

2-1-1935

## Foreword (concluded)

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### Recommended Citation

Laetsch, Theo. (1935) "Foreword (concluded)," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 6 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol6/iss1/10>

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# Concordia Theological Monthly

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Vol. VI

FEBRUARY, 1935

No. 2

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## Foreword.

(Concluded.)

On October 22, 1934, the United Lutheran Church of America, in convention assembled at Savannah, Ga., unanimously and enthusiastically adopted a series of "Resolutions on Lutheran Church Unity," showing reasons "in favor of negotiations with other Lutheran synods for unity of influence." (*Lutheran*, Nov. 1, 1934, p. 1.)

The chief reason why the Savannah resolutions favor a union of all Lutheran bodies in America is expressed in the following words: "We rejoice that the Lutheran church-bodies in America have held unwaveringly to the faith of the Church set forth in its historic Confessions and that all of them, by official declarations, have recorded their sincere purpose to continue in their loyalty to this faith. . . . Inasmuch as our now separated Lutheran church-bodies all subscribe these same Confessions, it is our sincere belief that we already possess a firm basis on which to unite in one Lutheran Church in America and that there is no doctrinal reason why such a union should not come to pass." The Lutheran church-bodies in America have held unwaveringly to the faith of the Church, we are told. Would to God that this had been the case or were the case to-day. If all Lutheran bodies had in doctrine and practise held unwaveringly to the faith of the Church, to God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions, then there would have been not the slightest excuse for refusing to acknowledge one another as brethren, for failing to cooperate, for maintaining a state of opposition or even separation. And as soon as the whole Lutheran Church in America unwaveringly follows the faith of our Church in doctrine and practise, the refusal of any individual or congregation or synod to establish and maintain fraternal relations with all other Lutherans or Lutheran congregations and synods would be tantamount to disobedience to God's clear will, Eph. 4, 4, and would lay them open to the charge of needless offense, unjustifiable waste of money and men, senseless opposition, sinful separatism. The ques-

tion is: Have all Lutheran Church bodies unwaveringly held to the faith of our Church? More important still: Do they at the present time adhere in doctrine and practise to the standards laid down in the Bible and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church? Let the facts speak for themselves.

We rejoice that conditions in the Lutheran Church in America are much better than they were 150, 100, 80 years ago. In 1793 the Pennsylvania Synod adopted a constitution in which the Lutheran Confessions were not even mentioned. When, on October 22, 1820, the General Synod of the Ev. Luth. Church in the United States of America was organized, the constitution did not so much as name the confessional writings or the Bible; but it was *synod* (the general body) to which was given the right of approval and proposal to its constituent synods of such books as catechisms, liturgies, hymn-books, and credal confessions. The constituent synods were expected to "duly heed a proposal of this kind" or give their reasons to the next General Synod for not heeding it. (Kraushaar, *Verfassungsformen*, reprints the entire constitution, p. 438 ff.) As late as 1855 Dr. S. Schmucker argued that this section of the constitution gave him the right to substitute the Definite Platform for the Augsburg Confession. Only in 1864 were the twenty-one doctrinal articles of the Augustana adopted by the General Synod. — We rejoice that in 1934 all the Lutheran church-bodies in America have subscribed to the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church and, officially at least, regard subscription of these confessions as one of the earmarks of Lutheranism. That is indeed a great step forward. But our joy is mingled with sorrow as soon as the question arises: Are the Confessions, is the Bible, actually applied as the norm of doctrine and practise in all the Lutheran church-bodies in America? Subscribing to the Symbolical Books is necessary of course; but is the mere subscription sufficient to make one a faithful, loyal Lutheran? Does not loyal Lutheranism involve that these Confessions be made the standard and norm for the doctrine and practise of the individual, the congregation, the church-body, that are subscribing? Sincerity and honesty certainly demand this; else why subscribe at all? Why, then, was it found necessary or deemed expedient to add to the paragraph of the Savannah Resolutions recognizing as Lutherans all such Christian groups as accept Scripture as the norm "by which all doctrines are to be judged and who sincerely receive the historic Confessions of the Lutheran Church (especially the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism)" the words "as a witness of the truth and a presentation of the *correct understanding of our predecessors*"? While Holy Scripture is the *norma normans* of Christian teaching, why not place the Confessions next to Scripture, alongside of it, as the *norma normata*, whereby Lutheran doctrine and practise are

