

8-1-1931

What is Unionism?

Th Graebner

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Graebner, Th (1931) "What is Unionism?," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 2 , Article 62.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol2/iss1/62>

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

Wie unsere Glaubens- und Bekenntnisgenossen im Auslande um und für das Erbe der Reformation kämpfen. 75, 163.

Der offene Himmel. 75, 196.

Die Einigung der lutherischen Kirche in China. 75, 233.

Drei Merkmale der rechten Theologie. 75, 289.

Die unierte evangelische Synode von Nordamerika will sich noch weiter unieren. 75, 321.

Unsere diesjährige Delegatensynode in River Forest. 75, 353.

Ein Besuch eines amerikanisch-lutherischen Pastors in der Schloßkirche zu Wittenberg. 75, 360.

Concordia Theological Monthly.

Vorwort. 1, 2.

„Das fruchtbare Lesen der Schriften Luthers.“ 2, 81.

Der e i n e Punkt. 2, 161.

Unsere Lehre auf dem lutherischen Weltkonvent in Kopenhagen. 2, 338.

Thesen, die dem „theologischen Schlußexamen“ dienen können. 2, 401.

Die Wiederholung einer falschen Anklage gegen die Missouri-synode. 2, 481.

Der Reichstag zu Augsburg der Reichstag des Friedens mit Gott und des ewigen Friedens im Himmel. 2, 641.

Abolf Harnack. 2, 651.

Eröffnungssrede zum neuen Studienjahr 1930/31. 2, 801.

D. Friedrich Bente. 2, 81.

Auch sind die Thesen zur kurzen Darstellung der Lehrstellung der Missouri-synode“, 2, 321 und 401 (englisch), zum großen Teil die Arbeit Herrn D. Piepers.
P. C. S t r e z m a n n.

“What Is Unionism?”

A question which has been rife in the Lutheran Church for a hundred years; a question which is easily the most important, affecting the inner life as also the outward relations to one another of the American Lutheran bodies; a question upon the answer of which, in the opinion of many, depends the future alignment of the various Lutheran synods and federated bodies in the United States. It may also be phrased: What is church-fellowship? or thus: What is the practical application of the confessional principle? Possibly, with a modernistic touch: Why creeds, if any?

The present stage of the problem underlying these questions originated in the discussions of a possible federation, or union, between the Missouri Synod, the Ohio Synod, the Iowa Synod, the General Council, and the General Synod sixty years ago. The center of debate were the so-called four points—Lodges, Chiliasm, Altar and Pulpit-fellowship. We are concerned with the latter two. No one acquainted with the literature of that day will doubt the sincerity of the General Council leaders in their efforts to bring about a closer adherence to the confessional principle. Yet from the be-

ginning an attitude of compromise is to be observed in the pronouncements on this subject. In 1868 the Council declared that preachers are to be excluded from its pulpits concerning whom "there is just reason to doubt whether they will preach the pure truth of God's Word as taught in the Confessions of our Church." Lutheran ministers were permitted to preach in the pulpits of other churches, "unless the circumstances imply, or seem to imply, a fellowship with error or schism or a restriction on the unreserved expression of the whole counsel of God." In both resolutions there is a begging of the question, which from the outset made them unworkable. What they gave with the right hand they took back with the left. The same convention declared: "Heretics and fundamentally false teachers are to be excluded from the Lord's Table." But two years later the term "fundamental errorists" was so defined as to eliminate reference to "those who are the victims of involuntary mistake" and to restrict the term to "those who wilfully, wickedly, and persistently desert, in whole or in part, the Christian faith" and those who "overturn or destroy the foundation" of faith.

At Akron, O., 1872, in answer to a question of the Iowa Synod referring to the declaration of 1870, Dr. Krauth, then president of the General Council, submitted the following: "1. The rule is: Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only. Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only. 2. The exceptions to the rule belong to the sphere of privilege, not of right. 3. The determination of the exceptions is to be made in consonance with these principles by the conscientious judgment of pastors, as the cases arise." This is the famous Akron Rule, ratified three years later at Galesburg.

The more conservative men in the General Council preferred to emphasize the rule rather than the exceptions allowed. The fundamental character of the confessional principle as applied to the pulpit and to Communion was stressed. In his opening address to the convention of 1884, Dr. A. Spaeth, president of the General Council, pointed out that "the battle for sound principles of altar- and pulpit-fellowship was a battle for the General Council's right to exist. If there is to be retrogression on this score, there would be no stopping until we had again reached the level of the General Synod. Once accept the principle which demands that the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions shall be regarded as fundamental, once deny church-fellowship to those who depart from this view, and then how is it possible to tolerate fellowship with those who in these same points are separated from us through their doctrinal position? What is at stake is the doctrinal basis of the General Council—that the true unity of the Christian Church demands unity in doctrine and faith in the Sacraments. More than this cannot be demanded; less than this may not be demanded. And if our beloved Church is

to endure for the future, she may not depart from this rule. She would, by doing so, give up her identity." In the same connection Dr. Spaeth quoted a letter of Dr. Krauth's from the minutes of the convention of 1881: "Our General Council has borne rich fruit for God's glory and the future of the Church. Most of all has she done a great work in that testimony for which she has been most assailed. In her principles of pulpit- and altar-fellowship she has vindicated herself from the reproach of the avowed sectarianism which in our day is trying to usurp the place of apostolic unity. May God keep her steadfast in the assertion of principle! May He make her willing to perish rather than to surrender it! May He make her whole life consistent with it, and may He bring all who love her to see eye to eye with her!"

