

adopted by the Synod at Savannah, Ga., in 1934, which aims at fellowship among the various Lutheran bodies. The Conference of Presidents agreed with me that we could not simply leave the communication unconsidered. A confession on our part seemed demanded. I appointed the Pastors E. C. Reim, J. Schulz, and H. Kleinhans to draft the same. In view of the fact that our members are repeatedly approached with such overtures of fellowship, I deemed it advisable to ask Pastor Reim to enlarge on our position in a short essay which he will read to the Convention. Pastor H. C. Nitz will also read an essay, his subject being: "Another Gospel."

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Last year the 50th anniversary of our Dr. Martin Luther College and Prof. G. Burk's service at the same was observed. In June of this year the 25th anniversary of the reopening of our Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Director O. J. R. Hoencke's service at the same was observed. Dr. J. H. Ott's 50th anniversary as professor at our Northwestern College was unostentatiously observed in June of this year. By resolution of the Synod the Seminary Faculty has arranged the observance of the Centenary of the birth of Dr. Adolph Hoencke. The celebration will be held Sunday morning. Preachers are Prof. J. Meyer and Prof. A. Zich.

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In the year 1860 a group of men, including the old Missionary Heyer and Pastors Blumer, Brandt, Wier, Mallison, and Thompson, met upon suggestion of Missionary Heyer for the purpose of founding the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota and Other States. The Minnesota Synod, now a District of our Joint Synod, is thus privileged to celebrate its 75th anniversary. Time does not permit us to include here the history of the Minnesota Synod up to the time it became a part of our Joint Synod. This might be done through our publications by one who is acquainted with its early history. We most heartily thank God for all the good He has bestowed upon the Minnesota Synod, in that He has brought it to a clear knowledge and steadfast confession of His saving truth, graciously guided and guarded it, and abundantly blessed it. We are permitted to enjoy a part of this blessing, inasmuch as the spiritual life created by God in the Minnesota Synod now pulsates in the body of the Joint Synod. The Lord preserve and continue to bless us in our common task.

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Our Representative of Missions and Institutions, Pastor R. Siegler, remarks in his report: "May I assume that the

work for which the Synod called me is to be regarded as completed?" Pastor Siegler has been in the direct service of the Synod since 1910, and has faithfully discharged the duties which sometimes proved most exacting. I believe I voice the sentiment of the Synod in expressing our sincere appreciation and gratitude to him. Inasmuch as Pastor Siegler was directly called by the Synod, the Synod will now have to answer his question and make provision for his eventual support.

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The printed reports of the various boards, together with this report, give us a picture of the work of our Synod during the past biennium, as well as a prospectus of the task before us. In God's name we shall cheerfully go to work, and do it in His fear and true brotherly love. To this end we beseech His presence and blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(5)

Church Fellowship and Its Implications *

(With Additional Notes on the Possibilities of Lutheran Union)

An Essay By Pastor E. C. Reim

* This is the title of a paper prepared for the 1934 sessions of the Northern Wisconsin District, but not read because of the press of other business at that convention. The purpose of the paper was to contribute toward a better appreciation of the fellowship we have in our Synod and to warn against a reckless wasting of this gift of God by internal dissension. When the writer was asked to treat the question of fellowship with other Lutheran bodies as it was raised by the U. L. C. early this year, it seemed feasible and practical to offer a part of this paper as a presentation of the principles involved, supplementing and bringing it up to date with an added section entitled, "Additional Notes on the Possibilities of Lutheran Union."

This procedure had one advantage: What was written on the principles of Church Fellowship was written without knowledge or particular thought of the developments which were so soon to follow in the Lutheran field. It can therefore lay claim to being unbiased. It also has a disadvantage of which the attentive reader will soon become aware: Some parts may seem to have little or no bearing on the present problem, having after all been written with a different purpose in mind. There we can only ask the reader's patience and pardon.

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The question of Church-Fellowship is one we face at almost every turn. On the one hand we have systematic efforts made chiefly by the Reformed group of sectarian churches to bring about better understanding and cooperation between the various Protestant denominations, with a program that calls for Union Services or exchange of pulpits on frequent occasions, formation of non-denominational community churches, cooperation in various civic, social, educational, and political enterprises, with the ultimate goal of erasing all denominational lines and combining the various Protestant bodies into one great National Church. This last is probably not universally admitted or even held by all those that share in the movement, but is certainly the fond hope of many, and has found expression in a statement recently issued in Chicago by leading churchmen of the Episcopal and Congregational Churches (quoted in *Northwestern Lutheran*, May 27, 1934) to the effect that a contemplated union between these two churches might bring pressure toward a speedy solution of the whole problem of American church unity, and turn the tide toward a true, free, national church in America. On the other hand we have the various mergers that have been effected in the Lutheran field, leading to the formation of the United Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Conference, the National Lutheran Council, and that have moved men to say that the next step will be to unite these large groups into one body comprising all the Lutheran churches of America.

A decidedly different angle, but the same question of Church Fellowship nevertheless is involved in the problem of internal unity with which we have been wrestling during the last decade.

It is not with the purpose of offering a solution to these various problems, but rather of setting forth the fundamental principles that are involved, that this paper is written.

I

The Appearance and Practice of Church Fellowship is a Direct Result of the Preaching of the Gospel

So it was even in Old Testament times. But since the spiritual relationship of the Israelites of old was peculiarly interwoven and overlaid with other ties, those of blood relationship and a joint nationality, we shall confine ourselves to the fellowship that followed the first public preaching of the New Testament Gospel of a crucified and risen Lord as it took place at Jerusalem on that first day of Pentecost. There

we immediately find these two paired in the closest manner: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and of breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2: 42, 44f.). Immediately the unifying power of the Gospel began to assert itself. For here there were rich and poor, humble Galilaeans and proud Judaeans, publicans and Pharisees, Grecians and Hebrews, a Cyprian Barnabas and Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, together with those whose universe was bounded by the walls of Jerusalem; men who had nothing in common but the bond of a common faith, yet ranged together in a fellowship that was to prove itself more powerful than that of language, nationality, or even family ties. This fellowship soon showed itself to be not merely an active interest in the common cause they now professed, but an intense concern about each other's personal welfare, as was shown by their care for the poor, Acts 6.

This unifying power of the Gospel was soon to break down age-old barriers. After the martyrdom of Stephen, Philip the Evangelist, no longer bound by Jewish tradition, went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them, reaping a rich harvest of converts. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8: 14f.). So the old aversion and enmity that had hitherto existed between Jews and Samaritans gave way to a warm welcome into the Christian fold, a desire to share their most precious gifts with these newly found brethren of the faith. This is one example of the active interest that the early Christians felt in each other. Similar instances could be multiplied.

Another barrier, and one even more formidable, fell when through the agency of Peter at Caesarea uncircumcised Gentiles came under the spell of the Gospel, and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them. When Peter declared, Acts 10: 47, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" he had taken an unprecedented step in welcoming into the fold such who had never submitted to the Jewish rite of circumcision. A most important bit of ground in the extension of the fellowship of the Gospel had been gained, ground that never again was to be yielded. But in this connection a new

and important characteristic of this fellowship appears, in the account Peter rendered of these events when he returned to Jerusalem. He "rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them" (Acts 11:4), and with such good effect that when they who before had charged him with going in unto men uncircumcised and eating with them, heard these things, "they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (v. 18). This sense of accountability to the brethren of the faith, this sense of consideration which most carefully avoids straining the existing ties and respects the conscience and faith of its fellows, is a most important mark of Christian fellowship.