to be judged? Why, above all, add another paragraph stating: "We believe that these Confessions are to be interpreted in their historical context, not as a law or as a system of theology, but as 'a witness and declaration of faith as to how the Holy Scriptures were understood and explained on the matters in controversy within the Church of God by those who then lived' (*Formula of Concord*, Part I, Introd., ed. Jacobs, p. 492)"?

We confess we are at a loss how properly to understand, and correctly to interpret, these words. We are told that the Confessions are "a witness of the truth" and that "we set up no other standards or tests of Lutheranism apart from them or alongside of them" (the Bible and the Confessions). In the same breath we are told that these Confessions are *not* to be regarded "as a law or as a system of theology," but merely as a true and reliable historical document of the doctrine and practise of sixteenth-century Lutherans. I dare say in this sense any Modernist or Liberalist would willingly subscribe the Confessions. We cannot believe that this was the only sense in which, and the only purpose for which, all the pastors and congregations within the U. L. C. A. subscribed to our Confessions. Why, then, this equivocal statement? Why such ambiguous language? Why this perplexing distinction? Why not clearly state either that we regard the Confessions as normative of twentieth-century Lutheran doctrine and practise or that we do not regard them in that light? The fact of the matter is that the neglect to make Scripture and the Confessions normative of its practise is one of the charges constantly raised against the U. L. C. A. by other Lutheran bodies in America, as we shall now see.

When the U. L. C. A. was organized in 1917, the *Kirchenzeitung*, the official organ of the Ohio Synod, in its issue dated May 12, 1917, commented as follows on this merger of Lutheran bodies: "The great and glorious work of Dr. Krauth in the Council has been nullified. The General Synod's practise of fraternizing with the sects will prevail. What is sound and good in the Council will crumble; the proposed union is a great victory for the lax portion of the General Synod and a pitiable defeat for the Council. Indeed, we shall be told about the 'salt' that the Council may be in the new body; but that is an old, old game, which cannot fool people any more. And this to celebrate the Reformation Jubilee! Would that Luther could return and with the thunder of his scorn shatter this celebration of his work! Where unionism has its jubilee, all true Lutherans turn away in sorrow and anger." The *Kirchenblatt* of the Iowa Synod had the following criticism: "It is apparent that the influence of the General Synod on the General Council has paralyzed the practical principles of the fathers and that the contemplated merger is tantamount to an annulment of these principles as far as the official practise of this

new church-body will come into question. And yet, just this life, the ecclesiastical life and practise of the ministers and congregations, is the mirror in which the real confessional attitude may be seen. We [Iowa] owe much to the General Council and will always remember this gratefully; but now our roads separate, and we must part. American Lutheranism which the General Synod has always stood for and which has had its adherents also in the General Council, especially among its nativistic representatives, will control also the new church-body. This, according to our understanding, means that a far-reaching influence of a Reformed nature will manifest itself, especially with respect to church practise and the attitude toward all manner of societies and antichristian lodges." These strictures were directed especially against the position of some of the merging synods on the questions of lodge-membership and pulpit- and altar-fellowship.

