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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

The Fellowship Question

The following paragraphs are taken from the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference*, March, 1937, from the minutes of the First and Second Biennial Conventions:

"Resolved, That against the background of that official pronouncement [the Minneapolis Theses] and translating it into a simple statement well suited to the interrelationships of synods and congregations, each sovereign in its own field, we submit this declaration:

"In applying to pastoral and congregational problems, Section III of the Minneapolis Theses, we agree to limit church-fellowship to those who share with us our mutual faith and confessions.

"I. This declaration is based on the admonitions of Holy Scripture concerning the Christian's relation to error in doctrine and the teachers thereof.

"II. It is definitely in line with the principles and policies of Luther and his associates of the Reformation period.

"III. This principle is emphatically endorsed by the said failure of the 'union' of a century ago in Protestant Germany, where the authorities, ignoring doctrinal distinctions, put the principles of indifferentism into thoroughgoing practise and brought forth, instead of the 'one Church' conceived in the mind of the king of Prussia, three churches with sharpened antagonisms.

"IV. We would furthermore support this declaration with the thesis that the history of the Lutheran Church in America from its first beginnings until now does show that not indifferentism but definite principles both in profession and in practise form the right policy for the Church to pursue in facing its problems and its possibilities in America.

"V. Furthermore we insist that the application of this principle must always be with courtesy, with no lack of firmness but nevertheless with kindness.

"VI. In defining this declaration, we first of all withdraw from the scope of that definition such church groups, such institutions and congregations, such individuals, as openly deny great truths which the Universal Church has always held basic. What unanimity can faith have with denial?

"VII. In further analysis of this problem we urge that a collective confessional purpose of the Church is involved here and that in bearing witness, whether one by one, with word of mouth, or collectively, in action and attitude, it is for the witness to see to it so far as possible that he be understood by those receiving the testimony.

"VIII. We further urge that there are public civic relationships in the typical American community from which the church and its pastor cannot permanently remain aloof without jeopardizing opportunity.

"IX. In certain outward manifestations of these civic relationships we believe that the setting for public functions wherein the pastor is asked to participate will largely determine the legitimate conclusions drawn by a community as to compromise of confessional standards.

"X. Proper application of that principle which lies in our declaration leaves no room for laxity in guarding the sanctities of pulpit and altar.

"Conclusion. The environment through which we move on into the future, the growing Lutheran consciousness which is a present reality, the increasing impact being made on American life, all urge us forward along the pathway where alone Lutheran solidarity is to be found and where alone the destiny of the Church of the Augsburg Confession can be attained."

At 4.30 P. M. the special order of the day, "The Fellowship Question," was considered. It was resolved that the Rev. Dr. L. W. Boe be given the floor. He read a paper on the subject "An Open Declaration of Aim and Purpose," with ten appended resolutions, as follows:

"To remove the hindrances and misunderstandings that lie in the way, not for pulpit- and altar-fellowship, not for organic union or even federation, but for united action and testimony, and to further the great work of winning America for Christ and for a great spiritual objective, the following resolutions are submitted for adoption by the American Lutheran Conference:

I

"The American Lutheran Conference declares it to be its conviction that America, in its philosophy and thinking, in its education and training, in its national and international relations, in its production and use of wealth and its distribution, must definitely be won for Christ and the principles of His kingdom, and it further states, so as not to have its position misunderstood, that this does not necessarily involve winning America for the Lutheran Church;

II

"That, aside from the economic and social changes necessary to remedy the ills and injustices made evident by the present depression, a matter entirely within the power of the people today, this task of winning America for a spiritual objective lies as a responsibility upon the whole Christian Church of America;

III

"That the Christian Church, in order to be equal to the task, must approach it with fasting, a giving up of many things, and prayer, and a willingness to submit to an inner renewal by the Holy Spirit;

IV

"That the Lutheran Church, in its emphasis on the divine Word and the means of grace, as expressed in the two cardinal principles of the Reformation and in its Confessions, has a special contribution to make, not in antagonism but in a friendly attitude toward other Christian churches;

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V

"That, in order to make the witnessing of the Lutheran Church united and effective, friendly relationships and contacts between the Lutheran bodies should be established on such a basis as to place no synod or church in a false position in relation to its own faith practise;

VI

"That the Lutheran bodies should, in so far as their faith and practise permit, cooperate in good works to the glory of God and the saving of our people; and finally,

VII

"That the Lutheran bodies, in friendly relationship and contact, together should 'wait upon the Lord' for a revealing of His will and purpose as to the next step forward in the Lutheran Church in America toward full recognition in pulpit- and altar-fellowship."