Other instances can be quoted. The action of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15 is a case in point, showing very clearly the desire to preserve the unity of the church if in any way it could be preserved without sacrificing that divinely revealed and established principle that salvation is not by the works of the law, not by the rite of circumcision, but by faith alone. At Antioch, where largely through the activity of Paul and Barnabas the reception of Gentile converts had become an accepted principle, it happened that "Certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." It would probably have been a simple matter for Paul and his companion, fresh from the triumphs of their first missionary journey, to hold their own against these critics, especially in the midst of this congregation that had just been aroused to a high pitch of enthusiasm by their report. Yet they thought it worthwhile that a delegation including the apostle should go up to Jerusalem about this question. There, with much patient consideration for those Christians who had not yet been able to grasp this new liberty from the Law, the principle was reaffirmed, with full approval of the entire college of apostles. Consciences were being respected. It was a different matter when in later years weakness of understanding would no longer serve to explain the continued attempts of these same Judaizing Christians to bring the Gentiles under the Law, and when conscientious scruples turned into malicious attempts to discredit the apostle and to nullify his work, when souls in Galatia were being misled and again being made subject to bondage. Then there could be no more talk of fellowship; the issue was clearly drawn: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Fellowship as long as possible,

with as many as possible, but never at the price of corrupting the Gospel. That made for true unity.

This principle of fellowship governed even the manner in which the all-important mission-work of that time was undertaken. When Paul and Barnabas went forth to explore Asia Minor, it was not as free-lance preachers; Antioch sent them. This congregation was the one to which they reported again and again. Time and distance never loosened the tie that bound the Apostle to the congregation which had commissioned him. Again, when it became advisable to divide the field of work, the existing fellowship was carefully maintained. Paul can say, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:9).

One may say that this was Christian fellowship, essentially a different thing from church fellowship inasmuch as it was the natural recognition that an individual Christian would accord to another or others on being brought into contact with them, and that these observations therefore do not apply to the relation between congregations and church bodies. But we need not go much farther in the history of the Apostolic church in order to find this early personal friendship of Christians toward each other manifesting itself by groups and congregations. When the church at Jerusalem was stricken with poverty and famine, it was the churches of Macedonia and Achai, and Galatia as well, urged by Paul, that came to the relief of their brethren.

Such was the unifying power of the Gospel in the primitive church. It was peculiarly a warm, satisfying relationship, this fellowship of Christians still in their first love. We may well look back upon it wistfully, keenly aware of our deficiencies. But let us not lose sight of the fact that this is the true fellowship even of today, and that in all essentials it is found even now, just as surely as the Gospel is preached and performs the purpose for which it is sent. For what we have seen of the life of the early church is simply the result of the preaching of the Gospel. It lies in the very nature of this Word to bring forth such fruits, not so perfect, not so abundant perhaps, but of the same kind nevertheless. The Gospel does this because it produces two things, Faith and Love. And Faith is (of course, this does not pretend to be a technical definition) a rejoicing in the possession of salvation. And that does not lend itself well to solitary contemplation only. It takes its pattern after the disciples who must

return from Emmaus to Jerusalem in order to share their joy in a risen Christ with their fellow-disciples. Faith is a constant confession of the wonders that God in His Grace has wrought upon us and in us. It rejoices in finding kindred spirits with whom it may share its blessings. Faith is a thing that communicates itself, according to the precedent set by the apostles when they declared, "We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). — And Love is of course not the common and often sordid thing that the world calls love, but the flame, kindled from the burning Love that God has shown toward us in our redemption, which according to the translation of Paul's great Song of Love (1 Cor. 13) we have learned to call Charity — Christian Love in its highest sense. From God, Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, from the Son Who loved us and gave Himself for us, the Christian, if his Christianity be true, learns to love his fellow-men and in a special degree his brethren of the faith as such who share with him the redemptive love of God. So Christian fellowship is created through the Gospel of salvation by the Spirit of God. One may recognize a certain fellowship of Hindus, Mohammedans, or Masons for each other, but at best such fellowship results from natural love, and often from far baser motives. The highest, noblest motion that has ever stirred the heart of man is Christian Love — Charity.

II

The Only Scriptural Conception of Church Fellowship is That of a Fellowship Based Upon a Common Faith and Engaged in a Common Task

Much of the confusion of this point is due to the failure to distinguish between what Scripture teaches concerning the true unity of the Church and the practice of Christian fellowship. Clearly Scripture teaches the absolute unity of the Church. Else the prayer of Christ was an unanswered one when He asked, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21). Else His prophecy would be an unfulfilled dream when he said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). Paul's statement would be utterly misleading when he declared, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above

all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). But this absolute unity of the Church is present, and a very real fact. It is not affected in the least by the degree to which the outward unity of the Church has been rent with schisms; it is not dependent in any way upon the extent to which we now acknowledge or practice fellowship with each other. Christ is the Head of the Church. He knows those who are His. Through faith every true believer belongs to Him. Without in the least condoning the errors that mar so much of the preaching of the Word of God, we joyfully realize that through the grace of God and the power of the Gospel such true believers are found wherever the Word of God and the Sacraments, the divine Means of Grace, are still employed. These believers are the One True Church. It is when men seek to bring about that which already exists, that which God Himself has already created, that they confuse what should be a clear and simple matter. This criticism would not apply if the efforts to establish, or rather re-establish the outward unity of the Church were based upon sincere efforts to remove the errors that have caused the separation, and union were effected only where and when that happy conclusion has been reached. But it is because the tendency is almost always to ignore, or at least to minimize these real causes of disunion that we feel constrained to offer these objections.

Let us remember that in the passage quoted from Ephesians Paul, while supporting his admonition that they endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit (the unity that the Spirit has brought about!) in the bond of peace, is telling the Ephesians to remember what they have, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc., and is not setting up an ideal that would be attainable only in the vague, distant future. The true unity of the Church, of all believers, exists triumphantly even over against the divided state of the outward church.

A different matter is that of fellowship. There we are confronted by the stubborn fact that serious differences of doctrine exist. We may wish that it were otherwise, but we cannot deny that it is so. In the face of these conditions the question arises whether it is possible to practice fellowship where there is such a divergence of opinion. The thoroughgoing Unionist of today declares it to be possible. He would bring about a union of all, if possible, who call themselves "Christian." For him it is sufficient if men will join him in working for the betterment of mankind and assist him in spreading the Gospel of the Universal Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. A National Church is entirely within the scope of his imagination. Let us for a moment imagine

ourselves bound up in a fellowship that is erected on so broad a basis. We would find ourselves joined together with the entire Modernist or Liberal movement of these times; speaking, of course, of the field of religion. Either we would be giving silent assent to the pronouncements of Liberalist preachers when they deride the doctrine of the Inspiration of the Word of God, challenge the Divinity of Jesus Christ, substitute an entirely different conception of sin for the scriptural one, and ridicule the teaching that our sins have been atoned for by the bloody sacrifice of Christ — or we would, with silence would no longer be endurable, find ourselves protesting against these willful perversions of the Gospel, testifying to the Old Truth and becoming involved in a battle, the bitterness of which would make the word fellowship a mockery. Dr. J. Gresham Machen, formerly of the Presbyterian Theol. Seminary at Princeton University, has written a book entitled "Christianity and Liberalism" in which he, as one of the leaders of the so-called Fundamentalists, shows how great the issue really is between those who, like himself, would still uphold the old Biblical conception of these doctrines, teaching Christianity as a redemptive religion, and those on the other hand who hold the Modernist view. He says (p. 52), "We would not indeed obscure the difference which divides us from Rome. The gulf is indeed profound. But profound as it is, it seems almost trifling compared to the abyss which stands between us and many ministers of our own church. The Church of Rome may represent a perversion of the Christian religion; but naturalistic liberalism is not Christianity at all." Surely such fellowship cannot be called Scriptural. When Unionists quote the example of the first church at Jerusalem, they should heed what is said of those Christians, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). As for ourselves, let us realize that the unity that Paul spoke of was a real unity, "of the Spirit." Let us remember the Savior's definition of a believer, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Fully realizing what the question implies, let us ask whether two can walk together, except they be agreed (Am. 3:3).

