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### Ecclesiastical Union Verses Christian Unity

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ECCLIASTICAL UNION VERSUS CHRISTIAN UNITY

A thesis  
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## ECCLESIASTICAL UNION VERSUS CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ours is a day of unionism. On all sides we hear the cry that the churches should unite. In this age of moral confusion and rejection of authority, when the forces of evil are drawn up on one side, standing solidly together, with complete understanding and cooperating fully, the churches, we are told, should do away with their particular brand of denominationalism and unite in order to be able to put forth the force of a single great drive on iniquities which prosper while the different churches are wrangling about ecclesiastical precedent, rank, and authority. The churches would then be decidedly stronger in affecting public opinion, the useless multiplication of agencies, properties, expenses, and sectarian groups would forever cease, the prayer of Jesus, in which He asked His Father that all whom He had given Him might be one, would then be fulfilled.

A plan, which is representative of the trend of thought in many churches of today, is that of the World Conference on Faith and Order. At Lausanne, Switzerland, representatives of eighty-seven world-wide churches will gather next summer to discuss religious unity. The proposed basis for this union is a common faith embodying the essentials of Christianity and a form of organization in which all will feel at home. It is not limited to Protestants. Already the Eastern Orthodox churches have appointed their delegates. Every "Christian" church has been invited to take part.

Bishop Brent of the Episcopal Church, who is one of the leaders in this conference, declares that Christian unity is based on God's ideal, not man's conception. He quotes in confirmation for his state-

ment the words of our Lord in John 17,11, and adds: "It seems almost unnecessary to stress the need of unity. Common sense advocates it. Economy demands it. Should not the followers of a single Person be in a common Fellowship?"

But are his words true? Is it true that the union which is advocated by this coming conference is based on God's ideal? Placing the basis of the proposed union along side of the basis laid down in the Bible, we find that the former is based on man's conception and is in direct conflict with many clear passages of Scripture. Nothing is more emphatically taught and stressed in the Bible than that church-fellowship must always, and in all places, be preceded by unity in the spirit, unity in doctrine. We learn this from such passages as Rom. 16<sup>17</sup>, 17; Eph. 4, 3-6, 13, and many similar ones, where we are told that in the Church the true doctrine and only the true doctrine is to be taught, confessed and practised by all its members. Accordingly, all true Christians, <sup>though</sup> though not unmindful of the Scriptural admonition to bear patiently with the weak in doctrine and in knowledge and to love our neighbors, dare not countenance the surrendering of any portion of the Christian doctrine in the interest of a church union. Most of the efforts at union are doomed to failure from the beginning because they seek a mere outward ecclesiastical union at the expense of the inward unity which is demanded by the Bible. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?"

When we study the history of the various denominations in this country we find that ecclesiastical union without true unity is not only a grievous malady of many of the sectarian churches, but of many branches of the Lutheran Church also. A study of the history of the

Lutheran Church in America reveals the fact that, if these Lutheran bodies were to be weighed with regard to this matter, many of them would be found wanting. It shall be the object of this paper to show how some of the Lutheran synods in our country have sought an ecclesiastical union without having the inward unity in doctrine. We shall see that whenever a church body fails to heed the clear teaching of the Bible with respect to the unity in spirit, doctrinal confusion and degeneration is sure to follow. Part I will treat unionism as it manifested itself in the period dating from the beginning of Lutheranism in America until the year 1820. The first part will deal mainly with the history of the Lutheran Swedes in Delaware, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the Ministerium of New York, and the North Carolina Synod. Part II will treat the history of the synods which merged in the year 1918 to form the United Lutheran Church. In view of the fact that it is impossible to treat the history of all Lutheran synods in America with respect to the matter of Christian unity in a paper of this size, I shall confine myself to the history of the United Lutheran Church, which is one of the largest Lutheran bodies, and which is notoriously known for its unionism. Only a few of the more conspicuous instances of such unionism will be mentioned.

Early in 1638 two shiploads of immigrants, consisting largely of Hollanders and Swedes, sailed up Delaware Bay under the leadership of Peter Minuit and landed in Delaware. The first Lutheran church building erected by this Swedish colony was at Christiana in 1646. From 1638 on, for over a century and three-quarters, there was a rather regular succession of thirty-five pastors ministering to these colonists <sup>- in</sup>