VIII

"In a spirit of friendliness and with the desire for friendly contacts the American Lutheran Conference takes cognizance of the coming of Dr. F.H. Knubel to Milwaukee on Friday and directs its president to invite Dr. Knubel, as president of the United Lutheran Church, to address the convention at some convenient hour, and further, in the same spirit and without the implication of pulpit- and altar-fellowship, invites friendly representation from the Synodical Conference and the other Lutheran bodies." (Adopted.)

IX

"In view of the general distress and suffering and the many and sober problems confronting the people of the United States today the American Lutheran Conference would urge that the twenty-fourth of November be not only a day of thanksgiving, for bountiful harvests and other blessings from the Lord, but a day of humiliation and prayer, humiliation nationally and individually because of our sins, prayer for guidance into a better day, and a day of dedication of ourselves and our means to the support of the Church and the relief of suffering and distress throughout our land."

X

"In order to release for the advancement of the Kingdom the potentialities lying latent in the organization of the American Lutheran Conference, the following recommendations are made to the constituent general bodies:

1) "That the changes in program, institutions, and methods made necessary and desirable because of the new relationships and the difficult times in which we live, be faced soon and with patience, wisdom, and courage and that whatever readjustments are made, have in view the advancement of the interest of the American Lutheran Conference and the whole Lutheran Church in America; and

2) "That as a method or working principle there be a recognition on the part of each constituent body of a major or preponderant interest

in a given territory and a willingness gradually to retire where there is only a minor interest, thus releasing the church for more intensive work in its major field and strengthening other Lutheran bodies; and

3) "That each constituent body develop a strong Home Mission activity in the field of its major interest and possibilities."

Your Committee proposes in the following certain measures practicable apart from merger or union of existing Lutheran bodies which are still striving to realize implications of their own form of organization.

A

In an attempt to discover the present relationship between the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Conference, your Committee submits the following:

1. As far as statements of faith are concerned, the bodies are in agreement.

2. In their official declarations both bodies oppose unionism.

3. Both bodies recognize the evil of societies holding antichristian doctrines and warn against them. The American Lutheran Conference does not tolerate the membership of pastors in these societies.

4. The American Lutheran Conference is earnestly desirous of pulpit-and altar-fellowship with the United Lutheran Church in America, but is convinced that a difference in practise regarding the membership of pastors in societies holding antichristian doctrines presents an obstacle to the consummation of such fellowship.

B

The American Lutheran Conference is equally desirous of pulpit-and altar-fellowship with the Synodical Conference.

C

1. Your Committee recommends that the American Lutheran Conference create a permanent commission on fellowship and cooperation.

This commission shall be empowered to initiate conferences with other Lutheran bodies relative to fellowship and closer cooperation and to deal with similar commissions elected by such other Lutheran bodies.

2. Your Committee recommends that the American Lutheran Conference invite the United Lutheran Church in America and the Synodical Conference to create similar commissions.

3. Your Committee recommends that the American Lutheran Conference invite the United Lutheran Church in America and the Synodical Conference to express themselves on what matters and to what extent they would be willing to cooperate with us even before complete fellowship is established.

This statement has reference to such matters as cooperation in the National Lutheran Council, in inner missions, in allocation of Home Mission fields, in the promotion of institutions of higher learning, and in the National Lutheran Editors' Association.

D

In clarification of the meaning of unionism your Committee submits the following considerations:

1. Unionism is well defined in the Minneapolis Theses. Unionism exists "where the establishment and maintenance of church-fellowship ignore present doctrinal differences or declare them a matter of indifference."

2. Unionism is not necessarily implied in every type of joint endeavor within a community where pastor and congregation may participate. With Dr. Gullixson's statement at Milwaukee your Committee is in agreement: "I believe that there are public functions in the typical American community from which the church and its pastor cannot permanently remain aloof without jeopardizing in some measure opportunity."

3. While the character and extent of such community cooperation must in large measure be determined by the local congregation and its pastor, this guiding principle should be kept in mind: that under no circumstances shall the clear purpose of the Lutheran Church be obscured or compromised. In the words of the Washington Declaration, that Church "is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts, and its altars must testify only to that truth."

On the basis of the report of the Committee on Fellowship the Preliminary Committee submits for adoption the following resolutions as "The Declaration of the American Lutheran Conference on Fellowship":

"1. The American Lutheran Conference voices its joy over agreement with the United Lutheran Church in America and the Synodical Conference so far as official confessions of faith are concerned.

"2. We rejoice that in official declarations each body concerned opposes unionism.

"3. We rejoice that the respective bodies recognize the evil of societies holding antichristian doctrines and warns against them.

"4. The American Lutheran Conference is earnestly desirous of pulpit- and altar-fellowship with the United Lutheran Church in America.

"5. The American Lutheran Conference is equally desirous of pulpit- and altar-fellowship with the Synodical Conference.

