

11-1-1939

Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

W. Arndt

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Arndt, W. (1939) "Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 10 , Article 86.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol10/iss1/86>

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

Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

War. — "And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red; and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword." Rev. 6:3, 4. At the beginning of September the frightful scourge of war with bewildering swiftness again fell upon a large part of the world's inhabitants. The political and other merely external aspects of the subject do not concern us here. Nor is it our intention to write an editorial elaborating on the great truths that ought to flash upon us from the Scriptures. Let us here simply remind ourselves that the war proclaims in thunderous accents our sinfulness and that of our fellow-men, that it is a punishment falling upon a wicked world ripe for the Judgment, that it constitutes a call to repentance for all who have ears to hear, that it announces the rapid approach of the final catastrophe, the end of the world. With hearts that are constantly beseeching God, on the one hand, to be merciful and soon to end the conflict and, on the other, to lead men to heed the moral and spiritual lessons taught by this dread affliction, and with feelings of love for all that are engaged in the conflict, regardless of where our sympathies lie, remembering that Jesus commands us to love our enemies and remembering, furthermore, that Christians must avoid fostering sinful animosities and must be peacemakers, let us be about our great task, preaching that real peace on earth which Jesus established through the shedding of His holy blood.

A.

Declarations Pertaining to Intersynodical Relations.—From the report of the *Northwestern Lutheran* on the convention of the Wisconsin Synod, we reprint the following paragraph:

"A great amount of time, in fact three full sessions, were devoted to a most conscientious consideration and discussion of the request of our sister Synod, the honorable Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, to render an opinion on the resolutions of this body at St. Louis in 1938, declaring 'that the *Brief Statement* of the Missouri Synod, together with the "Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church" and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod's actions thereupon, be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.' A communication addressed to the Missouri Synod was adopted by the convention. This communication had the following content: In two preliminary points the historical data of the entire development are set forth. In a third the principles which ought to govern such a resolution as that adopted at St. Louis are enunciated. And finally, in a fourth point, the application is made to the present case, disavowing a real doctrinal basis for church-fellowship as existing at St. Louis and desiring of our sister synod that the implications of the Sandusky Resolutions and the

Pittsburgh Agreement be 'officially recognized and made known to those within and without our Synodical Conference' to the end that 'confidence will be restored to a point where negotiations can be resumed, first to remove these obstacles and then to establish true doctrinal unity.'

The *Gemeindeblatt* of the Wisconsin Synod published this report: „Beschlüsse der Wisconsin Synode in bezug auf die Bestrebungen der Missouri Synode, Lehrsicherheit mit der A. L. C. herzustellen. Viel Zeit wurde bei der diesjährigen Tagung auf die Besprechung der Vereinbarung zwischen der Missouri Synode und der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche (A. L. C.) verwendet. Und mit Recht. Unsere Synode ist es ihrer Schwester Synode von Missouri, die ihr diese Sache vorgelegt hatte, ist es auch der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche schuldig, eine klare und unzweideutige Stellung in dieser Vereinigungsbewegung einzunehmen. Dies ist ohne Zweifel die wichtigste Angelegenheit, die unsere diesjährige Synodalversammlung zu besprechen und zu entscheiden hatte. Wir lassen die englisch verabschiedeten Beschlüsse hier folgen, die einstimmig angenommen wurden.

„1. Wir billigen den Standpunkt unsers Komitees, den es in seinem Urteil und Befund nach Teil III seines Berichts ankündigt.

„Ein bestehendes Komitee in Sachen der Vereinigungsbestrebungen unter den lutherischen Kirchenkörpern hat sei Juli 1938 im Auftrage des Präses gearbeitet. Aus seinem Bericht nahm die Synode Teil III an, der also lautet: Auf Grund seiner Beobachtungen, Beratungen und Besprechungen ist das Komitee der Ansicht, daß die Lehrgrundlage, die zwischen der Missouri Synode und der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche hergestellt ist, nicht annehmbar, ist, besonders nicht im Hinblick auf den Vorbehalt der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche, daß die „kurze Darlegung“ der Lehre der Missouri Synode im Lichte der „Erklärung“ der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche betrachtet werden müsse. Es sollten nicht zwei Darstellungen als Basis der Übereinstimmung herausgegeben werden. Vielmehr ist eine einzige gemeinsam abgegebene Erklärung unerlässlich, die die strittigen Lehren thetisch und antithetisch (also in Darlegung der rechten Lehre und in Verwerfung der falschen Lehre) deckt. Weiter muß solche Lehrdarstellung in klaren und unzweideutigen Ausdrücken gemacht werden, die nicht selbst wieder mühsamer Erklärung bedürfen. Die Aufrichtigkeit einer theoretisch richtigen Lehrdarlegung muß auch durch entsprechende Anwendung in der kirchlichen Praxis bewiesen werden.

„2. Wir halten dafür:

„A. daß die Sandusky-Beschlüsse und die Pittsburgh-Vereinbarung erwiesen haben, daß keine wirkliche Lehrbasis zur Aufrichtung der Kirchengemeinschaft zwischen der ehrwürdigen Synode von Missouri und der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche vorhanden war;

„B. daß weitere Verhandlungen zur Herstellung von Kirchengemeinschaft unter den gegenwärtigen Verhältnissen eine Verleugnung der Wahrheit in sich schließen und Verwirrung und Störungen in der Kirche verursachen würden und darum bis auf weiteres eingestellt werden sollten;

„C. daß, wenn auf diese Weise offiziell anerkannt und allen innerhalb und außerhalb unserer Synodalversammlung bekannt gemacht worden ist, was die Sandusky-Beschlüsse und die Pittsburgh-Vereinbarung in sich schließen,

wie unter A und B erwähnt, daß Vertrauen bis zu dem Grade wiederhergestellt sein wird, daß Verhandlungen wieder aufgenommen werden können, um erst die bestehenden Hindernisse zu beseitigen und dann eine wahre Einigkeit in der Lehre herzustellen.