in at least six Swedish churches. These early Lutheran churches, supplied by pastors from Sweden, were governed by "Provosts", who were noted for their legalism and unionism. Dr. Neve tells us that even the ablest of these pastors never suggested an independent development of the Lutheran Church in America. (1. p. 32.). Need we be surprised, then, when we read of the numerous unionistic practises of these pastors from the time of settlement in 1638 to the end of the 18th century, when Swedish Lutheranism ended in an absorption in the Episcopalian Church? From the beginning, Swedish bishops encouraged and even admonish-<sup>-ish-</sup>ed their emissaries to fraternize with the Episcopalians. One of the leading pastors of that day, Pastor Sandel, said: "Although between them and us there is some difference with respect to the Lord's Supper, yet he (Dr. Svedberg) does not want that small difference to rend asunder the bond of peace. We do not attempt any discussion on it; neither do we touch on such things when we preach among them, nor do they attempt to persuade our people to their opinion in this respect; but we live on intimate and fraternal terms with one another, as they also call us their brethern.... As our church is called by them 'the sister church of the church of England', so we live fraternally together; God grant that this may long continue." (2. p. 118.) The Swedish pastors regularly attended the Episcopal pastoral conferences, and, in the absence of the English rectors, they preached in the Episcopalian pulpits. From 1737 to 1741 J. Dylander preached at Gloria Dei church in German, Swedish, and English every Sunday and administered to the Episcopalians. This same practise was followed by the "provosts" Eric Byoerk, A. Sandel, A. Hesslius, Peter Tranberg, J. Sandin, Israel Acrelius, C. Wrangel, Nils Collin, whose activity extended from 1770 to 1831, during which time

he had eight Episcopalian assistant pastors. Whenever a cornerstone was laid or a new church dedicated by the Episcopalians, the Swedes were invited and accepted such invitations as often as they were made. Toward the close of the 18th century, after difficulties with the archbishops in Sweden relative to the appointment of pastors for the American churches, and after the last of the Lutheran pastors sent from Sweden had arrived in 1770, the Gloria Dei church called an Episcopalian minister. In 1846 this church declared its full connection with the Episcopalian Church; the other Swedish churches did likewise. Thus early Swedish Lutheranism committed spiritual suicide, reaped the harvest sown by its indifferentism and unionism, and gradually became extinct. Had these early Swedish pastors defended genuine Lutheranism, had they refused to fellowship with the Episcopalians, the historian of the Lutheran Church in America would, humanly speaking, have an entirely different chapter to write.

But the Lutheran Church was not entirely without its true defenders during this early period. Justus Falckner, who was the first Protestant clergyman to be regularly ordained in America (Nov. 24, 1703), was the author of the first orthodox Lutheran text-book published in America, by which he attempted to fortify his readers against what he declared "Calvinistic errors". In the preface to this book he commits himself entirely to the symbols of the Lutheran Church. This man, together with his brother Daniel and W.C. Berkenmeyer, were three of the most outstanding orthodox Lutheran pastors of that period. These three opposed the unionism of the Swedish and Halle pastors; even when they were obliged to preach in a Reformed church, they did not hesitate to

testify against joint services with the sects. They declared that in such a union without true unity in doctrine, the pastor was obliged to become either "a dumb dog or a mameluke".

We next come to an event which A.L.Graebner calls "the most important in the history of the American Lutheran Church of the 18th century", On August 26, 1748, H.M.Muhlenberg, one of the ablest leaders of his period, together with five pastors and ten congregations, organized the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. At first the doctrinal position of the pastors of this Ministerium was Lutheran and they admitted no congregation into the newly formed body without demanding the acknowledgment of the symbols of the Lutheran faith. Although these men stood for confessional Lutheranism, yet it was the Lutheranism advocated by rationalistic and pietistic Halle, a Lutheranism whose main features were legalism, unionism, and indifferentism. Muhlenberg had the intention of being and remaining a Lutheran, but he was entirely un-Lutheran in his fraternal relations with the sects. He regarded the different Christian denominations as sister congregations, who had the same divine right to existence as the Lutheran Church. A few of the more glaring instances of his unscriptural and un-Lutheran unionism will suffice to show his stand with respect to ecclesiastical unionism as opposed to Christian unity.

When he dedicated his new church at Philadelphia in 1769, he invited Episcopalian and Presbyterian pastors to attend and to speak. During the meeting of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1763, the examination of the children of St. Michael's church was held. The "evangelist" Whitefield was present and made a "fervent" prayer and an edifying address." Muhlenberg worked for the establishment of the

union seminary for Lutherans, Reformed, and other sects at Lancaster, Pa. His unionism is all the more reprehensible because of the high position which he held among the Lutherans of that day. His unionism with other denominations left its mark of influence on the entire Ministerium of Pennsylvania. We see the result of his influence in the Agenda of the Ministerium, which was published in 1818. In this book we find two forms for administering the sacrament of baptism, which contain no confession of faith; the confession to the Lutheran Church was stricken from the form of confirmation; in two of the forms for the distribution of the Lord's Supper the Union Formula was used; the formulas for ordination no longer demanded adherence to the Lutheran confessions. In 1817 this synod celebrated the tercentenary of the Reformation together with Reformed, Episcopalian, and others. In the unionistic Reformation celebration held at Frederick, Md., the following hymn, especially composed for this occasion, was sung to the tune of "How Lovely Now the Morning Star":

"One hundred years, thrice told this day  
 By heavenly grace, truth's radiant ray  
 Beamed through the reformation;  
 Yea glorious as Aurora's light,  
 Dispels the gloomy mists of night,  
 Dawn'd on the world salvation.  
 Luther!  
 Zwingli!  
 Joined with Calvin!  
 From error's sin  
 The church to free  
 Restored religious liberty." (2.p.664,665.)

