war zone country reaps. The religious needs came about through the real possibility that reformed churches might take over the Lutheran churches through a relief effort of their own, thereby using the chaotic conditions to their advantage. Such situations also prevailed in countries such as Germany, the Baltic States, Finland and others. Our government would again recognize only one Lutheran unit and financially it seemed beyond the reach of any individual synod to work overseas, so the Council was needed.

A third motivating force was the large number of people who had moved to large industrial centers to get the good paying jobs offered there. As Stub put it: "Should these people be left to themselves or to the so-called Community Service, or should not the Lutheran Church step in with its offer to take care of the people?"<sup>14</sup> The Council had already sent men into some of these areas and ministers had been installed, but a better system was now sought.

Point III, represents the middle-of-the-road position that a decade later would result in the formation of the ALC. Stub says that the Council "had to be organized, not to represent any organic union of the bodies taking part, not to be a federation of synods or church

bodies, yea, not even to be a body of men who had the right to declare that the Lutheran Church bodies taking part thereby had become one in faith and practice and therefore now at once could unite in permanent church work and coordinate and cooperate in home and foreign mission work,"<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the lack of unity in doctrine and setting aside the desire to unite the church bodies organically or even federally Stub still finds an overriding force that caused the Council to somehow be born and function: "having in the first place reason to believe that these Church bodies which by the hand of God had been thrown together thru the war and afterwar conditions, and in the second place, having mutually ascertained that we as Lutherans had so much in common, had so many points of contact, had so many common aims, the question naturally arose and impressed itself upon us: Must it not be the will of God that we regard it as our duty to find out how far from, or how near to each other these Church bodies are in regard to confessional Lutheranism and church practice?" Since God had forced them together it seemed high time to settle the differences they each had as to what God's Word tells us in certain areas that had in the past kept them apart.

The kind of structure that Stub envisioned was one where the member bodies would continue "to be separate and independent" but "could come so far that they could look upon each other as brethren in faith . . . by electing a committee or a commission that could act in every case where the present Church conditions in local Lutheran circles in some measure, at least, could be improved, or where the organization of a new congregation might create a friction and strife.

A commission of conscientious, impartial, and efficient men might in the large majority of cases be able to adjust matters to the satisfaction of all."<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that similar thinking seems to lie behind the Articles of Agreement that Schuette had already presented, especially #4-12.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of the meetings in Chicago, in Stub's estimation, was to come to enough agreement in doctrine and practice to carry on such cooperation. It is not hard to see this reflected in the Theses themselves. They are brief and to the point. There seems to be enough to settle the questions without stepping on personalities or interjecting semi-philosophical opinions which could be said of the lengthy Knubel statement.

There are two main parts, the first: "Mutual Declaration Regarding Doctrine", the second: "Mutual Declaration Regarding Practice". Under the first part the authority of Scripture as being the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the only rule of faith, doctrine and practice is laid down as the foundational doctrine. Upon this the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism are declared to be a true exposition of the doctrines contained in the Bible.

Then follows statements on eight areas that had been in controversy among Lutherans in America:

Work of Christ, redemption and reconciliation - "Jesus Christ, God and Man, has not for the benefit of, but in the place of the human race, taken upon Himself the sins of the world. . .,"etc.

Gospel - "is not only a story . . . it offers and gives the result of the work of Christ."



Absolution - "does not essentially differ from the preaching of the Gospel . . . is not a judgment passed by the pastor on those being absolved."

Baptism - has "the power of regeneration."

Justification - "not an act in man, but an act by God in heaven."

Faith - "not in any measure a human effort."

Conversion and repentance - "If man is not converted or does not repent, the responsibility and guilt fall on man . . . If man is converted or repents, the honor belongs to God alone."

Election - "The causes of election to salvation are the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ; nothing in us on account of which God has elected us to eternal life."<sup>18</sup>

The second part regarding practice states once again the principle: Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only and follows with the pledge: "We therefore promise each other that it shall be our earnest endeavor to impress this rule in order that it may be recognized and enforced everywhere in all the Church bodies represented in the National Lutheran Council."<sup>19</sup> Then an anti-lodge paragraph appears and it is followed with a promise that "it shall be our earnest purpose to give fearless testimony and do our utmost to place our respective Church bodies in the right Christian position in this matter."<sup>20</sup>

The last paragraph of the Theses calls for a commission which would coordinate home and foreign mission efforts if the Council and the member church bodies would accept the Theses.

When Stub finished reading his paper Jacobs moved that Stub's doctrinal statements be discussed since Schuette's Agreements pre-

supposed complete doctrinal unity. Apparently Jacob's felt that Stub's Theses did not. The motion was seconded, so the feeling was not his alone. Stub then said that he had not thought there was any lack of agreement among those present on the points presented. His intention was that this might be a possible public statement of the teachings represented in the Council. This all seems a bit confusing because the members of the Council did have varying opinions on the doctrines Stub presented, at least when judged by the more critical standards our own Synod holds today. But the brevity and rather general wording of the Theses may have allowed these men to honestly say they agreed.