Dr. Seiss, when the discussion was at its height, employed the full power of his pen in depicting the easy tolerance of the old General Synod, whose conservative and churchly men "take their seats in synods and councils" with representatives of Liberalism. In the *Javelin* (1870) he dealt body-blows to every half-hearted confessionalism. But in his chapter "General Council and Missourians" he makes the most far-reaching concessions to the unionistic point of view. Hear him: "Now, we wish it understood that we heartily agree to it as the normal state of the case and as the general rule upon which to proceed, that Lutheran altars are for Lutheran Christians and that none but Lutheran Christians can rightfully demand admission to Lutheran altars. But whilst we hold this to be the rule, we hold also that there may be proper exceptions to the rule and that cases may frequently occur in which it is the right of Lutheran pastors and congregations to receive and tolerate at their communions persons whom they know to be Christians, although not nominally identified with the Lutheran Church or not in all respects fully and intelligently grounded in all the distinctive features of what Lutherans believe and teach." (*The Javelin*, p. 299.) "Is it asked, however, whether it is lawful for a Lutheran pastor and congregation to invite a minister of another denomination to preach in their pulpit those doctrines and views of Christian ethics on which he is at one with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, our answer is clear and decided, that under the guards and limitations above expressed it is lawful and a right which is not to be denied them, though one which is to be exercised with great caution." (*Ib.*, p. 306.) The "guards and limitations" are these: that the preacher do not set forth "the distinctive peculiarities of his as against our Confession" and that "no indiscriminate opening of our pulpits be permitted." (*Ib.*, p. 305.)

After the death of Krauth the leadership in the General Council fell to Theodore E. Schmauck. In his editorial work as well as in his

activities in many fields of church-work the problem of the confessional principle engaged much of his attention. In a sense, it may be said that it slew him. Dr. Sandt's biography reprints extracts from his letters and other writings bearing on this issue. Schmauck had a fine sense of responsibility for a continued upward development in his church-body towards a stricter confessionalism. He writes of his own experiences in the Chautauqua Movement: "The writer has not been connected with this institution for many years, to the unanimous regret (so they said) of the Chautauquans and resigned partly because he found that his name on the letter-head of the blanks of this institution and his official contact with men of all kinds of religious convictions, from an agnostic like John Fiske and evolutionists like Lyman Abbott, on the one hand, to Roman Catholic priests, on the other, was so liable to be misunderstood as a religious endorsement and made such great demands on his time to prevent a religious compromise on his part, that he considered it safe, as a Lutheran, since the institution was no longer in a situation to affect the contiguous territory in a religious way, to resign his connection." (Sandt, *op. cit.*, p. 259.)

Schmauck describes altar and pulpit restrictions as distinctive of Lutheranism: "A minister who joins honestly in a union movement would have to admit the evangelist or revivalist into his own pulpit and allow him to partake of the Lord's Supper. He would thereby be eliminating everything distinctive for which the Lutheran Church stands." (Sandt, *op. cit.*, p. 260.) "If we are impeding the cause of Christ by not entering into these revivals, the question arises whether we are not impeding the cause of Christ by maintaining a distinct denominational existence. If the Lutheran way of salvation by the pure preaching of the Word of God and the use of the Sacraments is not the right way, or not efficient, then the question is a much larger one than merely entering into union movements. For us to enter into union movements is to confess the failure of Lutheranism." (*Ib.*, p. 261 f.) In 1907 he wrote on the external relationships of the Lutheran Church: "There is a common ground for all Christians in Christ. Those whom Christ recognizes despite their errors and imperfections are already one with us in Christ. They may not be one with us in mind and faith, they may not be one with us in those particular parts of our mind and faith which we feel divinely called to stand for and exposit, and hence we may be unable to feel and say that they are in a common brotherhood of faith, because we earnestly believe that, although Christ can receive them as they are unto Himself without danger to His truth, we cannot do so with the same safety. Christ can do all things. We must do in accordance with our convictions." (*Ib.*, p. 266.) So far, excellent. But Schmauck continues with a "nevertheless": "Nevertheless there

is some actual agreement of all Christians," and this is followed by eight pages dealing with the principles that should govern cooperation in the work of other Christian bodies. He returns to the subject in a discussion of "Universality and Individuality," the universality of the Christian Church and the individuality of Lutherans. "Lutheran pastors and people and the whole Christian world outside of us should also be educated to an appreciation of our right to individuality by being caused to clearly understand it, and of our principle of cooperation. That principle is as follows. Toward the Christians and Christian communions without us we are to show neighborliness, to have intercourse and sympathy to the extent of our common Christianity, provided that this involve no special obligations, recognition, or endorsement beyond what is actually in common. We may have dealings mutually advantageous of a common business character. We may enter into covenants on basal articles which in no wise compromise each other. We may enter into cooperation on lines of common policy, provided that those with whom we cooperate formally, officially, and practically recognize the bounds of limits and that our own people are clearly taught them." (Sandt, *op. cit.*, p. 276.)