A long period of unionism and indifferentism followed all during the next few decades. As late as 1851, this synod, according to a report of the convention of that year, maintained fraternal relations with the Reformed, Methodists, and Moravians. Most of the aberrations from

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true Lutheranism, which we find in this synod and also in the General Synod, are due to the influence exerted by the man, who has been called "the patriarch of the American Lutheran Church."

Other synods of this period, which are notoriously known for their unscriptural and un-Lutheran relations with the sects, are the synods of New York and Carolina. In 1792 the Synod of New York adopted the new constitution of Ministerium of Pennsylvania, which contained no reference to the Lutheran confessions. For many years this synod was under the leadership of the able Dr. F. H. Quitmann, who was its president from 1809 to 1825. The rationalism, which he had imbibed while studying under the rationalistic and pietistic Semler, worked havoc with the Lutheran churches with which he came in contact. In his catechism, which was published with the approval of synod in 1814, he virtually denied such fundamental doctrines as the Trinity, Deity of Christ, Vicarious Atonement, and Justification by Faith. In 1816 "A Collection of Hymns and a Liturgy for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Churches" was published by order of this synod. On page 60 of the liturgy we find these words regarding the distribution of the Lord's Supper: "When the minister presents the bread to the communicants, he says: 'Jesus said, take and eat, this is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me!.' When the minister delivers the cup to them, he says: 'Jesus said, drink ye all of this cup; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.'" In the Order of Confirmation found on pages 50 to 54 no mention is made of the Lutheran Church. Many of the hymns are of such a nature that they could be sung by Jew or Mohammedan. The third verse of hymn 345 reads: "On earth according to their light, They

strove to practise what was right; Hence all their errors are forgiven, and Jesus welcomes them to heaven." Hymn 349 is a hymn of "Candour and Toleration". Its unionistic sentiments are far from expressing the scriptural teaching regarding Christian unity. When we read such hymns as 446, 458, 509, and 515 we agree with the words in the foreword, where we are told that "a considerable degree of freedom has been used in selecting and framing them."

The first director of the Hartwick Seminary, which was under the supervision of the New York Synod, was Dr. Hazellius, who did not leave the Moravians for doctrinal reasons and who believed that Lutherans and Reformed did not differ very much. He approved of the distribution of the Lord's Supper to both Lutherans and Reformed at the same altar.

The last synod which we shall review in this period is the Synod of North Carolina, which was organized at Salisbury, N.C., in 1803. Some of the lowest depths of doctrinal degradation were reached by the pastors of this synod. No mention of the Lutheran Confessions was made in its constitution. In 1794 R. J. Miller was pledged to the 39 Articles of the Episcopalians. At its synodical meeting in 1804 a Reformed minister delivered the sermon; in 1810 a resolution was passed, which permitted every pastor to administer communion to those of another faith. In 1817 this body resolved to publish Shober's Jubilee Book, in the preface of which Shober gives utterance to the hope that "all Protestant churches would, by reading this book, be moved to pray God that he would awaken the spirit of love and union in all, who believe in the deity of Christ, ..... in order to attain the happy time prophesied when we shall blissfully live as one flock under one Shepherd."

On page 209 of this Jubilee Book he says: "Among all classes of those, who adore Jesus as their God I see nothing of importance, which could prevent a cordial union; and what a fortunate event it would be if all churches would unite and send delegates to a general convention of all denominations and there could settle down on Christ, the Rock, while at the same time, each denomination would be permitted to retain its peculiar ways and forms." The North Carolina Synod declared that this book will "give to all our fellow-Christians in other denominations a clear view of what the Lutheran Church really is." (2.p.121,122.)

And synod was right in this declaration. Shober's Jubilee Book did give a rather clear view of what the Lutheran Church really was in that age. Our brief study of this period has shown us that the unionism advocated in that book was more or less representative of all the Lutheran churches until the year 1820.

We need not look far for the reason for such deplorable conditions <sup>ion</sup> in the early period of American Lutheranism. In the foreword to his "A Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism", Prof. Ed. Koehler makes this statement: "Ignorance begets indifference. It is largely due to the general lack of an accurate knowledge of the Scripture doctrines that the spirit of indifferentism and unionism was able to win so many adherents." We realize the truth of his words when we look at the history of the early days of Lutheranism in America. One of the main causes for such widespread indifferentism toward confessional Lutheranism and Scripture teachings was the dearth of well-trained and able Lutheran pastors. Most of the pastors were ignorant of what genuine Lutheranism is, and their ignorance begot indifferentism in doctrinal matters. How could one look for the

Lutheranism of the Lutheran confessions when the leaders of the churches were being trained in pietistic Halle with its unionism and indifference, or in the Reformed theological seminaries of America? In 1864, more than 120 years after the first appearance of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, this synod started its first seminary. Up till the year 1827 only ten ministers had been trained in Lutheran seminaries of America! Another cause was the lack of Lutheran literature. The laymen, who spoke and read English, resorted to devotional literature full of Methodist and Puritanic suggestions, while ministers filled the shelves of their libraries with the writings of Reformed theologians.