„8. Wir empfehlen:

„A. daß unsere Wisconsin Synode ein Schreiben an die ehrwürdige Missourisynode richte, in dem sie ihr von unserer Stellung Mitteilung macht;

„B. daß der Präses der Synode ein Komitee, zu dem er selber gehören soll, ernenne, dessen Pflicht es sein soll, alle nur zu erlangende Information über die gegenwärtigen Vereinigungsbestrebungen innerhalb der lutherischen Kirche sorgfältig zu sammeln und über die Entwicklungen dieser Bewegungen an die Allgemeine Synode oder die verschiedenen Distrikte, wenn so gewünscht, zu berichten.“

The Lutheran Sentinel, the paper of our Norwegian brethren, reports this item in its account of the convention of the Norwegian Synod:

“This resolution was adopted unanimously: ‘Resolved that the Synod hereby endorses the letter to Dr. J. W. Behnken, drawn up by the committee appointed by the president to study the union movement between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod.’ In the discussion it was pointed out that the so-called agreement that has been reached is not sufficiently clear and definite to exclude error. That there are wide open doors to contrary teachings was clearly demonstrated. The convention discussions on this point were marked by an outspoken ‘on the record’ attitude; and equally clear was the concern for the truth which must mark the brotherhood of those who are united in a common confession. The whole convention, on the floor and in the halls, was noted for a definite tone of deep concern for the maintenance of our common faith with those of the Synodical Conference who have stood side by side with us in the past for Scriptural doctrine, faith, and life.”

In the *Australian Theological Review*, Prof. H. Haman published the following article:

“*The Lutheran Union Movement.* Naturally enough, Lutheran church-papers in Australia and in America devote more than a little space to the progress of the negotiations between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod, which negotiations have now been extended to the bodies with which these churches are affiliated and in communion. Besides, writing and printing on this topic are by no means restricted to the regular synodical organs. Whether any real progress has been made during the past year, as far as the rank and file of the ministers (and of the laymen) within the respective bodies are concerned, we are unable to say. In Australia nothing has been done, with the exception of a preliminary exchange of official letters; but there seems to be an earnest and urgent desire on both sides to get the discussions under way at last. In America conferences have been held by pastors belonging to the various synods joined in the Synodical Conference, and also by pastors of the two bodies which are now striving to bring about church-fellowship; the results are described as satisfactory. But unexpected obstacles have loomed up, and unexpected

opposition has been encountered. Still, were they unexpected? Men do not think and feel alike. *Quot homines, tot sententiae*. Even Christians linked by the bonds of a common faith may argue and debate the question: If a breach in the Church, a breach of many years' standing, is to be healed, what is the irreducible minimum that must be insisted on in the way of retraction, confession, guarantees? That there are divergent views on this point is not strange at all; the opposite would be astounding indeed. But discussion may help to clarify opinions, to harmonize differing views. One hesitates, at this distance, to add one's voice to the many already raised. Yet a few observations may not come amiss.

"Since the momentous action taken by the Missouri Synod at St. Louis (1938) things have not run altogether smoothly. It is not our intention to deal with statements emanating from the other side; though we may say in passing that the refusal to 'sign on the dotted line,' now almost historic, of which so much has been made, originally occurred in a letter (private?) to a pastor of the Missouri Synod who had asked for certain information. Of course, private or not, that letter is by this time public property, and we believe that its contents have been dealt with adequately by Dr. W. Arndt in the *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, May, 1939 (p. 387 ff.). We are now concerned with such criticism of the action taken by the Missouri Synod, and of its Committee on Lutheran Union, as has been published in our own circles, both officially and non-officially. Fears are expressed whether church-fellowship, if brought into being, would be based on true doctrinal unity; whether the doctrinal basis accepted by the two bodies is a sufficient and adequate one; whether the American Lutheran Church has really, by its *Declaration*, accepted the *Brief Statement* of the Missouri Synod; whether the *Declaration* is sufficient guarantee that certain errors formerly taught by the synods now united in the American Lutheran Church have actually been retracted; whether the efforts now being made to bring about a *rapprochement* between the A. L. C. and the United Lutheran Church would not inevitably involve the Missouri Synod in fellowship with the last-named body; etc.

"We do not doubt that these and other apprehensions proceed from hearts that love and desire the truth. We should not dream of denying to conscientious doubters and objectors the right to express their opinion. In a matter of such vast importance, where, as one writer correctly points out, the congregations with their pastors must in the last instance decide, free discussion and criticism is a desideratum, a necessity. It is quite in order when dangers, obstacles, stumbling-blocks, oversights, are pointed out, or what seem to be such; people have a right to urge caution. Still, *Sit modus in rebus*. We for our person do not share the opinion of those who regard the doctrinal basis accepted by the Missouri Synod as insufficient. We do not share the fears of those who say that 'The American Lutheran Church wishes the *Brief Statement* to be viewed in the light of the *Declaration*,' according to a resolution adopted at its convention at Sandusky, O.; therefore, in the last analysis, the *Declaration* will be everything and the *Brief Statement* nothing. The fifth resolution