Dr. Schmauck distinguished the following stages of participation: 1) Neighborliness. 2) Intercourse. 3) Dealings. 4) Covenants. 5) Cooperation. 6) Alliances. 7) Union. 8) Fellowship. 9) Unity. 10) Communion. The very refinement of these distinctions must create confusion in their practical application. Communion with the heretic is wrong; fellowship, reprehensible; alliances, dangerous; but may we not have cooperation, dealings, or at least intercourse? And how shall I classify an act of joint worship that is merely occasional or of which the object is some personal tribute? Is it "dealings" merely, or "cooperation," or "alliance," or "fellowship" when we attend a World Congress of Lutherans, or hold membership in the local church federation? Dr. Schmauck's principles were splendid, but his categories of union have done untold harm.

The exceptions allowed in the Galesburg Rule have ever stood in the way of effectively asserting the Lutheran principle of church-fellowship. Fry, in his book *The Pastor's Guide*, says concerning pulpit-fellowship: "A Lutheran pastor may officiate on any occasion or perform a ministerial act in which ministers of other creeds take part, provided the occasion and circumstances are such as will not violate synodical order nor compromise his confessional position." This singularly halting position, the legacy of Akron and Galesburg, recurs continually in the discussion of church-fellowship. Dr. Neve writes in his *Introduction to the Symbolical Books* (1926): "It must be kept in mind that the sermon is not a lecture in which a person presents his own personal views nor a matter which concerns only himself, but it is one of the most important parts of the devotional

life of a congregation, in which the minister is the servant of Christ as well as of the Church. As such he functions in the liturgy. Furthermore he has been instructed to preach the Word and apply it. Therefore only one who is in agreement with the faith and confession of the respective church can consistently be admitted into a pulpit or accept an invitation to a pulpit. The life of the Church is such that we would not deny that there can be exceptions to the rule. These, however, should not be practised to break the rule. There are meetings of churches that do not involve the real cultus of the Church, and there a contact between Christian preachers may be permitted that should not be practised in the regular services of the sanctuary. And even with regard to the latter there may be circumstances that justify the exception. Then the confessional note of the sermon must be such that the principle is safeguarded.¹⁾

Dr. Neve's pamphlet *Die Galesburger Regel* does not strike the point when, in discussing the exceptions so generally made to the Galesburg Rule, he says: "*Nicht jeder Pastor, der die Galesburger Regel nicht oder nicht allseitig zu wuerdigen vermag, ist schon darum einer, dem man die Treue zum lutherischen Bekenntnis absprechen kann,*" and then refers to ministers who unite with those of other denominations "*IN KIRCHLICHEN NEBENVERSAMMLUNGEN, die nach seiner Auffassung nicht zum eigentlichen Kultus der Kirche gehoeren.*" Dr. Neve asks: "*Wenn es Pastoren gibt, die unter solchen und aehnlichen Umstaenden Nichtlutheraner an lutherischen Altaeren empfangen, sind sie nun darum nicht Lutheraner?*" While we should not be willing to deny the name Lutheran to every one who takes such liberties, the cases referred to are not in point as far as present-day practise goes.²⁾

We are willing to grant to Dr. Neve the existence of a historical difficulty which stands in the way of making the Galesburg Rule effective. In his pamphlet *Die Galesburger Regel* he says: "*In unsern deutschen Synoden ist es nur natuerlich, sich nach der Galesburger*

1) Essentially this is the attitude also of Dr. C. B. Gohdes of Columbus (Ohio Synod): "It is not necessarily unionism when at a funeral the several pastors of a religiously divided family make a contribution to the same service and the Lutheran pastor, albeit reluctantly, yields to the arrangement, since a funeral is scarcely an occasion calling for polemics." (*Calling across the Fence*, p. 26). "Whenever the implication of confessional equivalence does not exist, there is no reason not to avail oneself of the services of other Christian brethren, even on occasions intended for edification." (*Ib.*, 28.)

2) The *Lutheran* editorial of February 5 (see below) makes no such restrictions to "secondary meetings," but grants blanket permission to commune all those who accept the Scriptural doctrine of the Eucharist, even though subscribing to error in other points.

Regel zu richten; unter den englischen Verhaeltnissen aber ist es unnaturlich; der Pastor muss gegen den Strom, gegen den ganzen Volkgeist, angehen. Das ist der Grund, warum es den Englischen im Generalkonzil, warum es auch der Vereinigten Synode des Suedens schwer wird, sich nach der Galesburger Regel zu richten." And in the *Lutheran* for August 4, 1917, he pointed out: "In a predominantly English Lutheran body, whose members are so much more in touch with the broad American life and its tendencies than is the case in the synods which can yet work with the tongue of their homeland and under the spirit which necessarily goes with language, the suggested method of eliminating these shortcomings by a mere outward discipline will simply not work. The educational method must largely be relied upon." The difficulty cannot be denied and should make us charitable in viewing certain offenses. But whether recent editorials in the *Lutheran*³⁾ are a stage in the application of "the educational method" is a question which the reader will be able to answer for himself.