## II

The organization of the Tennessee Synod in 1820 forms the starting point of a new era in the history of American Lutheranism. This synod was organized at a time when there was not a single synod in America that unreservedly accepted and received the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. The Tennessee Synod was formed in the year 1820 as a solemn protest to the autocratic and unionistic synod of North Carolina. This new synod not only accepted all the symbols of the Lutheran Church, but, in private and in public, it championed the cause of genuine confessional Lutheranism most energetically. The more this synod was abused and maligned and persecuted by the indifferent synods of that period, on account of its doctrinal position to which it closely adhered, the more necessary it became for it to proclaim and perpetuate the sound Scriptural doctrines of the Church from the pulpit, in the family, and through the printing press. In her relations

with the North Carolina Synod and the General Synod the practise of Tennessee was in perfect agreement with her doctrinal and confessional position. That this synod demanded unity in the spirit, unity in doctrine, as the absolute necessary condition of all church-fellowship we see from the letter written by Moser and Henkel, two of its leading pastors, in connection with the debates proposed in the interest of a union with the North Carolina Synod. We read in this letter: "As we differ with you in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, an ecclesiastical union is impracticable until one or the other party be clearly refuted and convinced." (3.p.171.) Tennessee made repeated efforts to establish a union with the Synods of North Carolina and Pennsylvania on the platform of pure and unadulterated Evangelical Lutheranism, but these cordial offers were spurned as often as they were made. Tennessee stood for public discussions to settle the differences between the different synods. This we see from the reports of the minutes of the sessions held in 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827. (5.p.64, 66, 70, 72.) This synod vehemently opposed the General Synod, which was working for an external union of all bodies bearing the name Lutheran, irrespective of doctrinal differences. It severely criticised the General Synod for its thoroughly un-Lutheran constitution. In the report of the year 1821 we read: "This body, indeed, may call itself Evangelical Lutheran, and yet not be such. The constitution does nowhere say that the Augsburg Confession of Faith, or Luther's Catechism, or the Bible, shall be the foundation of doctrine and discipline of the General Synod. It is well known that they have always

been the standard of the Lutheran Church. Why does the constitution not once name them?.....This body may consist of deputies from the different evangelical connections. It is not said of the several Evangelical Lutheran connections. If this body may consist of the different evangelical connections, then it is evident that it may be composed of all denominations, such as Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc. These all denominate themselves Evangelical, and are even recognized as such by some who call themselves Lutherans. Thus it is manifest that all denominations who call themselves Evangelical may have seats and votes in this body, forasmuch as there is nothing to prohibit them from it." (p. 164.) The Tennessee Synod also sought to unite all true Lutherans in defense of confessional Lutheranism against the Reformed and other corruptions then prevailing in the some of the Lutheran synods.

The Missouri Synod displayed a lively interest in the Tennessee Synod. The "Lutheraner" of February 22, 1848, made this statement with reference to the Tennessee Synod: "We confess that a closer acquaintance has filled us with the best prepossessions for this synod. As far as we can see from the Report, they are earnestly striving to preserve the treasure of true Lutheran teaching." The Tennessee Synod "fully and cheerfully reciprocated the kind and fraternal feelings expressed and manifested toward them by the Missouri Synod." Delegates were exchanged for several years, articles commending each other appeared in the official papers of these two synods. The Synod of Missouri rejoiced that in spite "of the great dearth of English literature" Tennessee had preserved such a "living consciousness of

Lutheran orthodoxy and such a firm Lutheran character." (cf. Report of Brohm on his visit to the convention of the Tennessee Synod as found in "Lutheraner" XI, p. 78)

However, the hopes, which the Missouri Synod had at one time harbored with regard to this synod, were shattered. Although the attitude of Tennessee against un-Lutheran synods and Reformed influences was of a most determined and consistent nature during the early days of its history, yet it gave up this loyal position in the year 1866, when it joined the United Synod of the South. Thus, Tennessee, with one stroke, gave up the Lutheran principles for which it had at one time fought so valiantly.

At Hagerstown, Md., on October 22, 1820, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, which at this time was planning a union with the Reformed denominations, the Ministerium of New York, the North Carolina Synod, and the newly organized synod of Maryland and Virginia met to form a new body which was subsequently known as the General Synod.

In the "Lutheran Observer" of January 2, 1863, H. Hartley wrote: "Some say that unity must precede union. But the Bible demands that we unite. Hence, those who magnify these differences and endeavor to keep us separate are the greatest sinners in the church." This statement gives us a good key to the entire history of the General Synod. Union, irrespective of doctrinal differences, has always been the chief aim of the General Synod. Any one who knows his Bible will readily see the utter fallacy contained in the statement of Hartley. The Bible very clearly tells us that a striving after true unity in doctrine is at all times and in all places of divine obligation, but that efforts at organic union always remain a matter of Christian wisdom and liberty. All endeavors at union which disregard the

divine norm of unity in doctrine and in spirit are out of place and are doomed to failure sooner or later. At its organization in 1820, the sole object of this synod was to unite all the Lutheran churches of America in a well-organized and imposing body. Dr. W. M. Reynolds said in 1850: "The constitution of the General Synod does not present a system of doctrine, a confession of faith. On the contrary, this constitution itself confesses that it was drafted 'only for purposes of government and discipline', and expressly denies the right 'to any General Synod to make changes in matters of faith which in any way might burden the conscience of brethren.'" ("Lutheraner", April 30, 1850.)