adopted at Sandusky begins with the words: 'That we believe that the *Brief Statement* viewed in the light of our *Declaration* is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses, which are the basis of our membership in the American Lutheran Conference.' But that, if we understand English, is not the same as saying that 'the American Lutheran Church wishes the *Brief Statement* to be viewed in the light of the *Declaration*,' with the implication that the *Declaration* is *normans* and the *Brief Statement* is relegated to the position of *norma normata*. Again, since there are now two doctrinal statements adopted by the negotiating bodies, the fear is voiced that in case of differences each body will appeal to its own and reject the other; and hence the demand is raised that there should be but one doctrinal statement equally subscribed to by both parties. We cannot regard this demand as unreasonable, but neither do we regard it as necessary. However, since we have here not two political parties trying to agree on an innocuous formula and haggling over words and phrases to enable each to save its face, but two church-bodies which, in the fear of God and in the love of His Church and with regard to the welfare of souls, are trying to reach unity of faith and to confess a common faith, we can well imagine such a thing as these two bodies complying with the request or demand just mentioned, if it be urged by many, in the spirit of love and brotherliness. Or again, what is asked for is a confession, in ethical and antithetical form, covering all controversial points that have made a rift between the church-bodies in the past. Even though one granted the desirability of having such a confession, one would still have to face the question: Where shall we begin and where shall we end? Is it really necessary, and is it charitable, needlessly to exacerbate the feelings of the present generation by demanding that it disavow errors from which it feels and knows itself free, because its fathers or grand-fathers once maintained these errors? Certainly a confessing Church is bound to reject error as well as to uphold the truth of God's revelation; but just as certainly Christian charity and practical Christian wisdom will have to play their part in determining the procedure to be adopted, or the language to be used, when two churches record the fact that, after long and carefully examining and discussing teachings that divided them, they have at last attained to unity on the basis of the Word of God. Matters are not helped when people, dissatisfied with the way in which things were done, propound a carefully excogitated scheme and attempt to communicate to others their own conviction that this scheme is the only one which has the sanction of the divine Word.

"Two matters in particular we must strongly deprecate and deplore. In their well-meaning but misdirected zeal, certain writers have expressed distrust of the Committee on Lutheran Union and distrust of the *bona fides* of those with whom fellowship is sought, even while strenuously and no doubt quite sincerely disclaiming any such intention. The Committee on Lutheran Union has been at work for years; the result of its labors were placed before the St. Louis convention in a number of resolutions by Committee No. 16; and as far as we can gather, the Missouri Synod has through that convention pronounced upon these recommendations in no uncertain voice. Pastors of both

bodies are encouraged, by resolution, to meet in smaller circles to discuss the doctrinal basis and questions of church practise; the Committee on Lutheran Union is to continue its work. The Missouri Synod went on record that agreement in practise is needed for true unity, referring specifically to 'the antichristian lodge and anti-Scriptural pulpit- and altar-fellowship and all other forms of unionism'; besides, it resolved that 'the establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend also on the establishing on the part of the American Lutheran Church of doctrinal agreement with those church-bodies with which the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship.' In other words, the Missouri Synod recognized that un-Lutheran practise and synodical affiliations might prove to be the rocks on which the consummation of church-fellowship may come to grief. All this was published long ago; everybody in the Missouri Synod is, or can be, aware of it. Just why, then, should any one doubt that the Committee on Lutheran Union, the officials of the Missouri Synod, or the editors of its church-papers will in the future display the same circumspection and conscientiousness and the same devotion to confessional principles which they have displayed in the past? It seems to me that these men are as well aware of all the relevant facts and factors as their critics. If there should be on the part of the American Lutheran Church and the synods affiliated with it an unwillingness to renounce un-Lutheran practise and to forsake unionistic associations, or even an inclination to enter into union with others whose doctrinal and practical unsoundness has long been a grief to sound confessional Lutheranism, then the whole matter will be off, to put it bluntly. Of this we have no doubt. Or should the partners of the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference decline, for reasons of conscience, to give their approval to the doctrinal basis and the establishing of church-fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod will with Christian charity and patience hold the matter in abeyance until apprehensions are removed and legitimate wishes met. Of this, too, we have no doubt. As regards the American Lutheran Church, Christian love and common decency demand that its *Declaration* be taken at its face value and that no doubt should be expressed or entertained regarding the sincerity of the men who dealt with the committee of the Missouri Synod. It is not ethical to suspect trickery and subterfuge; nor can such suspicions be justified by quoting incidents from sixteenth-century church history. It is true, the American Lutheran Church declared at Sandusky: 'We are not willing to give up membership in the American Lutheran Conference.' But that body also resolved: 'We are ready to submit the aforementioned doctrinal agreement to the other members of the American Lutheran Conference for their official approval and acceptance.' So matters stand. We can only wait and see and meanwhile hope and pray. The door is still open; let no one rush forward to close it prematurely.

"The other matter which we must not simply deplore, but censure in the spirit of meekness, is the intemperate language resorted to by some of the friends from our own side. Nothing is quite so contagious or infectious as the feeling of panic. Those writers who pour out in

printer's ink their doubts and fears, their anxieties and apprehensions; who in their mind's eye already see the Missouri Synod fallen from its high estate of strict confessionalism and entangled in unsanctified alliances with unionists and errorists—these are not rendering their Church or other churches a service, to say the least. Is it right to unsettle and unhinge the minds of readers by filling them with a vague dread of dangers which are certainly always present among sinful men in a sinful world, but to which the officials and committees of the Missouri Synod mainly charged with conducting the negotiations are extremely unlikely to succumb? Sorrowfully, not cynically, we record our conviction that about one half of what we have read on the movement ought never to have been written. One writer explains why our committee was 'so easily deceived'; another opines that, unless the American Lutheran Church now takes the action expected of it, 'our colloquents and the St. Louis faculty have suffered themselves to be deceived.' In an editorial comment we read: 'Meanwhile some Lutheran leaders are driving with the throttle wide open, full speed ahead, toward a union overriding all obstacles. . . . Just what the driving motive is behind all this speed for union [*Sic!* After negotiations and discussions extending over decades.—H.H.] this present writer has not been able to ascertain.' Later the same article speaks of a mad scramble for unionism and asks whether Missouri will soon find itself in a combined Church 'embracing all Christendom, Protestants, and Catholics, not forgetting the Jews.' The notion may be ridiculous, he admits; 'but with the craze for unionism all things are possible.' Evidently some of us are slipping into the language of propaganda with its 'weasel words,' and some are becoming slightly hysterical. At times the situation is not without its touch of humor. Thus one of our friends reiterates that, before Missouri can enter into fellowship with any church-body, there must be some guarantee that there will be in that body doctrinal discipline, doctrinal control, *Lehrzucht*. Most truly spoken, and we very heartily agree; but why should the gentleman assume that those whom he admonishes are not sufficiently alive to this necessity?