Has the U. L. C. A. since 1917 observed a practise in conformity with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions? When on October 24, 1934, Dr. C. C. Hein, the president of the American Lutheran Church, came to Savannah for the purpose of presenting the greetings of the A. L. C., he said, according to the *Lutheran* of November 8, 1934, "that the American Lutheran Church was satisfied with the doctrinal basis of the United Lutheran Church as set forth in its subscription to the historic Lutheran Confessions and that it accepted the Washington Declaration<sup>1)</sup> on practises as it understood it, but that he felt compelled to say that certain familiar inconsistencies in practise, in violation of the Washington Declaration as understood by the American Lutheran Church, were still barriers to that pulpit- and altar-fellowship which both bodies desired. Dr. Hein announced that the American Lutheran Church had authorized a committee to confer with committees from other bodies on all subjects pertaining to the union of Lutheran bodies in this country." The editor of the *Kirchenblatt*, October 6, 1934, in a footnote to an article by Dr. O. Pannkoke writes: "It is not, e. g., 'a pitiful, petty division' on the part of narrow-minded and superannuated literalistic Lutherans when they feel constrained by their conscience to testify against the unjustifiable evil that there are pastors in Lutheran synods who hold membership in the Masonic Lodge. This must simply be stated and repeated until the responsible church-leaders cease to hide behind constitutional difficulties and till they find the courage to act. Here is a ground for separation that is not at all pitifully petty, but which in our opinion is valid. To connive here in order to enable the Lutheran Church better to fulfil its important obligations would in our opinion be nothing else than pitiable cowardice." Dr. C. R. Tappert in *Lutherischer Herald*, the German periodical of the U. L. C. A., feels con-

1) The Washington Declaration of 1920, reprinted in the last issue.

strained to ease his conscience by the following remarks: "The president of the A. L. C. is of the opinion that membership in secret societies on the part of pastors and the practise of indiscriminate pulpit-fellowship conflicts with this declaration. Is he wrong?" After having shown that according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions the doctrine of justification is the doctrine with which the Church stands and falls, the editor continues: "Is justice done to this doctrine by the religious ceremonies of secret orders, or do they not rather teach a doctrine directly contrary to it, *viz.*, that man is justified and saved by his nobility of character and his own good works? Is it not a serious matter when at the very moment when a human soul stands before God's judgment-throne and when the only thing that counts is that Christ, his Vicar, intercedes for him and acknowledges him as His own,—that at this very moment, at his coffin and grave, his lodge brethren perform a religious ceremony in which the justification by the grace of God and the merits of Christ are deliberately omitted and, instead, his so-called virtues are praised as the basis for the hope of his salvation? It is to be regretted when laymen do not recognize this contradiction between the religion of the lodge and the Christian faith; for pastors there is no excuse in this matter." The author then calls attention to the offense given by such pastors and proceeds: "The same holds true when pastors participate with pastors of other denominations in religious celebrations at which a clear and unmistakable testimony of our most holy faith is not desired and will not be given. Such an action can only create the impression as if, after all, not much depended on the Christian doctrines of sin and grace, of the Son of God and the only Savior and Redeemer; as though all ways led to heaven, not only the narrow way leading through the strait gate, Matt. 7, 13. Thereby again consciences are troubled and the souls of men endangered." The editor feels that perhaps only isolated cases of such denial of our doctrines and principles occur. In his opinion they are less frequent than they formerly were in certain sections of the Church. He surmises that they may be due to the fact that even pastors may not have learned to draw the proper conclusions, but believe that they may square their membership in secret societies and their participation in all possible kinds of religious celebrations with their Christian faith and Lutheran confession. "Yet it must be clear that their action gives offense and proves a stumbling-block, and is the chief obstacle opposing the union of the Lutheran groups in America. One could expect that, irrespective of other considerations, they would sacrifice their personal hobby to the welfare and unity of the Church."

After having voiced his dissent with the policy of some of the pastors within the U. L. C. A., the editor continues: "Herewith the *Herold* has, in keeping with the demand of the Washington Declara-

tion of Principles, 'appealed to the consciences' and may now exclaim in the Latin phrase: *Dixi et animam salvavi*.