The history of the General Synod from the time of its organization until it joined the United Lutheran Church in 1918 is the history of rank unionism and a gradual confessional decline. And how could it have a different history? The Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the prime mover in this new body, was looking forward to a union with the Reformed. The leaders of the different synods which made up the General Synod were cherishing the fond hope of the grand union of all Protestant bodies. Mere ecclesiastical union was always, true unity in doctrine and in spirit, was sometimes not even a secondary consideration for the leaders of this new body. Looking at the constitution, we find no direct references to the confessions of the Lutheran Church. It binds only the "fundamental" articles of the Bible. It presupposes that "fundamental" articles are such as are held by all evangelical churches. It does not state whether all twenty-one articles of the Augsburg Confession are to be regarded as "fundamental" or not. It

adopts the articles of the Augsburg Confession, not simply, not absolutely, but merely as "substantially correct". According to Dr. S. S. Schmucker, who has been called "the most authentic interpreter of the constitution of the General Synod and that of its theological seminary", the fundamental doctrines in which the General Synod demands agreement are: "the cardinal doctrines of the Reformation, the points of agreement between the different creeds of the sixteenth century", distinctive doctrines of the different denominations being points of non-fundamental difference. The "Lutheran Observer" of October 26, 1849, quoting from the inaugural address of Dr. S. Sprecher at Wittenberg College, Springfield, O., declared that Lutherans of the General Synod, in adopting the confessions, "do not bind their conscience to more than what all evangelical Christians regard as fundamental doctrines of the Bible. We are bound to believe only the the sublime plan of the Gospel is taught in the Augsburg Confession." In 1860 this same paper declared that the General Synod was organized on the basis of a compromise with respect to doctrines of minor import, such as the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, of the power of Baptism and of absolution.

Having briefly studied the constitution of this body, we need not register any amazement when we find that during the whole course of its history the General Synod indulged in all manner of unionism. The historical platform of the confessions of the Lutheran Church had been abandoned in the constitution; unionism and doctrinal laxity were bound to follow. W. J. Mann in a letter written in 1847 to Ph. Schaff, described the relation of the General Synod to the sectarian churches as a "concubinage with the sects." The extent and nature of this

"concubinage" with the sects appears from the minutes of the conventions of the General Synod. At the meeting held at Hagerstown, 1837, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Reformed, and a Methodist were received as advisory members. Two Lutheran pastors preached in the Reformed church, two in the Methodist church, and Dr. Patton of the American Educational Society in the Lutheran church during this convention. At Charleston, 1850, delegates were appointed to the German Reformed, the Presbyterian, the Cumberland Presbyterian, and the Congregational church. It was also moved that the minutes of the General Synod be sent to the Congregational Association of New Hampshire, to the Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterians, and to the Synod of the German Reformed Church. At Dayton, O., 1855, sixteen sectarian ministers were seated as advisory members; at Pittsburg, 1859, fourteen were seated. At Carthage, Ill., 1877, delegates were appointed to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian, the Reformed Church, the National Council of the Congregational Churches, the United Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church, the United Brethern in Christ, and to the Evangelical Synod in the West. Similar facts are recorded in the minutes of the General Synod down to the year 1918, when it merged with two other synods. We see the un-Lutheran practise of this body when we learn that it cooperated with such bodies as the Federal Council, the International Sunday School Association, the Inter-Church Federation, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the W.C.T.U., the Anti-Saloon League and other Puritanic and sectarian bodies.

Communion-fellowship with non-Lutherans was at all times permitted and, at times, even encouraged. At Findlay, O., 1868, Lutherans,

Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Weinbrennerians, and United Brethern celebrated the Lord's Supper in the Presbyterian Church, an event, which the "Lutheran Observer" called "a celebration of the Lord's Supper in the true spirit of the gospel." Up to the year 1899 the Communion Formula contained a general invitation to all members of other churches in good standing or to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Valentine, writing in the "Lutheran Encyclopedia" of 1905, said; "The General Synod enacts no restrictive law against fellowship in pulpit or at altar, but allows to both ministers and members the freedom of conscience and love in this matter."

The stand of Dr. S. S. Schmucker, whose ambition, according to Dr. Bente in the preface to his "American Lutheranism", was to "transmorgify the Lutheran Church into an essentially unionistic Reformed body", is fairly representative of the position held by all the other leaders of the General Synod. This man was not only an enthusiastic advocate of the "Evangelical Alliance", but was the author of an elaborate and comprehensive scheme of an "Apostolic Protestant Union" with the following features: "Unity of name; unity in fundamental doctrines, while diversity in non-essentials was conceded; mutual acknowledgment of each other's acts of discipline; sacramental and ministerial inter-communion; convention of the different churches of the land in synod or council for mutual consultation or ecclesiastical regulation." This plan of the arch-unionist Schmucker was adopted by the General Synod at its meeting in New York, 1848.