"What amuses the present writer is this, that exactly the same point was stressed by a representative of the American Lutheran Church when discussing a statement made by members of the U.L.C. on the inerrancy of the Scriptures. He said, according to the *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, June, 1939, p. 458: '*Ohne Lehrsziplin kann keine Kirche auf die Dauer gesund bleiben.*' This saying is attributed by the C.T.M. to M.R., which we suppose to stand for Dr. M. Reu.

"And why all this? Not only because it interests us and concerns us as Lutherans in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, but also because it may teach us something for the time when discussions begin here in Australia, which, we hope will be soon. That the Missouri Synod is yielding never a whit to unionism and indifferentism must be plain as daylight to all who read the *Lutheran Witness* and the *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY* with care. Every new development is promptly published, moreover, and may be read by all and sundry. We have seen no trace of a desire to hide or hush up any matter. So let us, while

adhering strictly to the Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions, strive to keep sober sense and judgment, to remain scrupulously fair, and to speak the truth in love. The movement spoken of is still fraught with promise, as far as we know now. It is worth praying and working for. We have no patience with those who hint that it proceeded from mere megalomania and the desire to impress the world with large numbers. The issue cuts much deeper than that. There is, first of all, God's will and command, Eph. 4:3. There is the need of the world in an age of apostasy. There is the scandal and offense of a divided Christendom and a divided Lutheranism. Australian Lutherans feel uncomfortable when they see, in many a tiny settlement, a church of the U. E. L. C. A. on one side of the road, and a church of the E. L. S. A. on the other; they know what heartburnings, what misery and wretchedness, are caused in many a family by this state of affairs. There is the foreign mission-field. We wish that we could send all those armchair critics who speak slightly of the present movement into the foreign field for a term, so that they might see with their own eyes the shock of pained surprise in converts who learn that there are many Christian churches and that there are various Lutheran bodies not in communion with each other. Do we, then, advocate unionistic fellowship? Not for one moment. All these things, unbearable though they sometimes seem, must be borne for the truth's sake and for conscience' sake. We can do nothing against the truth and nothing against conscience. But we can work for a God-pleasing Lutheran union, in particular when the opportunity arises. It is good to say, The consummation will come in God's own time, when thereby we mean that only His Spirit and His blessing can bring it about. It is not good to speak thus, however, when this pious sentiment is made the excuse for doing nothing. *Ora et labora!* We pray for daily bread, and that implies that we work for our daily bread. Our prayer for peace puts on us the obligation to work for peace. Prayer for Lutheran unity can hardly be earnest and sincere if we are not willing to make efforts to attain it. Our prayer is: May God in His mercy and truth so direct the hearts of men that in the unity of the true faith and in sincere confession of His holy Word they may reach that Lutheran fellowship toward which they are striving." A.

Concerning Church-Fellowship Discussions in Australia.—With respect to discussions on the establishment of church-fellowship between them and the United Ev. Luth. Church of Australia our brethren in Australia published the following paragraphs in the *Australian Lutheran*:

The *Lutheran Herald* (U. E. L. C. A.) of March 27, 1939, contains "A Paper for the District Synods of the U. E. L. C. A.," "An Open Letter to the E. L. S. A.," written by the President of the U. E. L. C. A., and inviting reply.

We reply: The "Open Letter" puts the clock back to zero, inasmuch as it is guilty of, proclaims, and defends, a basic error, an unscriptural *twofold principle of Scripture interpretation*, which is the root evil of all doctrinal dissension and which, consequently, leads to further doctrinal error.

1. Christ, the apostles, and prophets attest that Holy Scripture, or the written Word of God, is the only source and standard of doctrine and

rule of faith and life, or the true and only *principium cognoscendi* (Schriftprinzip), principle of knowledge.

Jesus: "It is written," Matt. 4: 4; "The Scripture cannot be broken," John 10: 35.

2. The Reformation fathers recognized only one principle of knowledge and interpretation, and would have *Scripture alone* posit, decree, or determine doctrine as to fact and quality.

Luther: "The Church has no authority to establish (create or decree) an article of faith; this she has never done and never will."

Quenstedt: "Divine revelation is the first and last source of sacred theology, beyond which theological discussion among Christians dare not proceed."

Confessions: "The rule is: The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel." (Trigl., p. 467, § 15.)

"We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with (all) teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone." (Trigl., p. 777, § 1; cp. p. 851, § 1.)

3. We deny that the Reformation principle "consists of the two principles: the Scripture alone, faith alone, not one without the other, but both together, not one more stressed than the other, but both stressed alike as of equal value," that is, Scripture and faith coordinated and regarded as having equal value and power in the positing, testing, and interpretation of doctrine as to fact and quality.

4. We deny that "the only right way of explaining the Scripture is that which applies both principles of the Reformation, the Scripture alone, faith alone, equally and both as of equal importance."

Neither the Scriptures nor the Reformation fathers coordinate faith with the Scriptures, nor do they permit faith to be the cojudge of the fact and quality of doctrine.

5. We hold that the doctrine of justification by grace, through faith, is the central doctrine of saving truth and the touchstone and standard according to which man's subjective, personal faith is to be tested and judged and his interpretation or understanding of any doctrine is to be examined to ascertain whether or not both agree with the Gospel of grace.

6. The subjective, personal faith of a man, whether theologian or not, cannot be the source, standard, and cojudge of doctrine, inasmuch as Scripture alone in its doctrine of justification is the source and object of saving faith.