"With the above, however, we do not mean to declare that the position of the A. L. C. is correct when they on account of isolated, exceptional cases in practise deny full church union to the U. L. C. A., since the pure preaching of the Gospel and the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments are the criterion of the true Church, not the greater or lesser strictness or laxity in church discipline. And we may rejoice that all Lutheran groups in America may mutually acknowledge each other as far as these marks of the true Church, according to Art. VII of the Augsburg Confession, are concerned. There is no other church denomination in this country so unanimous in faith and doctrine."

Truly a pitiful vacillation, a halting between two opinions, saddening to the heart of every loyal Lutheran. Endeavoring to silence and salve one's conscience by voicing one's indignation and then permitting conditions to continue! Reading these words, we could not help recalling the words of Elijah: "If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." If lodgery is a matter affecting the very heart of Christianity, if Masonry is a denial of Christ's deity and atonement, as the editor correctly stated, why, then, be satisfied with Eli's half-hearted reprimand, 1 Sam. 2, 23? Why not demand a decision as Elijah did? Or if one objects that the spirit of the Old Testament should not rule in the Church of the New Testament, misinterpreting Luke 9, 55, 56, why not apply the words of Paul in the New Testament? If Masonry is unrighteousness, — and it certainly is, since it rejects Christ's righteousness, — if Masonry is darkness, — and it certainly is, since it knows not Christ, the only Light, — if Masonry is idolatry, what fellowship can Lutherans, who claim to be righteousness and light and the temple of God, have with Masonry, which is the very opposite, the avowed adversary, of all these? Hence: "Come out from among them and be ye separate." Merely voicing one's dissent, merely reprimanding, is not sufficient; *action* is required. "Come out, separate!" so says not the Synodical Conference only, not the A. L. C. only; so says the Lord. Then, and then alone, "will I be your God." In the face of this clear word of God can we consistently ask God to bless us and be our God if we deliberately join with, or tolerate in our midst, such as reject and oppose the very fundamentals of our faith? And concerning pulpit-fellowship, what are we to do if in the face of such clear passages as John 8, 31, 32; Rom. 16, 17; Matt. 7, 15, and others we are asked to tolerate, or even to participate in, a practise so evidently displeasing to God? Must it not sadden the heart of every loyal Lutheran to read comments like the following, glorifying unionism: "We have seen that the relations between the Lutheran and Reformed churches

in the United States in the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth centuries were exceptionally close and cordial. This was as it should be with churches that were in many ways so closely related in Europe. These beautiful personal friendships among individuals, these records of joint achievement and common experience among congregations, these cooperative enterprises between the general bodies of Lutherans and Reformed, are among the finest chapters in the history of Protestantism. They reveal the hand of God in history, and they point the way for the future." (*The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, Vol. VI, p. 327.) Such quotations might easily be multiplied.

Surely these matters are not unimportant questions nor "issues of endless doctrinal refinement," nor "matters which have lost their force except among older members of seminary faculties and in far-off rural sections." These are matters which affect the heart and soul of Christianity, the very life of every child of God. Shall we, dare we, compromise here? Would not a compromise be a denial? And does not Matt. 10, 32, 33 apply in the twentieth century just as it did in the days of Christ's life on earth? Why not muster up courage, as the editor of the *Kirchenblatt* suggests, and clear away these obstacles to true Lutheran unity and union?

If the excuse is offered that according to the constitution of the U. L. C. A. "the synods alone shall have the power of discipline" and that hence the U. L. C. A. has not the authority to sever connections with any individual pastor or congregation still in membership with any of the constituent synods, we ask in all sincerity and with all candor, Why do not the synods act, and why adopt and retain such a constitution? Is a synodical constitution more authoritative than the Word of the Most High? We again are in full agreement with the editor of the *Kirchenblatt* and with him maintain that union is impossible until "the responsible synodical leaders cease to hide behind constitutional difficulties and find the courage to act."