At any rate a discussion ensued which indicates that there was some lack of clarity on the purpose of their meeting. Lenski thought it would be proper to first decide what matters of cooperation "in externis" rightly belonged to the Council. He pointed out that the papers presented all went farther in that they aimed toward building up unity within the Lutheran bodies. He saw the importance of that unity, but felt it better to figure out which areas could now be acted and spoken on together and then take up the more vital matter of doctrine.

Schuette pointed out that Knubel had listed five or six such "in externis" questions. He went on to say that the Council was aiming towards unity and that the Lutherans were causing offense and hindering the church's work with all the divisions that existed.

Bauslin favored taking up Stub's Theses in which he saw practical value. Brandelle then expressed his idea of the purpose of the Council as being a body which would speak for the church "in externis" and he agreed that doctrinal unity was important since the meeting

in Columbus had enlarged the program to include home missions in the realm of externals.

Stub said it was difficult to define exactly what could be included in the term "in externis" as Lenski had indicated. This could be seen in the work with the French and German churches. But the opportunities seemed to be too great to pass by, so unity had to be striven for.

Richter felt that they were not in this meeting representing the Council as such, but rather their own individual synods. Therefore they were to present the conclusions reached to their synods who had the final authority. He seemed to favor getting on with Stub's paper, but Lenski still insisted that it would be a distinct gain to settle externals first. (Anyone who has studied Lenski's exegetical and homiletical works can understand how hard it would have been to move him from any opinion he had taken.) Lenski's point was consistent with the motives that originally had brought the Council into existence. He said that he viewed the Council as a clearing house for the coordination of work and distributing of labor to the various synods. This sort of thing could be done, he felt, but we must remember that the Missouri Synod had rejected this idea after their experiences with the Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare during the war. The "in externis" principle is too imprecise to be put into use and still uphold one's confessional position.

The minutes state that the motion was unanimously passed, so Lenski must have given in. The discussion of the paper took up the rest of the second day's session. Some recasting of the form that the Theses appeared in was done and minor word changes were made.

In some cases the wording couldn't be exactly determined, so Stub reworked these points and they were discussed and adopted the next day. The minutes do not hint at any hard stands taken by any of the men. The changes seemed to aim towards clarity, rather than anyone trying to grind an ax. Perhaps this could be proven to be a false assumption by someone who had more material at his disposal which would allow him to read between the lines of the minutes, which state only the bare facts.

Wednesday morning was taken up, then, with the discussion and reworking of Stub's paper, the afternoon being left for Schuette's. Knobel began to be concerned that there wouldn't be enough time to discuss his paper on catholic spirit so he asked for the floor and at the beginning of the afternoon session made a rather lengthy speech, considering his motion dealt with a matter of procedure. He began by reading the resolution of the Council that asked for a paper on the "essentials of a catholic spirit" to be presented at this meeting. He then said that he was satisfied with the way the meeting was running, but felt that there would not be time to get to his paper. This did not bother him because "in order that the statements of doctrine and practice here adopted may be as helpful as possible they should be formed in such a way as to gain the enthusiastic support of all bodies."<sup>21</sup>

Knobel then gathered steam and, according to the minutes, continued as follows: "In view of the impressionable age in which we are now living; it would further seem that the day for Lutheranism, with its great and abiding truths of God and its harmony with the ideals of American life, had come to make itself felt as a world force. No other demonination could meet and agree in such wonderful harmony

as we have experienced at this meeting. We must now disseminate our truth as never before. We must face outward and give a statement of what catholic Christianity really is. Many will welcome it. We owe it to the world as to ourselves,"<sup>22</sup> Knubel then moved that if there was not time to discuss his paper at the meeting, that a committee be appointed to work on this subject and present his findings at another meeting.

Knubel's action and words at this point in the conference make one wonder if there wasn't some strategy involved. It seems a little early to be so concerned about the time element. The conference was only half over. And why the pep talk about the importance of the subject? There must have been some question in the minds of the other men present also, for they discussed the motion and decided to go on with the plan for the rest of the day and Knubel withdrew his motion with the understanding that the subject suggested in his motion could be taken up later.