7. The Reformation principle *grace only* signifies that God's favor is bestowed freely on the sinner for Christ's sake.

8. The Reformation principle *faith only* signifies the means whereby the grace, or favor, of God becomes the sinner's own, to the total exclusion of man's efforts and works.

St. Paul: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast," Eph. 2: 8, 9.

9. Scripture alone is the source of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," Rom. 10: 17.

10. Scripture is the object of faith; it precedes, reveals, determines,

demands; faith follows, receives, and assents without question to, every doctrine posited by Scripture; it apprehends God's Word and promise, God's mercy and forgiveness of sins, and Christ as the Redeemer and Mediator; it is effected, or wrought, guided and ruled, by the Word; it is a witness and gives testimony to the doctrines posited by Scripture.

11. The introduction of faith as a cojudge of doctrine is to elevate the "blissful experience of the living Christ," "pious self-consciousness," "Christian experience," "enlightened reason," and the "unanimous consent" of theologians or the Church to a position of authority over the Scriptures.

12. The introduction of faith as a coordinate principle with Scripture in determining the fact and quality of doctrine is to coordinate the effect with the cause. This is both unscriptural and illogical.

13. The interpretation of Scripture operating with Scripture as "one organic whole," general scope of Scripture, entirety of Scripture, "*das Schriftganze*," allied with 'the subjective faith of the theologian as a cojudge of doctrine, sets aside the *sedes doctrinae*, the clear Scripture-passages which treat of the particular doctrines, and destroys all certainty of doctrine.

Kliefoth (German theologian) terms the phrase "organic whole of Scripture," "*das Schriftganze*," "*eine unvollziehbare Phrase*," an unworkable and useless proposition.

14. The doctrines of Scripture are derived from the proof-passages (*sedes doctrinae*), that is, from the clear and unmistakable passages in which the particular doctrines are set forth, and not from the "entirety of Scripture" or the "general scope of Scripture" or the "organic whole of Scripture" (*vom "Schriftganzen"*).

The reading of a book to have its "organic whole" make a general impression on the mind is of little or no value, inasmuch as the result must be confusion; but concentration on the particular statements and doctrines brings clarity.

15. Doctrinal differences cannot be removed and unity attained by permitting the "one organic whole" of Scripture, together with subjective faith, to have its general effect, or make a general impression, on the mind and imagination of the theologian, but by determining the controversial point (*status controversiae*) and then placing it in the light of all clear Scripture-passages that treat of the particular doctrine or point in question.

16. The distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines has not the purpose of showing what doctrines may be dispensed from faith, inasmuch as all truths of Scripture are *facts* of doctrine and *articles* of faith, even if not of saving faith.

17. Fundamental doctrines are all those doctrines that a man must *know* and *believe* in order to be saved.

18. Non-fundamental doctrines are all those doctrines of which a man may be *ignorant* and yet have saving faith.

19. Non-fundamental doctrines, truths of Scripture, are neither open questions nor problems, inasmuch as Scripture does not leave them open to question nor declare them to be problems which are to be solved by the keen and inquiring mind of the theologian.

20. Unity cannot be attained by evading or forsaking the *sedes doctrinae*, the clear and unmistakable passages of Scripture which set forth the particular doctrines; by coordinating Scripture and faith in the positing of doctrine as to fact and quality; by viewing the Scripture, and operating with it, as "one organic whole"; by avoiding the discussion of the individual doctrines in dispute as of "minor importance," open questions, problems, and agreeing to disagree.

21. Unity cannot be brought about easily or be said to exist because all are Lutherans holding to Scripture and Confessions, sing the same hymns, use the same Catechism, take the same ordination vow, are Australian Lutherans, and have in common a truly Australian sentiment and outlook, inasmuch as Scripture doctrine is intended for *all nations*, and Scripture is not concerned with the ancestry, sentiment, outlook, and nationality of any man.

22. Unity can be attained only when pastors and congregations face the fact that serious doctrinal differences *do still exist*, and are willing and ready to discuss the basic principle of the interpretation of Scripture and the differences in the individual doctrines that separate them, to the exclusion of all unionism, before unity is attained.

23. We agree that the difference is not only "vital," but hold also that it is *divisive of church-fellowship*; and therefore we ask for the early resumption of doctrinal discussions on the individual points of difference, both of the "main," or "fundamental," and the "minor," or "non-fundamental," doctrines, that unity may be established.

24. We hold that friendly doctrinal discussions are possible; and we are not minded to enter into or countenance mutual recriminations in regard to past history, inasmuch as we are convinced that they will hold up, and may easily result in preventing, doctrinal discussions altogether. Complaints regarding past history may receive attention, if necessary, at a later stage or when unity in doctrine has been established.

25. It will be necessary, should the intersynodical committees agree in doctrine, that all pastors, conferences, committees, parishes, and congregations of both bodies signify agreement, act accordingly, and deal with those who obdurately oppose themselves to the truth.

26. *Confessions*: "From this our explanation, friends and enemies, and therefore every one, may clearly infer that 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. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors.

"But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity 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*, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ." (*Trigl.*, p. 1095, § 95.)

K.