In his treatise *Die Kirchengemeinschaftsfrage und der Schriftbeweis* Dr. J. L. Neve undertakes to show that a number of texts generally quoted against practising fellowship with the Reformed do not as a matter of fact apply to the "more conservative Protestant bodies." Dr. Neve does not defend unionism with the sects. Indeed (p. 19), he combats this practise in his lectures at Hamma Divinity School. But he would have the argument develop along lines different from the quotation of texts specifically condemning unionism. He takes up Titus 3, 10 ("a man that is an heretic," etc.). From the fact that Titus is not instructed to oppose these false teachers actively he argues that no question of doctrine was involved—certainly an *argumentum e silentio*. Neve next attacks the applicability of 2 Cor. 6, 17, 18, a passage which we shall grant him at once, as the verse immediately following (7, 1) clearly indicates that godlessness of life rather than false doctrine is the charge against those from whom Christians are here commanded to be separate.⁴⁾ Rom. 16, 17, 18 ("Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions," etc.) is removed by Dr. Neve from the category of pertinent texts because Paul's warning is declared to be directed "against fanatical Judaists who had disturbed Antioch and the Galatians and were now about to invade the Roman congregation." Pure assumption, even if it is supported by Weiss, Godet, and Luthardt. The apostle warns against errorists and schismatics in the most general

3) See CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, April, 1931, pp. 300 ff.

4) Naturally, all those who teach doctrines subversive of faith in God and common morality—and this includes the more radical type of Modernism—cannot be excluded in the application of this passage.

terms. As for v. 18, we shall remember that divisions in the Church have been caused chiefly by those who sought personal advantage, rather than Christ, and who practised deception upon those who innocently followed their leadership. The fourth passage treated by Dr. Neve is Matt. 7, 15—20 (the false prophets coming in sheep's clothing). Dr. Neve tries to establish that these false prophets who come "with the motives of a wolf" are "malicious deceivers, who know that they are telling lies" (p. 29). Would Dr. Neve assert that the Lord is not warning against *sincere* apostles of Mormonism, *honest* Pentecostals, or *convinced* Christian Scientists? They must be conscious deceivers, he says, or the text does not apply to them. We cannot accept this narrowing-down of the Lord's warning. Dr. Neve, in a concluding section, substitutes for the direct argument from Scripture against unionism the proof from the *Schriftganze*,—in this case understood as the consensus of Scriptural doctrine emphasizing the duty of confessing the truth, especially through the lips of the ministry, and the doctrine of the unity of the Church, which certainly prohibits the destruction of that unity through false doctrine. Dr. Neve does not intend to weaken the stand of his Church in the question of fellowship, but his treatise can have no other effect. He points to the hymnology of the Reformed Church, which glorifies the Cross and the atonement ("Not the labors of my hands," etc.; "Nothing in my hand I bring," etc.), though to us this suggests the possibility of fellowship also with the Roman Catholic Church on the strength of such testimony as "O bleeding Head and wounded" and "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord." Dr. Neve's treatise was printed in 1918. Those who have noted the development of Modernism during the years that have elapsed since then will ask whether Dr. Neve himself would not apply to a great part of the Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian churches and to considerably more than one half of the Presbyterian pulpits even the hardest terms of the New Testament against which he has endeavored to shield the Reformed denominations in his argument.

The Tennessee Synod, under the leadership of the Henkels, developed a soundly Lutheran consciousness at a time when the General Synod was still floundering in the cross-currents of the pre-Akron days. And from the Tennessee Synod came in 1915 the last clear-cut testimony to the Lutheran position. In the *Lutheran Church Visitor* of January 28, 1915, Rev. B. D. Wessinger, discussing the "basis for Lutheran unity," quotes the rule which limits Lutheran altars to Lutheran communicants. He raises the question: "It may be asked what right we have to do this. People say it is the Lord's Table, and so it is. For the very reason that it is *the Lord's Table* we have absolutely no right to do as we please with it. Since it is His and *not ours*, we must stay within the limitations which

He Himself has placed around it. When Jesus instituted this Sacrament, He did not call in the Pharisees, nor Herodians, nor scribes, nor Sadducees, nor even many who loved Him and had heard Him gladly, but only the little band of *confessed disciples*. Scripture further says of those who do not discern the Lord's body that they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and also that those who eat and drink unworthily eat and drink condemnation to themselves because they do not discern the Lord's body. If we believe that the Lord's Supper is only a memorial of grace and not a means of grace, that it is a symbol of something, but offers nothing, we would not need to be very careful along this line. But we believe it to be a solemn Sacrament of Jesus Christ in which He imparts His body and blood, pledging us the forgiveness of sins and that, whoever draws near without believing the Word of Christ, not only receives no blessing, but commits a sin for which he is accountable to God. The Lord's Supper is not child's play, nor is it a mere social affair to which you invite me and I invite you in return. This is not questioning the Christianity of others, but their fitness to commune. Our children are Christians, and yet, before we admit them, we carefully instruct them, ask for the confession of their faith in confirmation, and then assure ourselves through the service of confession and absolution that they are penitent and worthy to commune. So St. Paul said: 'Let every man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.' If the Scripture requires us to demand this of our own people, how can we ask less of others? . . .

"This, then, is where we stand. If we are wrong, we must change; if right, then we cannot change or even modify this position without violence to conscience. If these things are not fundamental to others, they are to us and, so far as we are concerned, would of necessity enter into the consideration of the basis for a true union of Lutherans."