Such un-Lutheran, unbiblical practise as is being tolerated in the U. L. C. A. would alone be sufficient grounds for a refusal to enter into fraternal relations with that church-body. According to Dr. Hein's address at Savannah, these "familiar inconsistencies in practise, in violation of the Washington Declaration," were the "barrier to that pulpit- and altar-fellowship which both bodies desired. . . . The American Lutheran Church is satisfied with the doctrinal basis of the U. L. C. A. as set forth in its subscription to the historic Lutheran Confessions." Yet we are sure that within the A. L. C. there are many pastors and congregations that have another reason making it impossible for them to enter into union with the U. L. C. A. at the present time. We refer to the many instances of false doctrine, of Liberalism, and of Modernism being taught and tolerated within the U. L. C. A. Even its attitude toward lodgery and pulpit-fellowship



is a matter not only of practise, but one involving the fundamentals of Christianity. And with a sorrowful heart we must point to the fact that under the garb of Lutheran doctrines are publicly taught and preached within the U. L. C. A. which undermine the very fundamentals of Christian faith, and such teaching and preaching has been tolerated for years and is being tolerated to this day in spite of the friendly remonstrances from other Lutheran church-bodies. We shall add only a few examples to the many that already have been mentioned in our periodicals. Why are Lutheran instructors at Lutheran seminaries permitted to teach (and publish such teachings): "The holy writers were inspired with a supernatural knowledge of God and of His will, and on these subjects their words are final and infallible. On scientific matters they neither knew nor professed to know more than other men of their day"? (Stump, *The Christian Faith*, p. 320.) Why are such books as Cadman's *Prophets of Israel*, Bewer's *Literature of the Old Testament*, recommended without a word of protest against their liberalistic, modernistic tendencies (*Luth. Church Quart.*, Vol. VII, 80 f.), and why does the *Short Bible* by Goodspeed and Smith<sup>2)</sup> receive the following praise: "An amazing amount of historical and literary information, written in a fascinating, non-technical style, is packed into them" (the introductions to the various books). "Indeed, if they were to include all the books of the Bible and were printed and bound together, they would in themselves comprise a valuable little manual of introduction to the Bible. . . . The need to apply the concept of development in the study of the Scriptures is obvious, and the chronological arrangement of the books of the Bible, even though in some cases only approximate, is an indispensable first step. To say this is of course to say the obvious, but it is precisely the obvious that so many readers who find the Bible uninteresting too often fail to grasp"? (*Lutheran Church Quarterly*, Vol. VII, p. 85.) Why is Shailer Mathews, the well-known Modernist, paid this tribute without a word of criticism: "Although the Dean passed his seventieth birthday on May 26 and has retired from his position on the Chicago faculty, he is by no means at the end of his period of service. He is still in the full vigor of his powers and will continue with voice and pen to carry on and enrich American theological thought" (Vol. VII, p. 340)? Why are statements such as the following permitted to be made publicly: "I would not be understood as commit-

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2) The *Short Bible* arranges the contents of the Bible chronologically along the lines of liberal higher criticism; omits completely both books of the Chronicles; states, on p. 221, that the books of the Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah are "an imaginative priestly recast of Jewish history"; omits in Luke 7 the story of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, p. 145, and in John 11 the raising of Lazarus. These are only a few examples of the modernistic spirit which is evidenced throughout the *Short Bible*.

ting myself to an acceptance of the entire theology of Luther. The distinction between the *Deus revelatus* and the *Deus absconditus* as he develops it seems too dualistic. The communications are too scholastic, and the doctrine of the ubiquity of the body of Christ expressed too much in spatial terms. Nor can I follow him in his Aristotelian rather than Biblical view that God is impassible. His emphasis on the exacting sternness of God led him, after the manner of Anselm, to dwell too much on the equivalence of sin and justice in his conception of the Atonement. But in spite of all these, the regulating principles that shaped his theology are such as commend themselves not only to Lutherans, but also to many other Protestants who still hold to a theology of revelation. Every forward step in theology since Luther's time has been deeply indebted to him" (Vol. VII, p. 40)? Why is the Scriptural doctrine of the Holy Spirit misrepresented in so flagrant a manner as is done in the article entitled "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," reviewed in *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, Vol. VI (1935), 58—64.