From such unionism and indifferentism there is but one step to doctrinal confusion <sup>and</sup> disorder. The natural result and full develop-

ment of the unionistic germs which the General Synod had inherited and which it cultivated most assiduously during its history we see in the "Definite Platform". This "Definite Platform" was nothing else than a revised edition of the Augsburg Confession, with the distinctive Lutheran doctrines entirely repudiated or omitted or obscured. Eleven of the articles of this confession were changed and the opposite teachings of the Reformed taught in their place. Eight of the articles were omitted entirely. In spite of the fact that this "Definite Platform" caused quite a storm among the "conservatives" and the "liberals", nothing was done by the body as such with respect either to the "Platform" itself, or its authors and endorsers.

Our brief study of the General Synod has shown us that it was nothing more than a Lutheran body, deprived of its bones and heart, and whose empty skin might be filled with whatever was most pleasing at the time, if only the Lutheran name remained. This description is true of the General Synod not only at its beginning in the year 1820, but also in the year 1917, one year before it merged with other synods to form the United Lutheran Church of America.

In response to a call sent by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania to all Lutheran synods, ministers, and congregations in the United States and Canada which confessed the Augsburg Confession, a convention was held at Reading, Pa., 1866, attended by delegates from thirteen synods. Professor M. Loy, of the Joint Synod of Ohio, preached the opening sermon, based on the text, 1 Cor. 1, 10. The theme of his sermon was: "The Conditions of Christian Union." He stated that these are the

conditions of such union:"I.Having the same faith in the same truth. II.Having the same confession of the same faith. III. Having the same judgment under the same confession. "(6.p.132.) At the first convention of this new body known as the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America held at Fort Wayne,Ind.,1867,representatives of thirteen synods were present. At this convention it was shown that the following synods had adopted the "Confessional Basis" of the Reading convention,and thereby acknowledged themselves as members of the General Council:1.The Ministerium of Pennsylvania. 2.The Ministerium of New York. 3.The Pittsburg Synod.4.The English District Synod of Ohio. 5.The Canada Synod. 6. The Augustana Synod. (These first six remained with the General Council throughout its history.) 7.The Iowa Synod. 8.The Wisconsin Synod. 9. The Michigan Synod. 10.The Minnesota Synod. 11.The Texas Synod. 12. The Synod of Illinois. Several smaller synods joined at a later period.

The Missouri Synod,insisting on free conferences in order first to bring about real doctrinal agreement,did not take part in the hasty organization of the General Council. The Joint Synod of Ohio sent delegates to this convention but was not fully prepared to join. The Ohio delegates asked the General Council for a declaration on the following "Four Points":1.Chiliasm.2.Alter Fellowship.3.Pulpit Fellowship.4.Secret Societies. Because the General Council was not willing to give a definite answer to these "Four Points",the delegates of the Joint Synod of Ohio refused to join. After the next convention of the General Council held at Pittsburg,1868,where the "Four Points" were again discussed,the Wisconsin Synod withdrew;the Synods of

Minnesota and Illinois withdrew after the convention at Akron, O., 1871, the Synods of Michigan and Texas withdrew after a few years also.

The "Four Points", concerning which the Synods of Ohio and Iowa desired a declaration at the first convention of the General Council, occupied a very prominent place in the subsequent history of this body, so that it may be said that the history of these "Four Points" is the history of the General Council. The answer given to the delegates of the Iowa and Ohio synods show that the Council was unwilling to take an unequivocal and decided stand for a genuine Lutheran doctrine and practise, and that it was imbued with a spirit of unionism and indifference similar to that found in the General Synod and the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, though of a finer grade and of a more subtle nature. According to the leaders of the Council, its aim has always been to be "gradually educational", whatever that may mean. In reply to the statement of the Iowa delegates that the adoption of the "Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity" by the General Council as its confessional basis demanded that "there must be, and is, condemned all church fellowship with such as are not Lutheran," and that church discipline must be exercised "especially at the celebration of Holy Communion, and be likewise exercised toward those who are members of secret societies", the General Council gave a reply which is very similar to the evasive and qualified one given to the delegates of the Joint Synod of Ohio, a reply which is characteristic of the practise of the Council throughout its entire history, namely, "That the General Council is not prepared to endorse the declaration of the Synod of Iowa, as a correct and logical deduction and application

of the negative part of our Confessional Books, and that we refer the matter to the District Synods, until such time as by the blessings of God's Holy Spirit, and the leadings of His Providence, we shall be enabled throughout the whole General Council and all its churches to see eye to eye in all the details of practice and usage, towards the consummation of which we will direct our unceasing prayers. (6.p. 161.) As Dr. Bente has it, this meant nothing else than: "Unite with us, and we shall see what can be done in the future, and whether your position really is in harmony with the Lutheran confessions." (4.p. 209.)