Next, concerning pulpit-fellowship:—

"The Tennessee Synod does not believe in an exchange of pulpits with the denominations around us. Her rule is that Lutheran pulpits should be for Lutheran pastors. To many this appears narrow. Even some who subscribe to the Confessions and are proud of the name and history of the Lutheran Church are not willing to admit the correctness of this position. But let us look the matter fairly and squarely in the face. Protestantism is divided into a number of denominations, each having a distinct name and each standing for certain distinctive doctrines. Because of their avowed belief in these things, they have withdrawn and formed a separate organization. The Baptists believe that only those who are immersed have been properly baptized. The Methodists believe the Sacrament to be only a memorial service in which the bread and wine symbolize Christ's body and

blood. So might others be mentioned. Each one stands for certain teachings which others cannot accept. They demand from their pastors an adherence to their doctrines, and one would hardly be retained who is at radical variance with their position. To act consistently, they cannot ask us nor can we ask them to exchange pulpits; for they know they are not going to preach our doctrine, and we know we are not going to preach theirs. Nor could we agree to maintain silence regarding the differences. If we really believe that the truth of God's Word has been rightly interpreted in our Confessions, this faith is not such a trifling affair that we can dispense with it to suit the occasion. It is rather such conviction of mind, heart, and conscience that we stand as living confessors and examples of always and everywhere. Luke 24, 48.

"Before we ordain a pastor, we examine him as to his fitness mentally, morally, and spiritually. If qualified, he is ordained to the office of pastor with the sanction of the Church. If we do not allow a Lutheran to preach without this, why allow another? If our own pastors must climb this fence in order to safeguard the preaching of the pure Gospel, why lay it down for those outside when we know they not only do not believe what we do, but stand as avowed disbelievers in what we confess? Whenever the Lutheran Church can entrust the preaching of the Gospel among her people to those who are not Lutherans, she will thereby declare that no real difference exists between her faith and that of others and will therefore have no right to maintain a separate existence. We do not deny that other denominations are churches, that they accomplish much good, or that many good people are to be found among them. We admit all this, and further, that much of divine truth is taught by them. It is not because of the true, but of the false teachings which they maintain that we cannot consistently fellowship with them."

This was written in 1915. Three years later the Tennessee Synod joined with its parent body the United Lutheran Church, the Merger, which in Dr. Delk's phrase was to "merge the best and submerge the rest." What we have witnessed during the past twelve years is the gradual breakdown of the spirit that made possible the Galesburg Rule. More and more the exceptions are becoming the rule. The bars are down. Unionism with the Reformed sects is the order of the day.

The following cases are fairly typical. Dean Shailer Mathews of the Divinity School of Chicago University speaks in a Dayton church of the U. L. C. In Philadelphia an "Outdoor Twilight Community Worship" is programmed, with Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, and U. L. C. Lutherans participating. A Methodist, a Baptist, and an Episcopalian preacher are on the program of the Reformation quadricentennial in Rochester. In the same city a Com-

munity Thanksgiving Service is held in which Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and U. L. C. Lutherans unite, the invocation being pronounced by a Unitarian and a Rabbi serving as chairman. A prayer is spoken by a General Synod professor of theology in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City. In Syracuse seventy pastors exchange pulpits, and among those participating are five Lutheran clergymen. In the same city a Civic (?) Lenten Service is held in which a Lutheran prays and in which a Presbyterian makes the address. At Richmond, Va., sixty-six preachers exchange pulpits, the U. L. C. again participating. At Fort Recovery, O., four local churches—Trinity Lutheran, the Methodist Episcopal, the Church of Christ, and the Congregational Christian—conduct a united series of community meetings as Sunday evening services during the winter and spring months. In Clark County, O., a County School of Religious Education is organized under the direction of Wittenberg College, an Evangelical and two Presbyterian clergymen serving with the Wittenberg professors on the faculty. A School of Religious Education in Los Angeles finds another U. L. C. minister willing to serve on the Board of Directors. In Brazil the U. L. C. missionary unites with men of the La Plata Synod in the establishment of the Evangelical Institute. Membership in local church federations, with the constant fraternal intercourse which such connections involve, is, as far as the U. L. C. is concerned, more the rule than the exception.

Similar practises are rife in the Swedish Augustana Synod, until 1918 a member of the General Council. At Rock Island, pastors of that body are members of the Ministerial Alliance. At Sioux City "fraternal greetings" from the Ministerial Association were extended through Rev. O. N. Olsen to the Methodist Conference and (as reported in the *Lutheran Companion* of November 3, 1923, under the heading "Closer Cooperation between Protestant Churches") included the following: "It affords me much pleasure to extend to your conference the fraternal greetings of our Ministerial Association. . . . Times were when greetings of this sort would have seemed much out of place. . . . There have been times of religious bigotry and intolerance. . . . Happily these times are past. . . . We can all labor for better understanding, . . . for more generous recognition and appreciation, for a broader sympathy and courtesy, for a larger measure of cooperation in our common tasks and problems." At Augustana College, on Reformation Day, 1917, a Presbyterian spoke the prayer. Dr. Bostrom, of the college faculty, served a Presbyterian congregation during a vacancy. President Andreen of the same college delivered a sermon at a Maundy Thursday union service while a Congregationalist presided and a Methodist led in prayer. Many similar instances could be quoted, but multiplying analogous cases

would serve no purpose.⁵⁾ Unquestionably both in the United Lutheran Church and in the Augustana Synod no clergyman loses his good standing by participating in religious services together with preachers of the Reformed denominations.