Dare we under such circumstances unite, establish fraternal relationships, even though it would be desirable from many viewpoints? We concede that reasons of economy speak in favor of union. We concede that the lack of cooperation and the open opposition on mission-fields are detrimental to the Lord's work, that it would be far better if we could work together in brotherly harmony. Yet the fault rests with those whose clinging to unscriptural doctrine and practise makes union and cooperation impossible. We concede that just at the present time a union of the Lutheran churches is desirable in order to resist more successfully the evils of antichristian movements and to counterbalance the "wide-spread tendency among Christian groups to abbreviate or dilute the Christian message in an effort to make it acceptable to the modern age." Yet how can we hope to overcome these tendencies and movements if we tolerate them in our own midst in the form of antichristian Masonry and anti-Scriptural dilution and perversion of fundamental doctrines of Christianity? The only way to combat successfully the forces of Satan arrayed against the Church of Christ is by standing four-square, wholeheartedly, on that rock of the apostles and prophets, the Holy Bible. Our faith is the victory that overcometh the world, and faith cometh only by hearing and such hearing only by the Word of God. Let us read and take to heart what the Lord tells His congregation at Philadelphia, Rev. 3, 7—13.

In view of these facts we must confess that we cannot understand the statement, so frequently met with in periodicals, that, as far as doctrine is concerned, complete unity exists between all the Lutheran church-bodies in America since all have subscribed to the Lutheran Confessions. Surely subscription alone does not suffice, sub-

scription must mean willingness to adhere to, to confess and teach, the doctrines subscribed and to avoid and to reject and to abhor all contrary doctrines. Uniting with a synod tolerating the teaching of such manifest heresies would not establish unity, but be adding another obstacle to inner and outer unity and union of all the Lutheran church-bodies in our country. For, sad to say, such obstacles exist not only as far as a union with the U. L. C. A. is concerned; there are still valid reasons which under existing circumstances render a union of the Synodical Conference with the American Lutheran Church impossible, though our fervent prayer is that all obstacles for a complete and whole-hearted union between all Lutheran churches may be swept away, and that right early.

In his synodical address of 1917, published under the title *Die lutherische Kirche der Vereinigten Staaten im Jubilaeumsjahr 1917*, Dr. C. C. Hein voices his conviction that the doctrinal differences separating Ohio and Missouri do not consist in mere words nor concern only inconsequential matters, that rather the discussions dealt with "the center of the Gospel." Since 1917 intersynodical conferences have been held repeatedly, and certainly not without good results. Much has been accomplished by these conferences; many misconceptions and misunderstandings have been removed; many have declared that the expression *intuitu fidei* is founded neither in Scripture nor in the Confessions and is subject to misunderstanding, may easily lead to false doctrine, and should therefore not be used. Yet synergism is quite frequently found in various publications edited within the American Lutheran Conference, with which body the American Lutheran Church is affiliated. Witness Prof. C. O. Solberg's recent publication, *The Call to Service*. While he rejects the *intuitu fidei*, he writes: "The 'possibility' of conversion lies in the fact that conversion is 'a change of man's mind, heart, and will wrought by the Holy Spirit, so that man is able through such operation of the Holy Spirit to accept proffered grace.' Thus the Lord Jesus says: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' The opening of the door would mean simply a ceasing of opposition. Only by the active entrance of Jesus, of divine grace, can any change be brought about in the nature of man. . . . The Lord takes man back to the original point of departure for a new start on a right way. As man in Eden chose deliberately under temptation to follow his own preference, so man is taken back to the fact of his natural preference and then is asked to yield to the Lordship of the Savior. . . . The choice to which the disposition and will of man are moved should be as far as possible a permanent one. As such the choice, since it is that of a naturally weak creature, prone to ways not acceptable to God and to ways inconsistent with not only the practise of Christian principles, but the life itself which is distinctive of the regenerate, must be directed and supported. A choice