The matter of the rule concerning pulpit and altar fellowship, or the so-called "Galesburg Rule", is a part of the history of the "Four Points". At the convention at Lancaster, O., 1870, President Krauth, one of the more conservative leaders of the Council, prompted by a question on the part of one of the delegates of the Minnesota Synod, made the following declaration: "The Rule is: Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers, Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants". At the next convention held at Akron, O., 1872, the delegates of the Iowa Synod desired that this declaration should be made the official stand of the Council. In reply, the General Council said: "1. The Rule is: Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers, Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only. 2. The exceptions to this 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 the pastors as the cases arise." (6.p. 216.)

In the answer to an appeal from the Ministerium of New York against violation of the Galesburg Rule, the General Council virtually admitted that the following is the correct interpretation of the Akron-Galesburg Rule: The exceptions are: Lutheran pulpits are for non-Lutheran ministers, Lutheran altars are for non-Lutheran communicants. The final official statement of the General Council with respect to these two points was that, <sup>in</sup> ~~exceptionally~~ <sup>cases,</sup> non-Lutherans may be admitted to Lutheran altars and pulpits.

How the antiscriptural sentiments of this rule worked out in practise and what they led to, we see from the following: in 1916 the Mission Board of the Council was cooperating with the Foreign Mission Conference, a body composed of Adventists, Baptists, Quakers, Universalists, Reformed, and others; the Rev. E. S. Bromer, D. D., of the Reformed Church addressed the First Lutheran Church of Greensburg, Pa., on the occasion of its hundredth anniversary; in 1915 the General Council permitted Dr. Gerberding to occupy the pulpit of the Presbyterian church at Rock Island, Ill., during its convention in that city.

This "educational method" finally led to the harboring of many Reformed errors in doctrine and practise; it proved to be the entering wedge for many un-Lutheran teachings. Some of the pastors believed that a fine grade of chiliasm was not out of harmony with the Bible and the Lutheran symbols; some were joining hands with the Puritans in the observance of Sunday as a day divinely appointed by the Lord; others were preaching synergistic views concerning conversion. Many of the pastors joined different lodges, held funeral services for their "brethern" in the lodge, and even lectured on the advantages (?) of

Masonry. The doctrine concerning the verbal inspiration and the complete inerrancy of the Holy Bible was assailed and repudiated by some of the leading ministers. In her controversies with other Lutheran synods the General Council always took a weak and undecided stand.

So we see that, while the constitution of this synod declared <sup>that</sup> the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and the only source and guide of faith and life, and the confessions of the Lutheran Church are the true exposition of the doctrines of the Bible, yet its practise shows that this synod neither fully appreciated the truths set forth by the confessions, nor fully realized what the rejection of errors on the part of the confessions implies. It lacked a Lutheran <sup>ness,</sup> consciousness, a consciousness of the fact that the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is the truth of God, and that the acceptance of this truth implies the rejection of all error and likewise a refusal to fellowship with each and every errorist.

On November 12 and 13, 1884, delegates from the following Southern synods came together to a conference at Salisbury, N.C., in order to deliberate on the question of an organic union of all synods in the South: the North Carolina Synod, the Tennessee Synod, the Synod of South Carolina, the Virginia Synod, the Southwest Virginia Synod, the Mississippi Synod, the Synod of Georgia, and the Holston Synod. A doctrinal basis was agreed upon, in accordance with which the Holy Scriptures were accepted as the only rule of faith and life, and the ecumenical symbols, together with the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, as a correct and faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Bible.

Looking at the history of the United Synod of the South, we see the same forces of unionism and indifferentism at work which led to the degeneration and chaos in the General Synod and the General Council. The attitude of this synod toward lodges, altar and pulpit fellowship has always been of a kind which amounted to a denial of its good confessional basis. This synod, believing that the "lump" (non-Lutheran churches) cannot receive absent treatment, and that "the Lutheran leaven cannot be placed in the lump from a prohibitive distance", did not consider it a denial of the Lutheran confessions when its pastors openly participated in local ministerial unions, when they extended a general invitation at communion to all Christians, or when they preached in the pulpits of non-Lutheran churches. Advancing the argument that a husband and wife may live together in peace and in happiness although they do not agree on every point, this synod refused to take a definite stand with respect to the doctrinal differences within the Lutheran Church of America.

On November 15, 1918, the United Synod of the South, the General Synod, and the General Council, which synods had for a long time exchanged delegates and cooperated in various ways with one another, formed the United Lutheran Church. The aim of this body was to unite all Lutherans in a large and imposing body in spite of the lack of real confessional unity. This new union was not the result of any discussions of, and agreements in, doctrinal or practical questions. Although its constitution accepts the Bible and the Lutheran confessions<sup>-~~and~~</sup> as a correct exhibition of the faith and doctrine of the Lutheran Church, yet it fails to include a paragraph directed against pulpit and altar fellowship with non-Lutherans, and makes no definite and