The condition illustrated by the instances just quoted undoubtedly points to a weakening of the confessional consciousness. Only a few years ago the *Lutheran* defended the Galesburg Rule against the charge of narrowness and bigotry and quoted expressions from the *Christian Advocate* (Methodist) "practically endorsing the Galesburg principle," with the comment: "This is good Galesburg doctrine." It quoted the following: "To assist, by introducing to the pulpit of an evangelical church and thus endorsing as a preacher of the Gospel, one who belittles Him is not fidelity to Christ. 'Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds,' 2 John 10. 11. Yet some Methodist preachers will invite into their pulpits those who reject these truths and descant against them. This cannot be fidelity to Christ. Neither can it be fidelity to the churches with which such pastors are intrusted." The *Lutheran* remarked: "This is the very foundation on which the Galesburg Rule is built, and it is a pleasure to note a Methodist editor has the courage to endorse it. The time is at hand when others will endorse it also." Present-day practise in the United Lutheran Church removes the "foundation" here referred to.

Moreover, the decay of sound practise which has been developing for a number of years on the point of pulpit-fellowship has more recently also affected the official attitude towards the Galesburg restriction on altar-fellowship. An editorial article in the *Lutheran* of February 5, 1931, charges that an ecclesiastical body has no right to make rules governing the practise of its congregations in matters involving articles of faith. With reference to the communing of persons outside the Lutheran denomination who "believe the meaning

5) Naturally, unionistic undertakings between members of the various synodical bodies as yet not in official fellowship with one another are multiplying. Typical of such relationships is the "fellowship meeting" of Lutheran Seminary students, groups from eleven institutions being entertained at Columbus, O., by the students of the Ohio Synod seminary. The following were represented: Capital, Luther (Norwegian), Luther (American), Wartburg, Philadelphia, Waterloo, Augustana, Chicago, Gettysburg, Augsburg, Hamma. The differences which separate the synods represented do not in the least militate against the free and fraternal conduct of the meetings, which are an annual affair.

of the Sacrament and accept it with repented hearts," it establishes that such "may not be refused this means of grace," and the "interdict whereby during the Middle Ages and in more recent times the Church denied to believers reception of the Lord's Supper in the interest of denominational solidarity" is termed "an unpardonable misuse of their ecclesiastical powers." Again: "The enactment of a blanket rule, which resulted in refusing the Lord's Supper to one worthy of receiving it and seeking its benefits, on the ground that his synod did not belong to the General Council, was an illustration of ecclesiastical seizure of power." The Galesburg Rule, even with its loopholes, an example of "ecclesiastical seizure of power"⁶⁾

A meeting was held in Symphony Hall, Boston, on Thanksgiving Day under the auspices of the Boston Federation of Churches. A Jewish Rabbi was the speaker, and Unitarian preachers were participants. A Swedish Lutheran clergyman, Rev. S. G. Haegglund, pronounced the benediction. This is the defense put up by Rev. Haegglund when called to account by Rev. S. M. Miller in the *Bible Banner*: "Doubtless it would have been far more satisfactory to many of us if the speaker had been an orthodox Christian, and I fear that the conservative Protestant churches are in great danger of compromising their position when they extend the right hand of fellowship to representatives of Modernism and heterodoxy. But can we not, must we not, be courteous to each other? Is it not, after all, the sort of danger to which Jesus exposed Himself when He mingled freely with publicans and sinners, with Pharisees and scribes, and when He worshiped in the synagogues? Can we not believe that in every conflict of religious opinions, truth and the purer spirituality will prevail? Are not we Lutherans called to put the leaven of true Christianity into the three measures of meal?" Much of this is so evidently superficial reasoning that it is not worthy of comment. Rev. Haegglund is not sensible of the inconsistency of pronouncing in the name of the Triune God a benediction upon such a mixing of

6) A correspondent in the subsequent issue stressed the Lutheran point of view: "It is a principle of the New Testament universally recognized in the Church that the reception of the Lord's Supper in a particular congregation or particular communion has as one of its objects the confession of the pure faith as against the false or mingled, the complete as against the imperfect, the sound doctrine as against the corrupt or dubious, the true Church as against the spurious or doubtful." The contributor, Dr. John C. Mattes, quoted Dr. Krauth's approval of the older dogmaticians: "The Lord's Supper not only separates believers, or the Christian people, from unbelievers, but also distinguishes between Christians themselves who have wandered from the purity of the faith and those of a purer Church sincerely professing and defending the sound faith." But the position defended in this contribution was disavowed in an editorial appearing in the same issue.

the worship of Belial and Christ as took place in this music hall. The heart of Dr. Haegglund's reply is the claim, "We must be courteous." Courtesy demands that we accept such invitations as that extended to the Swedish minister in Boston. In his rebuttal Dean Miller pertinently quotes 2 John 9—11 (R. V.): "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." In a later contribution to the *Bible Banner* Rev. Haegglund directs the attention of his antagonists to the fact that "the Federation of Churches makes it perfectly clear that no one needs to compromise his confessional position by taking part in the common work of this organization." As if the question of compromise were one which the Federation of Churches had a right to define! Confusion becomes worse confounded when Dr. Haegglund continues a little farther down: "If we love all men, Jews and Gentiles, sinners and saints, we must long for fellowship with them, and we must pray for them and bless them in our hearts." As if longing for fellowship with the unconverted were on the same plane as practising fellowship with them; and as if praying for infidel Jews and Unitarians were a thing of the same nature as worshipping with them! Since the epistles of Paul and John had been quoted in Dean Miller's criticism of Haegglund's participation in this unionistic service, the Swedish clergyman actually proceeds to attack the authority of Paul and John. He says that Paul in the matter of marriage and of women and John in his second epistle and in Revelation fall short of Christ's standard. He blames Paul for monasticism and celibacy and complains that in John's second epistle and in Revelation "the very saints in heaven are heard impatiently uttering awful denunciations upon their enemies, those who had slain the martyrs, just as the psalmists in the Old Testament uttered denunciations upon their enemies. But this is not the spirit of the Christ, who prayed for His enemies and taught His followers to do likewise." The line of reasoning adopted by Dr. Haegglund in his defense is practically that which we have heard in private from those who either participated in joint services with Unitarians and Jews or condoned the practise. It stands to reason that to men holding the attitude worked up out of such thought-patterns the practise of joining in fellowship with the more conservative Reformed churches does not even appear in the light of a problem.