such as we have outlined, by its very nature is subject to the ministration of the Spirit; this Spirit directs to the help of the means of grace; it directs to the whole counsel of God, as even in His Word; it directs to the fellowship of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who conducts men into the ways of righteousness." (Pp. 65. 66.) Synergism pure and simple; an error concerning which the Formula of Concord says: "For the controversies which have occurred are not, as some would regard them, mere misunderstandings or disputes concerning words (as are apt to occur), one side not having sufficiently grasped the meaning of the other, and the difficulty lying thus in a few words which are not of great moment; but here the subjects of controversy are important and great, and of such a nature that the opinion of the party in error cannot be tolerated in the Church of God, much less be excused or defended." (*Triglotta*, p. 849.)

The *Opgjoer*, Madison Theses, with its unscriptural compromise is still the official confession of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, an integral part of the American Lutheran Conference. Chiliastic tendencies are in evidence; so when complaints are voiced in the official organ of the Norwegian Lutheran Church that "even our theological seminaries have not thoroughly treated the doctrine of Christ's second advent. Luther himself has not set forth this doctrine with sufficient thoroughness." (Rev. N. Lunde in *Lutheraneren*, July 3, 1929.) Especially in the Augustana Synod chiliasm is rampant. See CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, Vol. I, 873. 901; V, 63. Doubts as to the inerrancy of the Bible are not only rather frequently expressed in the church periodicals published within the American Lutheran Conference, such doubts are even designated as "evidence of logical argument and profound ecumenical spirit." (Geo. M. Stephenson, *Lutheran Companion*, Augustana Synod, June 21, 1930.)

Again we ask: Are these matters of no consequence, "superlogic refined till life and reality are buried"? Or are they no more than "forms of the past, the problems and solutions of a bygone day, the formulas of a dying age"? Certainly not. They are doctrines concerning "the heart of the Gospel," as Dr. Hein put it in 1917; they are doctrines clearly revealed in that Scripture of which the Savior says: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed," John 8, 31. Dare we unite with such as do not continue in His Word in these doctrines? Should we not become partakers of other men's sins? 1 Tim. 5, 22. Dare we unite before these matters are adjusted, and adjusted in keeping with God's Word and our Confessions? The *Lutheran Herald* of April 17, 1934, says: "We have no objection to the doctrinal position expressed by the Synodical Conference in its *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod.*" Why, then, not renounce the *Opgjoer*, whose unscriptural position is so clearly refuted in the *Brief Statement*? Why not purge out the

old leaven completely? Has not experience time and again shown the impossibility of sweetening leaven by placing it in a mass of dough? Will not invariably the leaven slowly, but surely exercise its leavening power until the whole mass is permeated, leavened? Why court the danger so often warned against in Holy Writ? Why become lax in combating error in every shape and form in doctrine and in practise? Has not such laxity time and again proved the ruin of congregations, synods, churches, becoming weary of contending for those precious gifts, purity of doctrine, Scripturalness of practise? We know that every true and loyal Lutheran will whole-heartedly subscribe to the sentiment expressed by Prof. J. A. Dell, writing in the *Pastor's Monthly* of December, 1934: "That basis [for friendly relationships] can never be attained by remaining aloof from one another and calling names. Neither can it be obtained by getting together and ignoring very real differences and pretending that there are no grievances. It is to be hoped that we are sincere enough Christians to meet each other fairly, to face problems honestly, and to judge issues, as Lutherans should, by the standard of God's Word. In that spirit let us go forward."