A much more moderate, but nevertheless dangerous form of fellowship is advocated by many Christians who are groaning under this utterly false fellowship with those who are teaching a religion that is Christian in name only, as we have just described. It is fellowship of those who agree in respect to the fundamental articles of Christianity, but who differ in regard to individual doctrines. Machen writes (p. 48), "It

is perfectly possible for Christian fellowship to be maintained despite differences of opinion." It is instructive to note such "differences of opinion" as Machen lists them: Concerning the Millennium, apparently an issue within his own church; concerning the mode of efficacy of the Sacraments, where he touches upon the breach between the Lutheran and the Reformed church bodies; concerning those doctrines also which separate his church from the Anglican and Methodist. He even speaks of the great "common heritage that unites the Roman Catholic Church, with its maintainance of the authority of Holy Scripture and with its acceptance of the great early Creeds, to devout Protestants of today!" (p. 52).

One does not wish to be critical of these men who are bearing the brunt of the battle against Liberalism. The splendid testimony they almost invariably give warms one's heart. But we do hold that there is a weakness here, one that has contributed largely to bring about the very condition with which they are now afflicted, where they, evangelical Christians of the old faith, are now on the verge of being dispossessed within their own church. One suspects that weariness engendered by the bitter strife has led them to look longingly toward the conservative evangelical branches of other denominations and created in their hearts a wish to establish fellowship there even "despite differences of opinion," which would supplant one that they can hardly longer endure. The Scripture passages which we noted before apply here also. In fairness to Machen it should be noted that, in one respect at least, he has practically refuted his own contention as to the possibility of maintaining fellowship despite differences of opinion when he writes:

"It is often said that the divided condition of Christendom is an evil, and so it is. But the evil consists in the existence of errors which cause the divisions, and not at all in the recognition of those errors when once they exist. It was a great calamity when at the 'Marburg Conference' between Luther and the representatives of the Swiss Reformation, Luther wrote on the table with regard to the Lord's Supper, 'This is my body,' and said to Zwingli and Oecolampadius, 'You have another spirit.' That difference of opinion led to the breach between the Lutheran and Reformed branches of the Church, and caused Protestantism to lose much of the ground that might otherwise have been gained. It was a great calamity indeed. But the calamity was due to the fact that Luther (as we believe) was wrong about the Lord's Supper; and it would have been a far greater calamity

if being wrong he had presented the whole question as a trifling affair. Luther was wrong about the Supper, but not nearly so wrong as he would have been if, being wrong, he had said to his opponents: 'Brethren, this matter is a trifle; and it makes really very little difference what a man thinks about the table of the Lord.' Such indifferentism would have been far more deadly than all the divisions between the branches of the Church. A Luther who would have compromised with regard to the Lord's Supper never would have said at the Diet of Worms, 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me, Amen.' Indifferentism about doctrine 'makes no heroes of the faith' (p. 50).

After these words of Machen as to the danger of minimizing "differences of opinion" in doctrinal matters, can one still hold fellowship to be safe if it involves any compromise on questions of teaching? Paul was speaking of just such differences in regard to single points of doctrine when he wrote to the Galatians (5:9): "A little leaven leaveneth the whole loaf." Luther made much use of this passage in this same Sacramentarian controversy, legitimate use, since he was facing the same situation as Paul. The difference was apparently limited to one point of doctrine, and it seemed reasonable, and in view of the common struggle with Rome even desirable, to treat the question as one concerning which men could without harm entertain different opinions. Following the lead of Paul he showed that a Christian dare not compromise on a single point of doctrine, and that, once error has been tolerated, it perpetuates and communicates itself to other parts of the body of doctrine, eventually corrupting the entire teaching of the church. That is what he meant at Marburg when he said, "Ihr habt einen andren Geist." He practically concluded the matter when he said: "Darum wollen wir gerne Liebe und Einigkeit haben mit denen, so mit uns christlich und guetlich in allen Artikeln der christlichen Lehre halten und glaeuben."

All these considerations leave no alternative but that of a fellowship based on a common faith in all points of doctrine. What Paul said to the Corinthians (I, 1:10), "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," certainly teaches us to seek to remove any disagreement that may exist, carefully and patiently striving to bring about understanding and agree-

ment; but where that proves impossible, where men are not speaking the same thing, are not perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment, these words do not tell us to perpetuate, or perhaps effect, an outward union; rather the contrary. When men, for the sake of outward union, agree to let certain differences of doctrine stand and label them "differences of opinion," they are compromising. They are weakening their own and each other's confession and teaching, they are converting true, scriptural fellowship into a false one.

We often speak of unity, not only in teaching, but also in practise as being essential to true fellowship. That our proposition has not been so formulated is not due to an oversight, but rather to the fact that what we mean when we speak of practise can well be taken under the same heading, namely that true fellowship is based upon a common faith. Our church practise is essentially a confession of the faith that is in us. It is a testimony, a teaching. For unity in practice does not deal with unity in outward customs, ceremonies, and the like. The setting up of certain requirements in such things dare not operate to disrupt or hinder Christian fellowship in matters concerning which the Word of God has not spoken decisively. But where Scripture has laid down certain definite principles, the practise which is founded on these principles is definitely a confession of faith, and unity in such practise becomes essential to true fellowship. This has an important bearing on the question of fellowship between the various Lutheran Church bodies of our land. Where the existing differences of doctrine are often not clearly understood, where all of these bodies profess allegiance to the same confessional writings of Lutheranism, it would seem that there were no obstacles to perfecting a close degree of fellowship over the entire field — until we observe the wide divergence in church practise (as to lodge membership, altar and pulpit fellowship with other denominations, etc.) and note that these are matters which involve a confession of faith, and are governed by principles that are laid down in the Word of God. Then we find that there is a difference — a difference of faith, as expressed in practise. That this principle has already been violated in such instances as that of the Norwegian Merger, those of the United Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference, also the fellowship practiced between them in the National Lutheran Council, will be clear to every one who is familiar with the difference in practise that even now exists between component parts of these organizations.

On an entirely different plan lies the statement which we have also incorporated in our proposition, that the Scriptural conception of church fellowship involves our engaging in a common task. It would, of course, be a grave error if we would let the interest which we feel in some common undertaking become the sole factor which would unite us with others who favor the same project. There is no question but that the Prohibition Movement, merely to quote an example, has been a powerful influence in fostering the growth of Unionism in the majority of Protestant churches, and that its militant spirit has gone far to bring about and perpetuate the unnatural fellowship between the liberal Modernist and the conservative Fundamentalist. The W. C. T. U. sends out its clarion call; the cohorts gather; "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" is sung with fervor by a group whose members hold profound and diametrically opposed views on some of the most fundamental questions of Christianity. It is not the Liberalist who suffers thereby. His campaign of undermining the old Christian Faith goes steadily on, has even gained in prestige; his claim that he is but the exponent of a higher and more adequate expression of Christianity, adapted to these modern times, has been strengthened. It is the Fundamentalist who has failed; failed to show how great the gulf between Christianity and Liberalism really is, failed to show that Liberalism is not Christianity at all, and that there can be no common ground between them. The first requisite of true fellowship is lacking, namely that unity of the Spirit which can thrive only where there is a common faith.