A glance at the latest configuration in the American Lutheran Church, and we shall be in a position to draw our conclusions. Article two in paragraph three of the Minneapolis Agreement, accepted

as the basis of her doctrinal position by the American Lutheran Conference, reads thus: "These synods agree that the rule 'Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only' is not only in full accord with, but necessarily implied in, the teachings of the divine Word and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This rule, implying the rejection of all unionism and syncretism, must be observed as setting forth a principle elementary to sound and conservative Lutheranism." The American Lutheran Conference consists of the Ohio Synod, the Iowa Synod, the Buffalo Synod, the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, the United Danish Synod, and the Augustana Synod. Acceptation *ex animo* of the propositions just quoted will place all these bodies solidly upon the footing of Lutheran confessionalism. If the rejection of "all unionism" is meant to reject *all* unionism and the principle of Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, etc., is accepted as it stands and without the weakening clauses that were attached to the Galesburg Rule, a greater Lutheran union than anything hitherto hoped for by Lutheran students of events might not be far in the offing. As a matter of fact, the Scandinavian bodies in the Conference—the Norwegians to a less,⁷⁾ the Swedes to a greater extent—have long ago permitted violations of the rule and cannot subscribe to it with clear convictions.

7) That there is a strong reaction against unionistic services in the Norwegian Lutheran Church, due chiefly to the old Norwegian Synod element, is evident. The official organs uphold the stand against fraternizing with the Reformed sects. In the *Lutheran Church Herald* of February 24, 1931, Rev. Olaf Turmo wrote: "All teaching of false doctrine is disobedience to God, and as disobedience it is sin." In support of this position he quotes 1 Pet. 4, 11; 2 Tim. 1, 13; 2 Tim. 2, 2; Titus 1, 9. The writer concludes: "Because all departure from the true doctrine of God's Word is sin, you make yourself by the practise of unionism a partaker in the sins of others. And not that alone, but you are also confirming them in their mistaken conviction that there is nothing dangerously wrong about what they believe and teach. If any church denomination or any individuals sin by departing from the truth of God's Word in their doctrine and in their worship, which they do if they do not believe and teach according to God's Word, then it is your duty to testify against such sin by not fraternizing with those who commit it. All who deviate from the truth of the Word of God are in so far as they do so false teachers, however well-meaning they may be and however sincere in their convictions. If their activities bear all the earmarks of sincerity and of a deep personal piety, that does not lessen, but rather increases, the harm to the Church which their *false* teachings will do, namely, by increasing by so much the power of their influence to lead men away from the truth in the points of doctrine in which they teach falsely." Just as this goes to the printer, a correspondent sends us the following list of pastors of the American Lutheran Church who participated in union services in the Pittsburgh

What, Then, Is Unionism?

Unionism is church-fellowship without doctrinal unity. Under church-fellowship we, of course, have in view the external factors which may be summarized as joint work and worship. In its concrete form it is accordingly the participation of congregations and church-bodies, of ministers and church officials, in spiritual work and religious worship together with those of differing belief and profession. Difference of belief is established a) when the individual departs from the orthodox faith,⁸⁾ b) when the church-body as such in its official declarations espouses or tolerates error. Church-fellowship with such is to be avoided 1) as unscriptural, a) in view of the texts which prohibit spiritual association with those who depart from the truth, b) in view of the texts that enjoin adherence to the truth; 2) as un-Lutheran, because of the confessional principle, which, in turn, is founded upon the doctrine of the Clarity of Scripture. If Scripture in all matters pertaining to revealed truth is a clear book, then the plea that we may agree to differ is patently inadmissible. Therefore the attitude of indifference or the appearance of it is an offense, a *skandalon*, in the true sense, individual cases differing in degree, of course, in proportion to the degree of departure from the teachings of Scripture—unionism with Jews and Christian Scientists, *e. g.*, constituting a greater offense than joint worship with the Reformed sects.

Such denial of fellowship is not identical with excommunication. We do not refuse the hand of fellowship to a Baptist or Methodist on the same grounds on which we refuse it to an impenitent sinner or infidel. In the case of the excommunicated the factor of personal faith is involved, while to introduce the question of personal faith into the general question of fellowship is inadmissible. It is, of course, a simple matter to establish (*negatively*) departure from the

District, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* of June 20: Rev. Lemmert Redelfs, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, in an open-air service in West Park, N. S., Pittsburgh, with United Presbyterians, Methodists, Evangelicals, Christians, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Rev. L. E. Leshner, Mount Lebanon Lutheran Church, and Rev. J. B. Sause, Dormont Lutheran Church, participated in a community service in the Mount Lebanon Presbyterian Church with Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, and United Presbyterians. Rev. George B. Tejan, Trinity Lutheran Church, Avalon, Pa., preached at the Bellevue and Avalon community services on the Bellevue Y. M. C. A. lawn, in which twelve sectarian and one U. L. C. church cooperated in the assemblies. Rev. L. D. Burry, St. John's Lutheran Church, Carnegie, Pa., served as the host to the church- and Sunday-school workers of District 36, Allegheny County Sabbath-school Association. At the General Assembly Pastor Burry extended words of welcome.