"6. The American Lutheran Conference respectfully recommends and urges the selection of committees on fellowship by the respective constituent bodies in order to initiate conferences with other Lutheran bodies relative to fellowship and to deal with similar commissions elected by other Lutheran bodies. It shall be within the province of each church-body, if it so decides, to act jointly with other commissions of the American Lutheran Conference so appointed. In any case final approval or disapproval of commission or committee recommendations in regard to altar- and pulpit-fellowship rests with each individual church-body as far as it is concerned.

"7. The American Lutheran Conference hereby establishes a Commission on Lutheran Cooperative Endeavor to ascertain in what matters and to what extent other Lutheran groups would be willing to cooperate even before complete fellowship is established.

"8. In clarification of the meaning of unionism, the following statements are submitted:

"a. Unionism is well defined in the Minneapolis Theses. Unionism exists 'where the establishment and maintenance of church-fellowship ignore present doctrinal differences or declare them a matter of indifference.'

"b. Unionism is not necessarily implied in every type of joint endeavor within a community where pastor and congregation may participate.

"c. While the character and extent of such community cooperation must in large measure be determined by the local congregation and its pastor, this guiding principle should be kept in mind: that under no circumstances shall the clear purpose of the Lutheran Church be obscured or compromised. In the words of the Washington Declaration, that Church 'is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts, and its altars must testify only to that truth.'

"Resolved to eliminate 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in this report and that the words 'in compliance with the mandate voted by the Milwaukee convention' be substituted as an introduction and that 6, 7, 8 be retained, these three paragraphs, with above introduction, to be received by the convention for consideration as a substitute for resolutions on the entire question.

"No. 6 (with above introduction) was adopted."

P. E. K.

Certification of School-Teaching Pastors

In view of the fact that there is a steady trend toward raising the standards of the teaching profession in most States, the Board of Education suggests that all pastors who are teaching in parish-schools in our Synod obtain the necessary information with regard to certification and try to get life certificates as soon as possible. In a few years the demands made by the States may be so high as to result in closing schools whose teachers do not possess the professional training required by State laws.

P. E. K.

Not a Preacher's Preacher

Some years ago I happened to attend a service in another congregation in which a good friend of mine in the ministry had been invited to preach. When we met after the service, he said, "If I had known that you would be present, I should have read my sermon over once more before I preached it." He said this more or less in a joking manner, but the real joke was that it would not have hurt his sermon in the least if he had read it over another time; and he knew it, too. But why should he go to some extra pains for one person, a preacher, that he failed to take for a whole churchful of laymen?

I don't know; but I do know that I wouldn't do it. I would spend more time on a sermon any time for laymen, who always may have some difficulty in getting the point, than for preachers, who ought to know more or less what it is all about. And this is the absolute truth.

Not long ago I preached to over a hundred pastors without having a single word of the sermon written down beforehand in black on white. I do not believe that I've ever done this with any sermon preached before my congregation. Those sermons have been written out in full for nearly twenty years.

A preacher's life's duty is to preach to laymen, and not to preachers. Once in a while he may be called on to preach before fellow-pastors; but that is the exception. If a preacher puts forth his best efforts only in exceptional cases, if good preaching is not the rule with him, he has certainly missed a lot of things, and his congregation has not gained much either.

(From a parish-paper)

Samson's Foxes

To the story of Samson recorded Judg. 15, 4, 5: "And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes (ἀλώπεκας), and took torches (λαμπάδας), and turned tail to tail, and put a torch between two tails, and fastened it. And he set fire to the torches and sent the foxes into the corn of the Philistines," we find an interesting parallel in the fable of Aesop on the farmer and the fox. The fable runs thus in part: "The well-grown crop of the neighbor caused the wicked farmer to be envious; and he desired to destroy the fruit of his labors. Having caught a fox (ἀλώπεκα), he fastened a lit torch (δαλόν) to him and released him into the crop of the neighbor. And he was released into it and did not go aside, as the god which sent him advised, but burned (ἐνέπρησεν) the crop."

K. G. MANZ

Image of God

Κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ (LXX), Gen. 1, 26. In *Corpus Hermeticum*, Libellus XVI, we read: "περὶ τοῦ κατ' εἰκόνα ἀνθρώπου." While God made man in His own image, κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ, Gen. 1, 26, Hermes tells us of things made in the image of man, κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. (Cf. Her. III, 45 f.)

K. G. MANZ

The Right Hand of God

Δεξιὰ κυρίου, Ps. 117 (118), 15. The right hand of God is often spoken of in the Old Testament. In *Corpus Hermeticum*, Libellus XVIII, 10, we read: "Those to whom God has given the topmost height of sovereignty and on whom victory has been conferred by God's right hand (τῆς ἐκείνου [θεοῦ] δεξιᾶς)."

K. G. MANZ