But while fellowship in a common task must always remain subordinate to true unity of faith, and real fellowship cannot exist where this first requisite is not present, this engaging in a common task is nevertheless an essential feature and rightly deserves a place in our study. Just as faith without works is dead, so a fellowship which professes a common faith, yet shuns the common task, is mere lip-service, a disavowing of the brethren, tantamount to a severance of the fellowship. Just as faith that proves itself in works is faith that is being exercised and strengthened, so fellowship which engaged in a common task becomes more closely knit by its activity. New points of contact are established, interest is quickened, Christians begin to discover how many things they really have in common. We have seen how this operated in the primitive church. Among us our local congregations offer an example. They who first establish such a congregation are actuated by their common faith to

engage in the one fundamental work of all Christians, to proclaim the Gospel. As the undertaking develops, the building of the first church, the calling of a pastor, perhaps the establishing of a school and the calling of a teacher, all these things successively engage the attention and call for the whole-hearted co-operation of its members. People who previously have perhaps been total strangers to each other become firmly knit into one compact body. The fact that there often are disruptive influences at work, that human nature crops out all too frequently, often causes us to lose sight of these underlying facts; but present they are nevertheless.

Our Synods are another case in point. Serving on the one hand as an expression of the unity of faith and doctrine, they have at the same time become the means by which we jointly engage in work that lies far beyond the capacity of the individual Christian or congregation. Synod is a most practical form of fellowshipping. And with all the imperfections which often are so painfully evident it must nevertheless be granted that it is just through the work that Synod is doing that the Holy Ghost is strengthening the ties that have been established by the preaching of the Gospel. Our educational institutions, our Missions, and all the other phases of the work constantly engage our attention, enlist our best efforts, call for our prayers, and, in spite of all the bickering and wrangling that so often mars our discussion of these affairs, yet by the Grace of God the fundamental work goes on and we become more firmly attached to it, and thereby to each other.

It is a normal thing for Christian fellowship to express itself in joint undertakings. That was evidently felt by the different Synods that formed the Synodical Conference. For it was decided that this organization should not merely serve as the instrument for expressing the unity of doctrine that existed between the various Synods of this body, but that it should also enter upon the field of practical work, as was done when it assumed the responsibility for mission work among the Negroes of our land. In just that way the common task will ever be an important feature of Church Fellowship: In certain instances natural obstacles may preclude any great degree of cooperation in a given phase of the general work. Our fellowship with the Australian Lutheran Church may seem more a theoretical than a practical one. Yet even there we know ourselves to be bound together not only by a common faith, but by participation in that one great task of the church, to proclaim the Gospel, even though it be in widely different fields. But wherever it is feasible, a closer sharing

of individual tasks will quite naturally result. It is a mark of true fellowship. God's blessing rests upon it.

III

To Foster This Fellowship and to Keep It Inviolable Must be the Earnest Desire of All Christians

That is the conclusion which properly and naturally follows upon the premises that have so far been laid down. In fact, it follows so naturally that it is almost universally agreed to. The agreement is so complete that it might seem unnecessary to speak of the implications of Church Fellowship as the subject assigned suggests. For this is the one implication, to foster such fellowship and keep it inviolate. But such universal agreement carries a warning. The fact that the dyed-in-the-wool Unionist will enthusiastically subscribe to this statement is sufficient to make us realize that, to say the least, there is a profound difference in the way in which we understand these words. In order, therefore, to prevent possible misunderstanding, to define clearly what we mean by fostering fellowship and keeping it inviolate, we must still analyze the whole matter more closely and state just what we mean by the above proposition. Two subdivisions suggest themselves as statements that will clarify the issue and leave no doubt as to what is meant:

- A. If its true nature is to be preserved, Church Fellowship must be both discriminating and selective, and dare not shrink from severing an existing relationship if necessity arises.
- B. Where a severance of this Fellowship, however, would be equivalent to a denial of the common faith, this consideration as well as the interests of the common task make it imperative to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

*This last subdivision served the original purpose of this paper, but is here being omitted because it is not pertinent to the present issue.

A

In regard to Christian fellowship a Christian must be selective. He cannot recognize the fellowship of any and all that offer themselves. True, he has no right to base his selection of those with whom he would practise fellowship on personal likes or dislikes, on social standing, on business grounds, political expediency, or any similar reason. It must

be a selection based on the ground of a common faith. It must be discriminating; it must weigh, judge, test, in short, do what John says (1 Joh. 4:1), "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." True Fellowship dare not shrink from severing an existing bond when necessity arises, necessity here again being determined not by personal wishes or preference, but only by what is clearly taught in the Word of God. True Fellowship cannot endure to be linked with doctrine that is contrary to Scripture and to its own confession of faith. It cannot establish or bear union without unity. It cannot endure to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Membership in lodges with their anti-Christian spirit is therefore out of question for true Fellowship. Nor can it be indifferent to the Christian brother who persists in maintaining such an unchristian relationship. Rather it is conscience-bound to warn him and to point out that thereby he is denying his Savior and the Scriptural faith, and forcing a severance of the tie that has bound him to his fellow-Christians.

It is at this point that Unionists seem to make out their strongest case. They are quick to raise the cry of intolerance. They will point to the schisms that have rent the Church because of such unwillingness to compromise on matters of doctrine, and do so as if that were a development of recent times, a condition which they are called to cure. In so doing they conveniently forget that it was so even in Apostolic times. Not only were there threats of division within the churches, as at Corinth, happily averted by the intervention of Paul, but there were also actual, definite, complete separations, as in Galatia, where there could be no further question of fellowship. They ignore the fact that Christ Himself took this into consideration when He warned against false prophets and false Christs that would arise (Matt. 7:15; ch. 24:23f.). He said: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law and the daughter in law against her mother in law" (Luke 12:51-53). As long as either error or unbelief are present in the world and can still arise within the Church, the need for selectiveness and discrimination and the occasion for sever-

ance of fellowship cannot be evaded if true fellowship as enjoined by Scripture shall not be violated.

For in this matter Fellowship has no choice — if it would remain a true one. For Truth is at stake. Truth cannot compromise with Error. When the two meet halfway, Error is still error, but Truth has ceased to be truth. Testimony is at stake. When Testimony loses its note of certainty and concedes an equal place to Contradiction, Testimony is weakened thereby. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8). Confession is at stake; when we no longer clearly confess, we begin to deny. In the face of the seductive arguments of Unionism true Fellowship should heed the admonition, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). Unionists have coined the slogan, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity." Really this is a specious argument, for though it seems sound at first thought, the fallacy appears when we find what the non-essentials are in which there shall be liberty. In the Liberalist controversy even the doctrine of Atonement by the Blood of Christ has been so designated — by those who have discarded that doctrine. But that does not mean that therefore it is non-essential in fact, and must be so considered also by the Christian who holds fast to what the Bible teaches on that point. Surely, for him it is the most essential point, the very heart of the Gospel.