A defensible theory might be that Knubel could see which way the wind was blowing in Chicago that week in March. Stub's paper has been characterized by Nelson in Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970 as "exclusive confessionalism". Knubel's is branded as "ecumenical confessionalism". Surely Knubel could see where he and Stub differed in their viewpoints. The conference was demonstrating their preference for the "exclusive" stance in that they were willing to polish up Stub's paper for presentation to their bodies. Knubel therefore was willing to give them all the time they could take by making his announcement so early. There would be less pressure to get the discussion of his view which would, in any case, receive little enough time to clearly air the position. By having a committee work

on the subject, a committee he could rightfully expect to be on, he would have the opportunity to work on persuading a smaller group who would not be under the direct influence of the spirit exhibited at this conference.

Perhaps the last paragraph only proves that mountains really can be made from mole hills. As it turned out Knubel's paper did not come under discussion during this conference whether through his machinations or not. Schuette's Agreements were scrutinized next. Of interest in this discussion is the snag that was caused by pulpit and altar fellowship. Jacobs of the ULC offered a substitute for Schuette's "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors" stand which says that these pieces of furniture should be cautiously guarded, but nowhere stipulates that Lutherans must occupy them, only that the Word still be preached "as our Church teaches it." The matter, after some discussion, was deferred to a committee consisting of Lenski, Jacobs and Stub. The same committee was also asked to formulate a statement on secret societies.

The final day of the conference opened with reports from the committee mentioned above. On the matter of fellowship two brief paragraphs were offered which explained the reasons for having to limit fellowship with the conclusion that "pulpit and altar fellowship with pastors and people of other confessions are to be avoided, as contrary to a true and consistent Lutheranism."<sup>23</sup> On the lodge issue antichristian societies were defined, condemned and a promise was made that each church put its own house in order.

Several resolutions were made at the end of the day in regard to

the papers that had been presented during the conference. Those which had been discussed were to be presented to the Council and then to the synods belonging to the Council. Knubel's was to be further studied by a committee of three: Knubel, Stub and Schmauk.

The original intent of this paper was to investigate Nelson's characterizations of Stub and Knubel as representing "exclusive confessionalism" and "ecumenical confessionalism" respectively. Without regard to the ever-present limitations of time and space a sketchy outline was made and writing commenced.

This, then, is the half way point in the originally conceived paper. It shows how Stub's viewpoint was holding sway during these sessions in March, 1919. It also hints at Knubel's stand and indicates that there was variance. In further study of the microfilms one can more exactly pinpoint Knubel's stand and see how the difference of opinion became more evident to everyone during the months and years following this conference.

Unfortunately the press of time forces the study to end here. Other work is due. It has been interesting working in this area, more personal enjoyment has been derived from this assignment than any other history project undertaken in twelve years of synod schooling. The copies of the microfilm will be available in the library and there is still plenty of material for continuing this study, should a student in the future care to go into it.

END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Nelson, Clifford E., Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn. 1972, page 22
- <sup>2</sup> Microfilm photostats #1
- <sup>3</sup> ibid., #2
- <sup>4</sup> ibid., #3 and 4
- <sup>5</sup> ibid., #2
- <sup>6</sup> ibid., #2
- <sup>7</sup> ibid., #2
- <sup>8</sup> ibid., #5
- <sup>9</sup> ibid., #7
- <sup>10</sup> ibid., #7
- <sup>11</sup> ibid., #8
- <sup>12</sup> ibid., #8
- <sup>13</sup> ibid., #9
- <sup>14</sup> ibid., #9
- <sup>15</sup> ibid., #10
- <sup>16</sup> ibid., #10
- <sup>17</sup> ibid., #7 and 8
- <sup>18</sup> ibid., #11 and 12
- <sup>19</sup> ibid., #12
- <sup>20</sup> ibid., #12
- <sup>21</sup> ibid., #17
- <sup>22</sup> ibid., #17
- <sup>23</sup> ibid., #20



840 NW 33rd Street  
Corvallis, Oregon 97330  
March 21, 1974

Prof. Edward C. Fredrich  
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary  
Mequon, Wisconsin 53092

Dear Professor Fredrich:

Enclosed is a copy of a paper done for your history of Lutheranism in America course. I had meant to leave you a copy last year. Prof. Westerhaus wrote to me requesting the photo copies of the microfilmed Knubel-Stub correspondence. He said a Senior this year was interested in this project. If you wish to share my paper with him it might be helpful since, as I stated in the paper, only about half of the microfilm is represented in my paper.

Also of interest to you: I had found an apparent error in E. C. Nelson's Lutheranism in North America, (cf. page 26, paragraph 2 and footnote #79 on page 37 - I believe you made a note of this in your own copy of the book last year.) Before sending the microfilm copies back to the Sem library I made some notes on this error and intend to write Dr. Nelson about this when the strain of Lent has passed. I will send you a copy of the letter.

The ministry is very much what I expected and, yet, different from anything I'd ever considered. Growing is always a pain and a joy and out here it has been a matter of grow or be swamped by the responsibilities.

Sincerely,



Pastor Mark E. Hannemann

1973