U. L. C. A. Leaders and the Pittsburgh Agreement.—In the July, 1939, issue of the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* (U. L. C. A.) the widely held view that through the Pittsburgh Agreement the commission of the U. L. C. A. for closer relations with other Lutheran bodies accepted the position of the A. L. C. and of the Missouri Synod toward the Holy Scriptures, is shattered. This number of the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* makes it evident that in certain influential sections of the U. L. C. A. there is no intention to accept the doctrine of the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. Dr. H. Offermann, a member of the U. L. C. A. commission, in explaining why this commission drafted a declaration on the Word of God and the Scriptures to be presented to the Baltimore convention, states that the U. L. C. A. commission found the Missouri Synod position as outlined in the *Brief Statement* unacceptable, and he does not say that now, since the Pittsburgh Agreement has been adopted, the commission has changed its view. In addition, Prof. F. Nolde, of Mount Airy seminary, a colleague of Dr. Offermann, joining him in a symposium on the Baltimore Declaration, boldly sponsors destructive views of higher criticism. Speaking of the significance of the Baltimore Declaration for the educational program of the Church, he seeks to show, taking Gen. 1 as an object-lesson, how the narratives of the Holy Scriptures may be taught if one is guided by the Baltimore Declaration. Unblushingly he says: "Pupils may later discard the scientific import of the story." Concerning the child's reaction he says that it should be "not so much to specific and detailed facts but to the following values: a) God is the Creator, and the story in Genesis tells how people explained the way in which God had created the world." Besides he sponsors the oft-exploded view that in Gen. 1 and 2 we have two creation accounts. No wonder that Dr. Reu, drawing attention to some of these things in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* for September, declares: "Wie kann man hoffen, dass unsere Pittsburgh-Erklärung in unserem Sinn von den Vereinigten Lutherischen Kirchen angenommen wird, wenn Lehrer dieser Kirche schon die Baltimore-Deklaration behandeln, wie es hier geschieht?" A.

D. Neu über Unionismus. In der „Kirchlichen Zeitschrift“ vom Juni dieses Jahres hat Herr D. M. Neu einen längeren Aufsatz über Unionismus veröffentlicht, der treffliche Ausführungen über dieses wichtige Thema enthält. Der Aufsatz war ursprünglich als Vortrag für die intersynodale freie Konferenz, die am 8. Mai in Cedar Rapids tagte, geschrieben und wurde dort an jenem Datum gelesen. Der Vortrag wurde wiederholt auf der freien Konferenz zu Rochelle, Ill., am 28. August, und auf der zweiten freien Konferenz zu Cedar Rapids, die am 18. September stattfand, wurde er des längeren besprochen. Wir unterbreiten hier besonders wichtige Abschnitte, mit einigen Bemerkungen unsererseits.

„Melancthon hat, wenn nicht alles täuscht, für seine Person die Gegenwart des Leibes und Blutes Christi im Abendmahl bis an sein Lebensende festgehalten, trotzdem daß er bereit war, mit Calvin in einer Kirche zusammenzugehen. Das ist beim Unionismus häufig der Fall. Und gerade dies, daß man beim Eingehen einer Union doch seine eigene Überzeugung nicht aufzugeben braucht, sondern bloß neben dieser einen andern Raum ge-

wahren muß, wird gerne als Mittel gebraucht, um sowohl sein eigenes wie das Gewissen anderer zu stillen. Man erkennt dabei ein Doppeltes nicht: 1. daß man damit, daß man der entgegenstehenden Meinung ausdrücklich Raum gibt und ihr Berechtigung zugesteht, entweder der Schrift die Klarheit und Eindeutigkeit abspricht oder dem Irrtum neben der Wahrheit Existenzrecht zugesteht oder gegen das, was eigentlich biblische Wahrheit ist, wenigstens insofern gleichgültig ist, daß man auf ihrer absoluten Gültigkeit nicht mehr besteht; 2. erkennt man nicht, daß man mit dem Zugeständnis des Rechtes von zweierlei Meinung in einem Lehrstück eine schiefe Ebene betreten hat, die notwendig immer tiefer zieht und zu doktrinellem Gleichgültigkeit überhaupt führt, wie wir an der Preussischen Union das traurigste Beispiel haben. Doktrinellem Indifferentismus ist beides, die Wurzel des Unionismus wie sein Resultat. Wer die Absolutheit des Autoritätsanspruchs der Schrift und die Eindeutigkeit ihrer Aussagen in bezug auf alle Fundamentallehren theoretisch wie praktisch anerkennt, muß allem Unionismus gram sein."

"Gibt es eine dritte Form des Unionismus? Allerdings. Während es sich bei den beiden ersten Formen um Indifferenzierung der Lehrunterschiede zwischen der lutherischen und der reformierten Kirche handelt, kann eine ähnliche Indifferenzierung der biblischen Lehre in der lutherischen Kirche selber eintreten, die es denen, die es treu mit dem Bekenntnis meinen, nicht erlaubt, mit gewissen Teilen der lutherischen Kirche in Kirchengemeinschaft zu treten oder zu bleiben. Zwar bekennen sich alle Teile der lutherischen Kirche der Welt offiziell entweder zur ganzen Konfessio von 1580 oder doch zur Augsburgerischen Konfession und zu Luthers *kleinem Katechismus*, verpflichten auch so oder so ihre Pastoren und Professoren darauf. Aber jedermann weiß, daß man die Verpflichtung auf die symbolischen Bücher auch in den Zeiten des Rationalismus weithin aufrechterhalten hat — ist doch selbst Semler, der Vater der modernen Bibelkritik wie des Liberalismus in der Theologie überhaupt, für ihre offizielle Anerkennung eingetreten — und dabei doch nichts anderes mehr zu bieten gewußt hat als die Theologie und Religion des natürlichen Menschen. Darum ist das *Brief Statement* der Missouri-Synode ganz im Recht, wenn es sagt:

"The orthodox character of a Church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed but by the doctrine which is *actually* taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a Church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline."