As for liberty, God Himself exercises no compulsion in matters of faith. Men are free to believe what they will — or to disbelieve; in this our country they are free also to preach and teach their convictions. But God does deny men the right to inject any error into the Truth of His Word. We therefore must challenge their procedure when they seek, under the cloak of fellowship, to gain recognition and standing for their subversive doctrines. In reality that is a dishonest attempt to obscure the issue and to gain converts, not through conviction, but by subterfuge.

In these matters those who stand for a true fellowship and wish to keep it inviolate must take the initiative. It will not do to leave it to chance that the discordant elements in a church body gradually come into harmony and agreement. It does not work that way. On the contrary, if left to themselves, conditions rapidly grow worse. Neither will it do to express the pious wish that those who are not truly brethren may remove themselves. They will not do so. Machen wrote, "The best way would undoubtedly be the voluntary withdrawal of the liberal ministers from those confessional

churches whose confessions they do not, in the plain historical sense, accept. And we have not altogether abandoned hope of such a solution" (p. 167). That was in 1923. Since then he and his conservative colleagues have lost Princeton Seminary and have been forced to establish a new Seminary in order to be able to propagate their convictions. There never has been an instance where an unsound fellowship has not wreaked havoc with the truth.

These events show why true fellowship dare not shrink even from severing an existing tie, if necessity demands. The Presbyterian Fundamentalists would have done far better to have faced the issue when it arose, even though it might have meant a serious breach at the time. Now they find themselves outgeneraled, outvoted, outnumbered, and dispossessed within their own church. The Milwaukee Sentinel under the date of May 29, 1934, carried a news item with the following head-lines, "Presbyterian Merger Voted. Objections of Fundamentalist Group Overruled." So the element that had been tolerated, though really foreign and opposed to the confessional stand of that church, has gained power and seized control.*

To take such a stand for true fellowship and to accept its implications certainly is hard. It will bring a storm of criticism upon the heads of those who advocate it. But is not that simply a part of the general reproach of Christ which we should willingly bear? Furthermore, such criticism is far outweighed by the consciousness that the course chosen, though difficult, is the right one, and by the occasional commendation of those who, while disagreeing with us as to doctrine, agree that it is better to recognize such differences and the separation they imply than to treat them as trifling things which do not matter. Some ten years ago a young man earned his degree at the University of Minnesota by a thesis in which he showed that at Marburg it was Luther who, with his unyielding attitude, made agreement impossible. To a true Lutheran that will hardly be news. We are not only aware of the fact, but thank God for it, realizing that Luther's attitude was determined not by obstinacy, but by a profound

* Since this was written Dr. Machen has been tried for "insubordination" by the Presbytery which had jurisdiction over his case. Dr. Machen was given no opportunity to show why he had disobeyed the mandate of the Assembly, no reference to the doctrinal controversy at the bottom of the matter was permitted, and the verdict as a result was that Dr. Machen was condemned and suspended from office. Cf. *Quartalschrift*, July 1935, p. 209-212.

reverence for the Word and a thorough understanding of the importance of Truth in Doctrine. And that there are even opponents who can appreciate this attitude is shown by the remarks of Dr. Machen on the Marburg Conference that were quoted before.

But surely, though it be hard to take that stand, it is most worthwhile. Thus, by the Grace of God, is preserved for us a true, satisfying fellowship. Let Machen appear once more as the spokesman of those who have experienced the alternative. He says (p. 179), "At the present time there is one longing of the human heart which is often forgotten — it is the deep, pathetic longing of the Christian for fellowship with his brethren. One hears much, it is true, about Christian union and harmony and co-operation. But the union that is meant is often a union with the world against the Lord, or at best a forced union of machinery and tyrannical committees. How different is the true unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! Sometimes, it is true, the longing for Christian fellowship is satisfied. There are congregations, even in the present age of conflict, that are really gathered around the table of the crucified Lord; there are pastors that are pastors indeed. But such congregations, in many cities, are difficult to find."

In taking this stand for a true fellowship, one danger however must be guarded against, that of a Pharisaic attitude. When the temple at Jerusalem was being rebuilt under Ezra after the Babylonian Captivity, the Samaritans made a proposal that smacks of the Unionism of today (Ezra 4:2), "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do." The refusal of the Jews to entertain the offer was well founded, and is commanded because the Samaritans had corrupted the worship of the true God. But the superior, contemptuous manner in which Jews of the New Testament regarded the same Samaritans is condemned and in marked contrast with the manner in which Christ Himself dealt with them. There was no approval of their worship; plainly He said to the woman at Jacob's well (John 5:22), "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." But then in kindly sympathy He went on to bring her the message of that salvation. So let us bring our testimony for, and work toward preserving a true fellowship, with patient charity, not in arrogant pride. Let us not think that sound Lutheranism must show itself in an air of irritating superiority or aloofness. We can and should "show honor to all" (1 Pet. 2:17). That does not imply weakness. On the contrary, Charity can be firm, and will be, if it is sincerely

concerned about the spiritual welfare of its fellowmen and brethren. If the situation calls for a refusal of fellowship, perhaps even the severing of old ties — if Biblical grounds require it, then let the step be taken. Often men are reluctant to take that step because it seems to imply a denial of the Christian character of those from whom they have separated, a denial which they feel would not be justified. Hence this continuing of fellowships that no longer are justifiable. Let us go back to the principles that were outlined in the early part of this paper; that the One True Church has Christ as its Head; that to Him belongs every true believer; that the unity of this Church is not affected in the least by the degree to which the outward church has been rent with schisms, and is not dependent in any way upon the extent to which we acknowledge or practice fellowship with each other. If we heed these principles, then we come to realize that where constancy to God's Word requires us to declare that there can be no true fellowship between ourselves and others, where an existing fellowship must perhaps be terminated, old ties severed, that does not necessarily involve a denial of the personal Christianity of those from whom we are so separated. Only where manifest impenitence is stubbornly adhered to in spite of careful admonition, the denial of fellowship does and must involve a denial of the impenitent person's Christianity — and then always. Mt. 18: "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Looking back over what has so far been written, I fear that I have wearied you with a discussion of problems that seem to lie rather far afield, not pertinent to our own practical problems, particularly by what has been said about the Liberalist controversy. However, that has not been without a definite purpose. The tide of Unionism is rising strongly within our land. We shall have to set our faces resolutely against it. Invitations and temptations to take part in unionistic undertakings come to us with increasing frequency. We shall have to take a definite stand against them. The merger movement within the Lutheran field will probably gain further strength. Let us welcome it, if mergers can be effected on the basis of true doctrinal unity. If not, let us reject them in unmistakable terms. But above all may the description of the unfortunate situations resulting from an uncertain attitude on the question of Church Fellowship serve to create in us a new appreciation of the fellowship that we have in our own Church and Synod, a fellowship that is based upon a common faith and dedicated to a common task.

Additional Notes on the Possibilities of Lutheran Union

Since the foregoing was written, the question Lutheran union, which at that time seemed rather remote, and therefore was touched only in passing, has moved very much closer and now calls for careful study. At its convention in Savannah, Georgia, in October, 1934, the United Lutheran Church in America considered and adopted a "Declaration on Lutheran Church Relationships" in which is set forth the desirability of union among Lutherans and also the hope of success in this direction, based on the fact that, after all, these various and disunited bodies subscribe to the same set of Lutheran confessional writings. This declaration has been brought to the attention of our Wisconsin Synod by Dr. F. H. Knubel, president of the United Lutheran Church, who has invited us to confer with them with the view of establishing closer relationships between our respective bodies.