satisfactory statement pertaining to lodges. When we look at its short history, we wonder why such a body has the audacity to still call itself a Lutheran body. All the un-Lutheran practises, which we have noted in the three synods which merged to form the new body, cropped out in the history of the United Lutheran Church. A few instances will suffice. During the convention held last fall at Richmond, Virginia, United Lutheran pastors filled the pulpits of many of the sectarian churches. Dr. Delk and a few others have openly avowed that they are "theistic evolutionists; Harry Emerson Fosdick, the most "modern" of modernists, was permitted to fill the pulpit of the United Lutheran Church at Springfield, Ohio. Many of the pastors boast themselves on being members of the different lodges. The matter of pulpit and altar fellowship is left to the conscience of the individual pastor. Union services with the sects are often held, especially at Thanksgiving time. This body cooperates with the World Conference on Faith and Order to be held next summer in Switzerland. In "The Lutheran" of March 31, 1927, we find an article by Dr. Knobel, the president of the United Lutheran Church, in which he states rather bluntly that Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Pan-Protestantism, and Lutheranism are the "only forms of Christianity that are entitled to claim common and world-wide application". We agree with the editor of "The Lutheran" when he says in the same issue that this statement is "certainly calculated to make one sit up and take notice". Such a statement coming from a sectarian modernists would not cause much of a surprise, but when it comes from the president of a body which has assumed the name "Lutheran", we begin to wonder what the name "Lutheran" really means, yes, whether it means anything at all. In this same article the president says: "We need some agency which will stand forth clearly

as an indication that Lutherans have an essential message for which they stand universally and which they must maintain." But why look for such an agency when the Lutherans of the United Lutheran Church have no essential message for which they stand universally and which the world really needs? This question forces itself upon any one, who with open eyes views the confessional confusion which the unionism of this body has brought with it.

And now, a final, brief word regarding the stand of the Missouri Synod. The study of the "Lutheranism" of the bodies which we have mentioned has inculcated a deeper appreciation of my membership with the Missouri Synod. This synod has at all times maintained that church union dare not be advocated and effected at the expense of any doctrine clearly taught in the Bible and the Lutheran confessions. But while it has refused to join a mere ecclesiastical union without the true unity in faith, it has been anxious and willing to advance that unity where nothing of the divine truth of the gospel is surrendered, where no room is given to the least error. This is the true Lutheran stand. This we see from the Formula of Concord, where we read: "We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and unity (which, moreover is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. . . . But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are anxious and sincerely inclined to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error." (Concordia Triglossa, p. 1095.) In the Préface to the

Augsburg Confession we read: "We are...prepared to confer amicably concerning all possible ways and means, in order that we may come together, as far as this may be honorably done, and the matter between us on both sides being peacefully discussed without offensive strife, the dissension, by God's help, may be done away and brought back to the one true accordant religion." (Concordia Triglotta. p.41.)

Following the advice and the example of Luther and his coworkers during the sixteenth century, the Missouri Synod has been anxious to confer amicably with other Lutheran synods in order that these might come together as far as this may be done in accordance with the clear teachings of the Bible. In accordance with the principles of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions, that church-fellowship presupposes unity in doctrine and in practise, the Missouri Synod insisted on Free Conferences in order first to bring about real doctrinal agreement. This was her practise with respect to the General Council in the year 1866. The members of the Missouri Synod, during its convention in Chicago in May, 1867, renewed their proposal to the General Council for Free Conferences in these words: "Even at the expense of appearing capricious in the eyes of the Reverend Body, and less diligent in our efforts for churchly unity, we beg leave to declare is again as our conviction that Free Conferences, such as are separated from officially organized conventions of ecclesiastical bodies, on the basis of the Symbols of our Church, as contained in the Form of Concord of 1850, are the only proper means for an exchange of such convictions, as are still divergent, and which, by the grace of God, may lead to a

unity on the basis of our beloved Confession."(6.p.157.) These repeated requests for Free Conferences, in the interest of real unity as a prerequisite of union, were disregarded by the General Council.

Missouri stood for such Free Conferences in her relations with the Buffalo Synod, the Norwegian Synod, the Iowa Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, the Ohio Synod and others. In some cases these Free Conferences have been successful in bringing about union with doctrinal unity. The organization of the Synodical Conference at Milwaukee in 1872 can be traced mainly to such Free Conferences. Even today the Missouri Synod has its committee which meets with the committees of the Iowa and Ohio synods in an effort to bring about real confessional and organic union between these three synods. This synod has at no time held back from anything that could bring about Christian concord, such as could be effected with God and a good conscience.

At the present time, when it seems as though purity of doctrine is no longer uppermost in the hearts and minds of many who call themselves Lutheran, when differences in doctrine are regarded by many as dead issues, when we are being told that Lutherans must lay aside their "petty and narrow" doctrinal differences and unite to form a Lutheran Church which will be able to exert its influence throughout the entire world, we need a complete and universal return to the Bible and the Lutheranism found in the Lutheran confessions. Whenever the Lutheran Church ignored her symbols or rejected all or some of them, there she always fell an easy prey to her enemies. Let the different Lutheran synods study and esteem the Lutheran confessions, let them hold fast to the faith of Luther, and make the symbols of the Lutheran Church the norm and standard of their entire life and practise. Then, and then only, will the Lutheran Church flourish and confound her enemies.

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