"Das ist es, was uns trennt nicht nur von der neuen Deutsch-Evangelischen Reichskirche, die ja nach ihrer Konstitution so ausgesprochen uniert wie nur möglich ist und in der weiteren Entwicklung den Namen 'Kirche' überhaupt nicht mehr verdient; das trennte uns auch schon vor 1933 von den damals bestehenden 'lutherischen Landeskirchen'. Denn selbst in ihnen hatte der Grundsatz der Gleichberechtigung der Richtungen mehr oder weniger den Bekenntnisboden unterhölet, und Lehrzucht wurde nur krassem Auswüchsen des Liberalismus gegenüber geübt. Das trennt uns auch hierzulande von der Vereinigten Lutherischen Kirche. Man mag gerne zugestehen,

daß die Konstitution dieses Kirchenkörpers lutherisch ist; man mag anerkennen, daß es eine mannhafte Tat war, die Washington-Erklärung von 1920 durchzusetzen mit ihrer Anerkennung der Galesburg-Regel; man mag gerne annehmen, daß die in den Verhandlungen mit der Amerikanisch-Lutherischen Kirche, einschließlich des Satzes von der Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift, aufgestellten Sätze ehrlich und aufrichtig gemeint und nicht das Resultat politischer Klugheit sind; man mag sich von Herzen darüber freuen, daß nicht nur viele Laien, sondern auch gar manche Pastoren ihr Leben und Amt diesen Grundsätzen gemäß führen und tapfer gegen das unlutherische Wesen in ihrer eigenen Kirche unter manchmal sehr erschwerenden Umständen kämpfen. Es läßt sich doch die Tatsache nicht wegleugnen, daß offizielle Publikationen dem Modernismus starke Zugeständnisse gemacht haben, die den Grund einreißen; daß an manchen Seminarien Professoren lehren, die in vielen Punkten mit dem Bekenntnis der Kirche gebrochen haben; daß an manchen theologischen Anstalten eine Einführung in die Bekenntnisschriften der Kirche überhaupt unterbleibt; daß Kanzel- und Altargemeinschaft mit den Reformierten weithin ungestraft geübt wird und daß immer noch Hunderte von den Pastoren zu den Logen, besonders den Freimaurern, gehören und sogar solche Gemeinden von obenher unbelästigt bleiben, welche prinzipiell nur Freimaurer berufen. Wir sind nicht blind, sondern erkennen mit dankbarer Freude an, daß die Oberleitung der Kirche die wenigen ihr verfassungsmäßig zustehenden Mittel, diesen Zuständen ein Ende zu machen, nicht unbenützt läßt, und erbitten für sie ein Feststehen und Wachsen darin; aber zur Zeit bestehen diese Zustände nicht nur noch weithin, sondern es wird auch von den Synoden, die unmittelbar damit handeln sollten, vielfach gar nichts getan, und es fehlt selbst nicht an nicht geringen Streifen, die sich für den Fortbestand des traurigen status quo einsetzen und ihre eigene Indifferenz als rechte evangelische Freiheit preisen. Unter diesen Umständen Kirchengemeinschaft mit der Vereinigten Lutherischen Kirche aufzurichten wäre Unionismus, weil es nicht ohne Indifferentierung der Wahrheit geschehen könnte, und diese Indifferentierung ist eins der markantesten Kennzeichen des Unionismus.

„Doch manche von Ihnen warten schon lange darauf, daß ich endlich noch eine vierte Form des Unionismus nenne; denn sie meinen, Unionismus sei schon da vorhanden, da man mit einem kirchlich zusammengeht oder gar nur mit ihm betet, ohne doch in allen Lehrpunkten mit ihm übereinzustimmen. Die einen meinen, man müßte doch nicht bloß in der Lehre von der Sünde und Gnade, von Christi Person und Werk, von Glaube und Rechtfertigung, von Bekehrung und Prädestination und ähnlichen Zentralpunkten übereinstimmen, sondern auch in der Lehre vom Antichrist, von der Judenbekehrung, von der Auferstehung der Märtyrer, in dem Verständnis von Apok. 20 usw., und die andern fügen hinzu: im Verständnis der Schöpfungstage, in der Frage von der Schwagererei, von der Verlobung, in der Frage nach der Wirkung der Johannisstaufe, in der Abweisung der Beziehung von Joh. 6, 51 ff. auf das heilige Abendmahl, in der Frage nach der Veredlung des Zinsnehmens usw. Nur bei völliger Übereinstimmung in allen diesen Punkten könne man miteinander Kirchengemeinschaft aufzurichten, und nur bei solch völliger Übereinstimmung könne man auch miteinander beten; denn Gebetsgemeinschaft und Kirchengemeinschaft wären identisch.“

„Nun gestehe ich von vornherein zu, daß man allerdings von den genannten eschatologischen Punkten in einer Weise reden und lehren kann, wie sie in der Kirche nicht geduldet werden darf. Ich gestehe ferner gerne zu, daß man ein Zusammengehen trotz starker Differenzen in diesen Punkten in einer solchen Weise anstreben kann, die abgewiesen werden muß und meinetwegen als Unionismus bezeichnet werden kann. Dann nämlich, wenn es einem gleichgültig ist, was die Schrift eigentlich in bezug auf diese Dinge lehrt; denn Gleichgültigkeit gegen die Schrift ist immer sündhaft, selbst dann, wenn es sich um ganz untergeordnete Punkte handelt. Ich gestehe endlich zu, daß Gebetsgemeinschaft und Kirchengemeinschaft identisch sind, wenn es sich um das Gebet im öffentlichen Gottesdienst handelt, und selbst private Gebetsgemeinschaft kann dann unionistisch wirken, wenn der, mit dem ich bete, meine Gebetsgemeinschaft mit ihm als Zeichen völliger Übereinstimmung in der Lehre nimmt und ich ihn in dieser verkehrten Meinung lasse.

„Wo aber dieses Dreifache nicht statthat, lasse ich mir von keinem etwaiges kirchliches Zusammengehen trotz Mangels der Übereinstimmung in allen Punkten als Unionismus brandmarken. Das ist in der alten Zeit in der lutherischen Kirche nur einmal versucht worden, und selbst da nicht in bezug auf alle der obengenannten Punkte. Abraham Calov hat es versucht, als er 1655 seinen *Consensus Fidei Repetitus Verae Lutheranae* schrieb und 1664 veröffentlichte. Da hat er selbst den von der kirchlichen Gemeinschaft ausschließen wollen, der da nicht zugeben wollte, daß die alttestamentlichen Frommen dieselbe explizite Erkenntnis der göttlichen Dreieinigkeit besaßen haben, wie sie später im *Symbolum Athanasianum* gelehrt wurde. Aber es ist Calov nicht gelungen, und sein *Consensus* ward bald vergessen.