In order that the Synod may fully measure the implications of this invitation, permit me to add the information that is pertinent to this particular problem, information which we may then test in the light of the principles previously set forth.

The invitation of the United Lutheran Church has gone forth to all Lutheran bodies of our land. Time was when this meant many groups which had little connection with each other. In recent years, however, there has been a marked tendency to merge, so that instead of giving our attention to seventeen different Lutheran bodies, we need now consider only the three major divisions, the United Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Conference, and our own Synodical Conference (the Missouri, Wisconsin, Norwegian and Slovak Synods). These three groups are of almost equal size, each numbering between 1,400,000 and 1,500,000 communicant members. The most recent statistics are given in the Northwestern Lutheran of July 21, 1935. The United Lutheran Church was formed by a union of the General Council, the General Synod, and the United Synod South. From this group comes the invitation that we are dealing with. In fact, from the very time of its organization in 1918 it has been clear that this body has considered the establishing of Lutheran union its peculiar mission in this country. This group contains most of the older Lutheran bodies of America, some of them dating back to colonial times. Its chief strength lies in the East. Often its congregations like to claim for themselves the distinction of being "English Lutheran." — The American Lutheran Conference is the youngest of the present

major groups of Lutherans. This body is predominantly Scandinavian, containing the Swedish Augustana Synod, the various Norwegian bodies (excepting of course the Norwegian Minority, which is affiliated with our Synodical Conference), and the United Danish Church. Here also we find the American Lutheran Church, formerly the Synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo. These constitute about one fourth of the membership of the American Lutheran Conference.

This is the field that is included in the merger plans of the United Lutheran Church. The basis upon which this proposed union is contemplated is clearly stated in the "Savannah Declaration":

"We recognize as Evangelical Lutheran all Christian groups which accept the Holy Scriptures as the only rule and standard for faith and life, by which all doctrines are to be judged, and who sincerely receive the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church (especially the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism) 'as a witness of the truth and a presentation of the correct understanding of our predecessors' (Formula of Concord, Part II, Intro., ed. Jacobs, p. 538); and we set up no other standards or tests of Lutheranism apart from or alongside of them.

"We believe that these confessions are to be interpreted in their historical context, not as a law or as a system of theology, but as 'a witness and declaration of faith as to how the Holy Scriptures were understood and explained on the matters in controversy within the Church of God by those who then lived' (Formula of Concord, Part I, Intro., ed. Jacobs, p. 492).

"Inasmuch as our now separated Lutheran Church-bodies all subscribe these same confessions, it is our sincere belief that we already possess a firm basis on which to unite in one Lutheran Church in America and that there is no doctrinal reason why such a union should not come to pass. We believe that it would have God's blessing, and we pray that He will grant to all of us the wisdom, the courage and the patience to accomplish it."

Every true Lutheran will certainly be glad to stand upon this basis of the Lutheran confessions, but one is disturbed by the reservations apparently intended when it is stated that these confessions shall be accepted "as a witness of the truth and a presentation of the correct understanding of our predecessors," or as "a witness and declaration of faith as to how the Holy Scriptures were understood and explained

on the matters in controversy within the Church of God by those who then lived." It is true that the foregoing quotations are taken from one of our principal confessions, the Formula of Concord, and apparently these reservations are sanctioned by this fact. But what does not immediately appear is that in both instances the intention of the men of that time was not to cast doubt upon the correctness of the doctrinal presentation of these confessional writings, not to suggest the thought that the passing of time would justify a change in the interpretation of Scripture, but rather to bring out the fact that confessional writings, being after all the work of men, are not equal in authority to the Word of God, but are essentially subordinate. The last quotation, if read in full, will bring out that fact: "But the other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a witness and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those who then lived." The first quotation likewise takes on a different complexion when taken in its entirety: "No one, therefore, can blame us that we derive from them, namely the confessions) an explanation and decision of the articles in controversy, and that, as we lay God's Word, the eternal truth, as the foundation, so also we introduce and quote these writings as a witness of the truth, and a presentation of the unanimously received correct understanding of our predecessors who have steadfastly held to the pure doctrine" (Jacobs, Book of Concord, p. 538). A stronger statement, less encouraging to those who would establish reservation, could hardly be drawn.

We believe that the procedure of the authors of the "Savannah Declaration" in putting these quotations into a different setting ("that these confessions are to be interpreted in their historical context, not as a law or as a system of theology but "as a witness and declaration of faith" etc.") is, to put it mildly, a questionable method, and one that makes for confusion rather than clearness. Both the United Lutheran Church and we subscribe to the Lutheran confessions. When we do so, it means that in spite of the lapse of three centuries and more we still find the doctrinal presentation of these writings adequate. When the United Lutheran Church so subscribes, and makes these reservations, it apparently means something else. There was a time when even this body did not find it necessary to make such significant reservations. As recently as 1920 this church said in its Washington Dec-

laration: "In the case of those Church Bodies calling themselves Evangelical Lutheran and subscribing the Confessions which have always been regarded as the standards of Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, the United Lutheran Church in America recognizes no doctrinal reasons against complete co-operation and organic union with such bodies." One notes the change with regret!

For it cannot be denied that Lutheran union, if it could be effected, would offer many great advantages. The ending of unethical and undignified antagonism and competition would alone be a consummation most devoutly to be wished. Furthermore, one certainly feels a marked degree of kinship to those who with us bear the name and honor the memory of Luther. One is deeply impressed by many of the fine writings which come from other Lutheran publishing houses, and strongly drawn to individual members out of these other Lutheran groups as one occasionally meets them. But the question remains whether such union can be effected without violating the principles of Christian fellowship which we profess.

One thing is certain, differences in national backgrounds, in language etc. dare not play a part here. The fact that some of us have been German, others Scandinavian etc., while still others are able to trace their American ancestry back to pre-Revolutionary days is not only outweighed by the fact that now we are all Americans, but vanishes completely before the greater truth that here we are approaching each other as Christians. — Nor dare the antagonisms of the past even be considered in this connection. If there were no other obstacles than those which have so far been mentioned, they should be swept away in a storm of indignation over their trifling nature. But if there are other reasons, real differences of faith and doctrine, they certainly call for most careful and conscientious study before any steps are taken of such profound and far-reaching consequences as those suggested in the proposed plan of union. We believe that there are such doctrinal differences.

As has been stated, the plan for union embraces the entire Lutheran field. Any doctrinal difference which may be noted there calls for close scrutiny. Any such differences should be frankly recognized, freely discussed, and in charitable Christian spirit an earnest effort made to find the common ground of truth in the Word of God. Such was the course followed in the case of the differences which existed between the former Ohio and Iowa Synods on the one hand, and the members of the Synodical Conference on the other,

the issue being the doctrines of election and conversion. For some thirteen years representatives of the various synods made honest and persistent efforts to arrive at an understanding and finally, in 1928, reported their agreement. It is useless to speculate whether the findings of this committee would ever have been accepted by the various synods. The entire undertaking to which so much time and thought had been given was nullified when in 1930 the Ohio and Iowa Synods, which by that time had united with Buffalo to form the American Lutheran Church, established fellowship with the Norwegian Merger, which on its part had ruthlessly overridden the conscientious objections of the Minority against their proposed theses for union (the Madison "Opgjør"), objections which were raised because of questionable statements on this same doctrine of conversion and election. Thus the ground which had so slowly been gained was lost again, and the toil-some work of many years undone at a single stroke. The passion for mergers, the craving for union had outweighed this sober striving for real unity. The failure of these negotiations may, as Dr. O. H. Pannkoek in the "Lutheran" (United Lutheran Church) of October 11, 1934, calls it, be "the great sin and tragedy of our generation." But the responsibility does not lie where the Doctor apparently places it, in mere failure to agree regardless of the difference that had again appeared, but in the fact that the issue which had been disposed of tentatively in the Inter-synodical Committee was revived by the fellowship and merging of the American Lutheran Church with the Norwegian group.