8) The tolerance of Modernists in conservative bodies.

faith or apostasy from it or a godless, impenitent life. But it is impossible to establish (*positively*) that there is personal faith even in those who are of our own communion and "household of faith." If this is true,— as it certainly is,— then it is not feasible to consider the individual's personal relation to God in establishing grounds for our personal relation to him. We cannot read the heart. But we can hear, and judge of, the profession of the lips. Hence it is clear that in establishing church-fellowship, the deciding factor is that of a common profession. This certainly applies in every case of reception into membership in a local congregation. Not the state of some one's heart, but the expression of his lips and his life are the basis of calling any one our brother. We may be convinced that our own fellow-Lutheran is a sincere Christian, but that is not our reason for being associated with him; the ground of that association is his agreement with us in profession. Conversely, the belief that the individual Methodist or Catholic is a Christian can become no reason for our associating ourselves with him in religious work and worship; his adherence to a heterodox body is the deciding factor in refusing him our fellowship. Anything else is not only impracticable, but unreasonable, if the confessional principle is sound. The duty of acknowledging those as brethren who are one with us in their public profession of Scripture doctrines and principles has as its necessary corollary the duty of refusing fellowship to those who disagree with us in public profession. To deny this is to deny that there is an absolute norm of what Christians are to believe and do, is tantamount, in other words, to a denial of the clearness of God's revelation and the Holy Spirit's witness-bearing.

Lutherans will indeed subscribe to the sentiments of Martin Luther voiced in his exclamation: "Nothing has so grieved me for a number of years (Christ is my witness) as this disunity in doctrine." But this will not prevent us from subscribing to the same Reformer's opinion regarding a peace not founded upon true unity, as expressed in his words on the efforts to unite the new Evangelical Church of Germany with the Sacramentarians: "If you but retain the unity of the Spirit and Christ, it will not hurt you to disagree with those who corrupt the Word and thereby destroy the unity of the Spirit. I would therefore much rather that they and the whole world with them should separate themselves from me and become my enemies than that I should separate myself from Christ and have Him for an enemy, which would be the case if I were to forsake His clear and revealed Word and cling to their vain dreams, by which they pervert the words of Christ to suit their own notions. The one, Christ, is to me far greater than unnumbered unities of love." And once more: "The Church shall not and cannot teach lies or error, not in a single article. If she teaches one lie, it is *all* wrong, Luke 11, 35. How can it be other-

wise? The mouth of God is the mouth of the Church. God cannot lie, hence the Church cannot lie. When a preacher leaves his pulpit, he must not pray, 'Forgive us our debts.' But if he is a true preacher, he must be able to say with Jeremiah: 'Lord, Thou knowest that what has come out of my mouth is right and pleasing to Thee.' He must be able to say: 'I have been an apostle and prophet of Jesus Christ in this sermon.' Unless he can say this, let him refrain from preaching. Life may be sinful and wrong, but the doctrine must be absolutely straight and certain and without any defect. Only the sure, unadulterated, and unmixed Word of God is to be preached in the Church."⁹⁾

9) Writing in the *Lutheran* of February 24, 1921, Dr. Neve discusses Luther's position on freedom of religious thought. He points out the "interesting" fact "that in matters of doctrinal discipline Luther knew to distinguish between radical errors, such as antinomianism, and such a departure as is seen in Melanchthon's later development and in the unionizing tendencies of Bucer. . . . Luther attacked the teaching of Zwingli and his disciples, also Schwenkfeld; but no mention was made of Melanchthon or not even of Bucer. The time came when Bucerism developed into Calvinism, and the Lutheran Church had to meet a crypto-Calvinistic propaganda by adopting a new confession. But Luther at that time could not see that he was to act in any decisive way. Education by public testimony was his policy in this situation." Now, it is true that Luther never ceased to look upon Melanchthon as a coworker in the cause of the Reformation while he regarded Zwingli as an errorist. However, if we are to understand Luther's tolerance towards Melanchthon, we must not lose sight of the fact that Melanchthon was guilty of base deception, as was brought out in the Cordatus controversy. Regarding justification he wrote to Luther: "I have never desired to teach, nor have I taught, particularly as regards the matter now in controversy, anything but what you teach in common. . . . I beseech you to believe that my public deliverances were made with good intention and with no mind to differ from you. I have never wished to separate my view from yours." (Quoted in *Theological Quarterly*, 1908, p. 146 f.) Furthermore, when the questionable attitude of Melanchthon regarding this article was brought to Luther's attention, he announced in a letter to Cordatus his intention to get at the actual facts: "I shall first approach Dr. Philip and hear his side and what is his intention. I shall go to him alone, as Christ commands us to do. If he chooses to defend his teaching, well and good. I shall then have cause for action." (*Ib.*, p. 154.) Luther believed it possible that a satisfactory explanation could be obtained from Melanchthon. The Convention of Smalcald, a serious illness of Luther, the absence of the leading theologians from the university, rendered a prosecution of the case impossible.

THEODORE GRAEBNER.