„Die Meinung, daß die, welche in Kirchengemeinschaft miteinander leben wollen, in allen Lehrpunkten übereinstimmen müßten, ruht auf einem verkehrten Verständnis von 1 Kor. 1, 10 und andern Schriftausagen. Sorgfältige Berücksichtigung des jeweiligen Zusammenhangs führt zu anderm Resultat.

„Jetzt bleibt bloß noch die Frage übrig, ob gelegentliches privates Beten mit Lutheranern, mit denen man nicht in Kirchengemeinschaft steht, oder mit Andersgläubigen Unionismus ist. Wenn Gebetsgemeinschaft so eng wie Kirchengemeinschaft ist, dann ist das natürlich der Fall. Aber sind beide wirklich identisch? Das anzunehmen ist für mich unmöglich, es werde denn besser aus der Schrift bewiesen als bisher. Das Gebet des Christen hat keine andere Voraussetzung als den Glauben, daß ich um Christi willen zu Gott als zu meinem Vater kommen darf, getrost und mit aller Zuversicht. Wo jemand diesen Glauben als seinen Glauben hat und bekennet, da ist das gemeinsame Band da, welches es mir erlaubt, mit ihm vor den gleichen Vater zu treten. Er ist damit ein Glied der *Una Sancta* geworden, die Gott der Herr unter allen erscheinenden Kirchen auf Erden hat, und zu der gehöre ich auch. Warum sollte ich dann nicht mit ihm zusammen beten dürfen? Gewiß, nicht im öffentlichen Gottesdienst — denn da wäre es Indifferentismus gegen das Bekenntnis der Gemeinde und möchte andere zu gleichem Indifferentismus verleiten oder ein Stein des Anstoßes werden —, aber in privatem Zusammensein unter besonderen Gelegenheiten. 1 Tim. 2, 5. 6; Eph. 2, 18—22; Eph. 4, 1—6 reden für mich deutlich genug. Im einzelnen

zu zeigen, daß die gewöhnlich für die gegenteilige Behauptung angeführten Schriftstellen (Matth. 5, 23. 24; 10, 32. 33; 18, 15—17; 18, 19; Luk. 9, 26; Joh. 8, 31. 32; Act. 2, 42; Gal. 5, 9; Eph. 4, 1—6; 1 Thess. 5, 22; Amos 3, 3) nicht beweiskräftig sind, dafür reicht die Zeit nicht aus.

„Wir leben in einer Zeit des Indifferentismus, in der alles zur Vereinigung der Kirchen treibt. Lassen wir uns davon nicht angesteckt werden. Verengern wir aber auch die Grenzen der Kirchengemeinschaft nicht über die Schrift hinaus. Seien wir auf der Hut gegen jeden wirklichen Unionismus, zersplittern wir aber auch unsere Kraft nicht dadurch, daß wir etwas als Unionismus hinstellen und beurteilen, was nicht wirklich Unionismus ist!“

Jeder konservative Lutheraner wird sich über die klare Verwerfung des Unionismus, die hier stattfindet, freuen. Allerdings können wir nicht mit allem stimmen. Was D. Neu über Gebetsgemeinschaft sagt, ruft unsern Dissensus hervor. Wie können nicht eine so weitgehende Unterzeichnung zwischen Gebet im öffentlichen Gottesdienst und bei privatem Zusammensein machen. Außerdem ist es unsere Überzeugung, daß die hier zur Rechtfertigung von Gebetsgemeinschaft mit Andersgläubigen angeführten Sprüche (1 Tim. 2, 5. 6 usw.) keine solche Rechtfertigung enthalten. Unsere Hauptbeweiskstellen gegen solche Gebetsgemeinschaft, wie Röm. 16, 17, sind hier nicht genannt. Wenn freilich die vom geehrten Verfasser niedergelegten Prinzipien befolgt werden, wird es nach unserer Meinung nicht viele Fälle von Gebetsgemeinschaft geben, wo unsere Praxis von der seinigen abweichen wird.

Der Satz „Wer die Absolutheit des Autoritätsanspruchs der Schrift und die Eindeutigkeit ihrer Aussagen in bezug auf alle Fundamentallehren theoretisch wie praktisch anerkennt, muß allem Unionismus gram sein“ erfordert eine kurze Bemerkung. Das Gesagte darf nicht beschränkt werden auf Fundamentallehren. Zu unserer Freude können wir mitteilen, daß bei der mündlichen Besprechung D. Neu erklärte, er wolle mit obigem Satz durchaus nicht die Verbindlichkeit der Nichtfundamentallehren leugnen.

In bezug auf die von D. Neu genannten Nichtfundamentallehren (siehe oben „Lehre vom Antichrist — Verechtigung des Zinsnehmens“) halten wir allerdings dafür, daß eine Abweichung darin von unserer Stellung nicht notwendigerweise Kirchentrennend ist, müssen aber hinzufügen, daß wir, da Gottes Wort über jene Punkte geredet hat, keinem das Recht zugestehen können, hierüber irgendeine beliebige Meinung zu hegen.

Schließlich ein Wort über den Satz: „Die Meinung, daß die, welche in Kirchengemeinschaft miteinander leben wollen, in allen Lehrpunkten übereinstimmen müßten, ruht auf einem verkehrten Verständnis von 1 Kor. 1, 10 und andern Schriftausagen.“ Dieser Ausspruch könnte mißverstanden werden; denn Gott fordert unbedingt Übereinstimmung in allen Lehrpunkten. Damit ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß man mit den Schwachen Gebuld haben muß.