This instance may serve as a means of comparing the two methods of establishing union. For directness and results the method which minimizes existing doctrinal differences or even ignores them altogether certainly has its pronounced advantages. We dare not underestimate the way in which such proposals for union will appeal to the general membership of our church, especially if they are based upon some such platform as the one which underlies the present proposals: a joint faith in the Word of God and a joint acceptance of the Lutheran confessions. There the other way, that of carefully examining doctrinal differences and painstakingly seeking to remove them seems infinitely slow and tedious. But let us pause to think whether Truth, and here we mean the Truth of God's Word, can be served in any other way? Do not the very examples we have seen show that the attempt to seek a short cut in these matters has only led to compromise and the acceptance of questionable doctrinal statements, has violated many a conscience, and shows the reason why

the mergers of these recent years have so sorely disappointed many of their own constituents, who have observed to their sorrow that these undertakings have had a degenerating, rather than a regenerating effect, that the spiritual tone of their bodies has been, not raised, but rather depressed?

It would certainly not be possible for us to enter upon any general plan of Lutheran union without first taking up these abandoned efforts at intersynodical agreement at the point where they were dropped. I believe that we of the Synodical Conference should be ready for that at any time, but realize likewise that the new ties which the American Lutheran Church has assumed in the American Lutheran Conference make it rather unlikely that this will ever occur. There will undoubtedly be renewed proposals to merge, but probably little desire once more to resume these old doctrinal discussions.

But our present proposals come from the circles of the United Lutheran Church. Are we perhaps doing that body an injustice by injecting into our discussion matters for which they are not responsible and creating the impression that similar doctrinal issues exist there, when that perhaps is not the case?

At first glance this might seem to be true. It might seem that there were no such outstanding doctrinal issue between the United Lutheran Church and us as for an instance the one on conversion and election which has just been referred to. While this controversy was in progress in the German Lutheran field the older Eastern synods which now constitute the United Lutheran Church stood aloof. It has not been the custom of this group to commit itself readily, nor to speak so positively. That course may have certain advantages, but it also makes it much more difficult to determine just where such an organization stands. The answer is made: "On the Word of God and the Lutheran confessions." And yet one has the disturbing feeling that all is not well. For the United Lutheran Church, which sometimes calls itself the most liberal and tolerant of the Lutheran bodies, has carried this tolerance to such a point that just that becomes the very thing which must be challenged when Lutheran union is proposed.

Three grave charges must be laid to the door of the United Lutheran Church, all growing out of this excessive spirit of tolerance. The first and most serious of these is that it tolerates doctrinal statements arising out of its own midst which are definitely not in agreement with Scripture and the Lutheran confessions. In his tract, "Why Not Join the United Lutheran Church," Dr. Wm. Dallmann quotes two

instances of such un-Lutheran teaching. One is that of Dr. Delk who in 1917 was charged with denying the verbal inspiration of the Bible, denying that Christ was truly divine, truly God, and also denying that Christ gave Himself a "ransom" for us. The other case is that of a Pastor Hanning of Oak Park, Illinois, who in 1924 seems to have supported the cause of Modernism. Although the tract in which these charges were made has been widely circulated, Dr. Dallmann tells me that to date their accuracy has not been challenged, nor has it ever appeared that these errors have been retracted. The men in question have continued to appear on the roster of the United Lutheran Church as members in good standing.

A more recent incident deals entirely with the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. When Dr. Charles M. Jacobs assumed the presidency of Philadelphia Theological Seminary (U. L. C.), succeeding his father, he startled the Lutheran world of America with statements in his inaugural address: "We do not identify the Scriptures with the Word of God." "The Bible . . . is the record of God's Word." . . . "The Scriptures show us not only the perfect truth as it is in Christ, but half-truth as it lived in the minds of men; they have their zones of twilight as well as their brilliant sunlight." (Quartalschrift, 1927, p. 326.) Many writers, not only of the Synodical Conference, expressed their swift and decided disagreement. Yet the statement still stands. In fact, the April, 1935, issue of "The Lutheran Church Quarterly," edited by the faculties of the Philadelphia and Gettysburg Seminaries (United Lutheran Church), contains two articles which follow the very same line of thought. Under the heading "The Bible — The Word of God" John Aberly of the Gettysburg faculty makes what he calls a fresh study of this subject. He discusses the weakness of the theory of verbal inspiration, and his answer to the question whether Scripture is inerrant is not the ringing answer one would expect from a Lutheran theologian, but a guarded, but nevertheless definite admission that the Scriptures are not inerrant, that they are not identical with the Word of God, but rather only contain the Word of God. In the very next article in the same magazine one A. E. Deitz of Long Island likens the teaching of the Bible to a large circle, at the center of which he places Christ and the Cross, around which center he sees a large region of certainty which includes all the great teachings of the Bible about religion and morality, but which has at its circumference an area where may be placed "those unessential matters about which for any reason there may be

some doubt such as historical inaccuracies, numerical errors, etc."

It lies beyond the scope of this paper to enter fully on a discussion of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. It is enough merely to point out that here we have repeated declarations to the effect that not everything in the Scriptures is given by God, and to ask how that squares with II Tim. 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." — It helps matters not at all that the second of these articles states: "Now, if we inquire how far out toward the circumference does the region of certainty extend, answers may differ, but for the present writer the region of certainty reaches far out toward the circumference." The fatal step has been taken which places the decision as to how much of the Scriptures is really Word of God in the personal judgment of man, and sets aside the divine authorization which God Himself has given to His Word. When Dr. Aberly in the first of these two articles which have been quoted grants a certain proper place in the interpretation of Scripture to the subjective, although warning against the danger of having it too subjective, this concession in plain words means that the result of Scripture interpretation may then contain not only what Scripture itself states on a given matter, but also what the interpreter thinks it should mean and say. Lutheran principles of interpretation have ever been different, holding that the sole duty of the interpreter is to bring out clearly what the divine texts state, adding not a particle of his own thoughts, wishes, and wisdom to the matter, in short, letting God speak, not man.

Whatever the new theories on inspiration which have here been scanned may be, they are not Lutheran. Nor are they in harmony with the Lutheran confessions. It is a surprising fact that the Confessions say very little on the question of the inspiration of Scripture. They offer no extensive treatment of this subject, such as one almost instinctively expects in these present times. But that was not because the men of the Reformation were weak and undecided on this matter. Rather, as one reads the confessional writings, one is impressed by the manner in which it is taken as self-evident that the Scriptures are identical with the Word of God. The Formula of Concord (Mueller, p. 572) simply identifies the writings of the prophets and apostles with the term, "Word of God."

When we are told that there is no reason why Lutheran union should not be effected since we stand together on the Word of God and in our joint acceptance of the Lutheran confessions, it is well for us to pause, to recall the modern ten-

dency to veer away from the old doctrine of the inspiration, to note the United Lutheran Church's tolerance of such divergences; and then to ask whether we really do so agree. Surely, words have lost their meaning when we are asked to ignore differences which are so clearly apparent.