If that spirit guides us, God will surely bless our efforts at getting together and establishing a basis for truly Christian, fraternal relationships, a basis which will stand as long as God's Word shall endure and a relationship which shall be of untold blessing and unending continuance, since it is based on, and is engendered by, and receives its nourishment from, the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

Doubts have been expressed as to the possibility of ever arriving at complete unity in doctrine. It has been stated that doctrinal discussions would be useless since they had so far failed to establish unity. We grant that complete unity has not yet been established between the church-bodies participating in these conferences and discussions. Nevertheless we hold that these efforts were by no means useless. They have brought the synods closer together than they ever were before. In a number of instances the participants in such discussions have found that they were in fact one in doctrine. Shall we in view of these facts cease our efforts merely because complete unity of all the members of the various bodies has not yet been accomplished? Or shall we follow the suggestion of some that we merge now, since so much has been accomplished, and trust to God that unity would come after union has been established? Neither the one nor the other. The latter would be dishonest, as Prof. Dell correctly states; the former not in keeping with God's will. Even if complete unity should never be established, it is our God-given duty to work towards that end, Eph. 4, and leave success or non-success to the Ruler of His Church. If in the spirit of love and charity, in that spirit

of complete submission to God's Word which brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, in that spirit of unflinching loyalty which will not yield one iota of this Word, — if in this spirit the differences which separate the Lutheran church-bodies are discussed, God will surely grant His blessing to His children on earth endeavoring to do His will. Is not His Word a light, a lamp? Shall we not in its light see the truth, and shall not that light, if only we permit it to illumine us, so fill our hearts and minds that we will gladly walk in the ways it points out both as to doctrine and practise? Shall we say that such unity is impossible? God speed the day on which it shall be evident that, while impossible with man, all things are possible with God!

THEO. LAETSCH.

## Zur Bedeutung der Taufe Jesu.

Matth. 3, 13—17.

### 1.

Daß die Taufe Jesu von allen Synoptikern berichtet und somit bestätigt wird, ist nicht von ungefähr. In dieser Tatsache finden wir mit Recht eine Betonung der Wichtigkeit der Taufe unsers Heilandes. Sie war nicht eine Handlung, die gleichsam nur zufällig in das Leben und Amtswirken des göttlichen Erlösers hineinschlug; sie hatte im Gegenteil wirkliche, bleibende Bedeutung für sein ganzes Heilandswerk. Das ist je und je die Erklärung unserer Dogmatiker und Exegeten gewesen, und das haben auch wir immer wieder vor Augen zu führen. Jesu Beschneidung und Taufe liegen gewissermaßen auf gleicher Stufe; beide gehören zu dem, was Jesus als der erschienene Messias uns armen Sündern zugute getan hat. Darin müssen wir ihre hohe Bedeutung finden. Diesen Punkt hat man strittig gemacht; es lohnt sich daher, daß wir ihn neu betonen und ins rechte Licht stellen.

### 2.

Allerdings berichten nicht alle Synoptiker Jesu Taufe mit derselben Genauigkeit und Fülle aller einschlägigen Begebenheiten. Johannes setzt die Taufe Jesu voraus; sie bildet gleichsam den Hintergrund der johanneischen Prolegomena. Markus berichtet einfach die nackte Tatsache der Taufe, fügt aber prägnant hinzu, was darauf folgte. Ähnlich verfährt Lukas, wenn auch von einem andern Gesichtspunkt aus. Eine eigentliche, eingehende Darlegung und Erklärung der Taufe Jesu findet sich nur bei Matthäus, und an dessen Bericht müssen wir uns halten, wollen wir die Taufe des Erlösers recht verstehen. Immerhin setzen auch Markus und Lukas Jesu Taufe in Verbindung mit der nachher erfolgten Bestätigung und Salbung des Heilandes und so mit seiner offiziellen Ausrüstung für sein Amtswerk. Bei keinem Synoptiker