Other doctrines could be mentioned on which the United Lutheran Church has shown similar undue tolerance toward statements which are at variance with accepted Lutheran, Biblical teaching. But the one on inspiration has been singled out with a purpose. It is because the concessions which have there been made and to which reference has been made above are concessions to the spirit of Modernism and Liberalism, which has wrought such untold havoc in other churches. Certainly, the men quoted above are far from being Modernists. This is gladly granted. And yet one cannot ignore the fact that when men concede an area of error within the Bible, even though they would limit it to a very small scope, the breach has been made. Others will widen this area of doubt far beyond what the first writers intended. I believe that here we have the beginnings of the inroads of Modernism and Liberalism into the field of American Lutheranism. I shall be more than glad if time shall prove these gloomy forebodings unfounded. But at present, with the unbelieving spirit of the new ideas at flood-tide, we dare not be indifferent to what may appear to be only a slight breach in the dikes. The potential danger makes it necessary that they be pointed out and the gaps closed — if that be possible.

The second charge which must be laid against the United Lutheran Church is its tolerance of lodge-membership on the part of its congregation members and even pastors. This was brought to the attention of the United Lutheran Church as recently as last October's convention in Savannah, the very one from which these resolutions for Lutheran union originate, and the facts on which the charge was based were not denied. The existence of these conditions is a matter of common knowledge. But the surprising thing is that in various of its official declarations the United Lutheran Church has arrayed itself definitely against the lodge. Its constitution reads: "The United Lutheran Church shall have the right, where it deems that loyalty to the Word of God requires it, to advise and admonish concerning association and affiliation with non-ecclesiastical and other organizations whose principles appear to be inconsistent with full loyalty to the Christian Church, but the Synods alone shall have the power of discipline" (Article VIII, Sec. 6). The Washington Declaration, p. 10f., is outspoken on the point.

Our pointing to the inconsistency of this stand may, however, suggest the question whether we may not be asking of the United Lutheran Church what we ourselves are unable to achieve; namely to be completely purged of the lodge element in our various congregations. It will not help us here to reply that the instances in the United Lutheran Church may be more numerous and more flagrant. We shall do well to confess our own failings in this matter and to deal with our erring brethren wherever the need appears. But what does justify the bringing of this charge is the way in which the spirit of tolerance which is so much in evidence in the United Lutheran Church has paralyzed every effort to do anything about the matter, so that the printed confession against the lodge is nullified by a pernicious policy of inactiveness. Very properly Prof. John Meyer has pointed out (*Quartalschrift*, 1935, p. 69) that the "Praxis" of the church is judged not merely by its declarations of principle, nor according to occasional lapses of individual members, but by the way the fallen member is dealt with, the earnestness with which one seeks to win him from his error, in short, the manner in which truly evangelical church discipline is exercised. That is why tolerance as current in the United Lutheran Church has ceased to be a virtue.

The third charge deals with the practice of Unionism. Here again it is not necessary on our part to bring proof since the charge, made by others, has met with no denial. Again it is a matter of common knowledge that United Lutheran congregations have often taken part in Union Services with non-Lutherans, that their pastors have freely exchanged pulpits, etc. The outstanding incident of this kind was the occasion in 1925 when Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, leader of Modernists, preached from the pulpit of the First Lutheran Church of Dayton, Ohio, of which Dr. Miles H. Krumbine was pastor. A related incident which involved the appearance of this same famous heretic in Wittenberg College has been disavowed officially by the local Synod, but there is no record that any official word of censure was ever spoken with regard to the case of Dr. Krumbine, or any word of apology ever offered by him.

As to the right or wrong of the practise of Unionism, we shall not repeat what we have said in the preceding paper. But it is interesting to hear testimony from the United Lutheran Church itself: "That until a more complete unity of confession is attained (between Lutheran and other Protestant churches), the United Lutheran Church in America is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate

identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts and its altars must testify only to that truth" (Washington Declaration, p. 8. Emphasis is ours). — We wish we could have said it half so well. We wish even more that it would not be necessary here again to record the sad fact that tolerance, undue and pernicious tolerance, has once more nullified a beautiful declaration.

In view of these facts it will not be surprising to the Synod here assembled to hear that in the writer's opinion the necessary prerequisites for the establishing of fellowship with the United Lutheran Church, namely true unity of doctrine and practise, do not exist. The invitation which has come to us must regretfully be declined. In the meantime the merger movement will probably go on. Eventual union between the United Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference is more than likely. We of the Synodical Conference shall more and more find ourselves standing alone. We may find the glitter and tinsel of outward organization and greatness duly impressive. But let us realize that there are many who have tasted the fruits of union even in the recent Lutheran merger, and have found them as ashes in their mouths. There are such in their midst who will testify that these mergers have only strengthened the so-called liberal element, and increased the tendency toward a tolerance which will strain at nothing. Let us realize that the strength of the merger movement lies largely in a desire for outward greatness and impressiveness. That craving will persist, even when and if (let us suppose it to be possible for just a moment) each and every Lutheran in the land shall have been absorbed. And when that point has been reached, with whom shall one then plan union? Shall we suppose that the craving will then suddenly cease? Or is it not more reasonable to see in this movement, which so far still confines itself to the Lutheran field, a close kin to that larger spirit of unionism which is even now abroad in the land, which would not rest until it has ground confession and distinctive doctrine down to a point where it is thoroughly "non-denominational" and acceptable to every one because of its weakness and lack of color?

Turning away from these dark prospects — may they never become real — let us simply do the work which has been entrusted to us, testifying unmistakably to the Truth which has been given to us, and commending the future of our Church to Him Who has established it and kept it to this day. Amen.

Business Transactions

(6)

ELECTIONS

* Denotes such who were newly elected, or whose appointment was confirmed.

Officers of the Synod Until 1937:

President: *Pastor John Brenner.
 1st Vice-President: *Pastor E. Benj. Schlueter.
 2nd Vice-President: Pastor John Witt.
 Secretary: *Pastor Karl F. Krauss.
 Doctrinal Recorder: *Pastor O. Hoyer.

Board of Trustees:

Until 1941: *Pastor W. T. Meier (Dakota-Montana District).
 *Mr. E. G. Hubb (Western Wisconsin District).
 *Mr. Wm. Stelljes (Minnesota District).
 Until 1939: Pastor Paul Pieper, chairman (Southeastern Wisconsin District).
 Pastor L. Koeninger, secretary (Pacific Northwest District).
 Pastor W. Pankow (Northern Wisconsin District).
 Until 1937: Pastor Emil Wenk (Michigan District).
 Pastor E. J. Hahn (Nebraska District).

Seminary Board:

Until 1941: *Pastor G. E. Bergemann.
 *Pastor S. Jedele.
 *Dr. H. Scholz.

Until 1939: Pastor E. Ph. Dornfeld.
 Mr. H. Albrecht.

Until 1937: Pastor Wm. Sauer.
 Mr. R. Freihube.

Dr. Martin Luther College Board:

Until 1941: *Pastor E. Fritz.
 *Pastor G. Hinnenthal.
 *Teacher O. Hellermann.

Until 1939: Teacher H. Sitz.
 Mr. R. G. Rohrke.

Until 1937: Pastor Edmund Birkholz.
 Mr. F. H. Retzlaff.