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The Reunion of Christendom

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The Reunion of Christendom

Unionism is the order of the day. In an address delivered at Valparaiso on Sept. 23, 1942, Dr. J. W. Behnken declared: "The things which are happening on earth in these days are not merely rocking the very foundation of our vaunted twentieth-century civilization, but are also causing dreadful difficulties for the Church. But far worse than this havoc is the alarming indifference to the Word of God as it manifests itself in the mighty movements to unite all churches professing the Christian name into one large body. Within very recent months some very ominous statements have been made belittling doctrinal cleavage between the different denominations as mere 'petty differences.' Here are a few: 'Ancient creeds and hoary practices divide us as Christ's followers into exclusive groups.' 'Modern scholarship has shot the old convictions full of holes.' 'Smash down the walls.' 'Our little sects have had their day and must cease to be.' Unionism is the order of the day. Like a mighty devastating flood tide it is rising to work havoc among the churches. . . . It is my honest conviction that we must again be ready to defend soundness of doctrine. The next major controversy in our Lutheran Church of America apparently will be on the question of unionism."

Unionism is the order of the day. The movement to bring about the reunion of Christendom by way of compromise is gaining in force. Most of the denominations surrounding us are working for it with might and main and are faulting the Lutherans for refusing to join the movement. We are in controversy with them not only because of their false doctrines but also, and increasingly so, because of their indifference to doctrine. And there are Lutheran churches and synods throughout the world who are marching with the unionistic hosts and are one with them in charging us with confessional isolationism. They say we are sinning. We say they are sinning. And the controversy on this point is assuming major proportions.

Who is right? If majorities count, the unionists have the better arguments. For they are gaining adherents right and left. The union movement is scoring one success after another. There are the various World Conferences and the World Council of Churches growing out of these conferences. Writing on "World Christianity," Dr. O. F. Nolde points out: "Over the last twenty years Christian churches throughout the world have been drawn more closely together. Representatives of church bodies have met in world conventions to study their common faith and to attack their common problems. . . . One evidence of the trend towards world Christianity is found in world conventions which have been called by separate denominations. The Lutheran World Convention at Copenhagen is cited as an illustration. . . . With two main exceptions, the World Conference on Church, Community, and State, Oxford, 1937, included representatives from all the Christian groups of the world. . . . The World Conference on Faith and order was held at Edinburgh from August 3 to 18, 1937. At their separate sessions a resolution to establish the World Council of Churches was adopted." (*Christian World Action*, p. 43 ff.) The Declaration of Edinburgh sounds a jubilant note. It begins with the statement: "The total number of active unity movements is impressive." It goes on: "With deep thankfulness to God for the spirit of unity which by His gracious blessing upon us has guided and controlled all our discussions on this subject, we recognize that there is no ground for maintaining division between churches. The Conference approved the following statement *nemine contradicente*: 'We are one in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . He makes us one in spite of our divisions.'" (See *Christendom*, 1937, Autumn, p. 660 ff.)

The World Council of Churches has "been defined by those who drafted the constitution as a 'fellowship' or *koinonia* of churches. . . . Its unity cannot consist in a full *consensus de doctrina*, that is, in a fundamental agreement about the common faith, but it can consist in the common prayer that the church of Jesus Christ may be more truly revealed in the world and in the common willingness to serve that church." (*Christendom*, 1939, Winter, p. 29.) "The first article of the proposed constitution reads: 'Basis: The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior.'" (*The Lutheran*, May 8, 1940.) There is a rush to enlist in this body. John R. Mott records "the remarkable fact that already . . . between seventy and eighty communions in twenty-seven different countries have, through their ecclesiastical bodies, voted to identify themselves with it. So far as Canada and the United States are concerned, all but a very few of the larger denominations, as

well as a number of smaller ones, have acted favorably. We are not without hope that, even in the exceptional cases, further negotiations will open the way for them." (*Christendom*, 1941, Autumn, p. 530.) The U. L. C. A. has joined, and following President Bersell's recommendation: "I refer also to the proposal that the Augustana Synod become a member of the World Council. In my opinion this should be done. Our Synod would thereby be setting a praiseworthy example for other Lutheran bodies, and we should be rendering a service to the cause of Christendom that is trying to find a common point of contact and co-operation in a world that needs a united Christian testimony, such as this Council will provide," the Augustana Synod joined in 1940. (*The Lutheran Companion*, June 13, 1940.)

While this global union is in process of formation, unions on a smaller scale are being contemplated or consummated. The U. L. C. A., it seems, is negotiating with other Protestant bodies. We read in *The Lutheran* of Dec. 30, 1942: "1942 had its points in the U. L. C. A. . . . Significant steps toward fuller fellowship with Lutherans of other bodies and with other Protestant communions were taken." We are not fully informed on how far these negotiations with certain Reformed churches have progressed.

Then there is the merger of the Evangelical Church and the United Brethren. *The Lutheran* of Dec. 16, 1942, reports: "As another indication of the spreading fervor for union, the General Conference of the Evangelical Church recently voted in favor of union with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ." *The Christian Century*, too (Oct. 28, 1942), hails this merger as a glorious achievement. It sees therein a promise of greater things to come. "*Long Stride Toward Reunion*. The reunion of Christendom within the fellowship of one church of Christ may still be a 'far-off, divine event,' but recent weeks have provided further evidence that it is nevertheless an event toward which the whole church is moving. . . . The action of the thirty-third General Conference of the Evangelical Church is significant as one of the first fruits of the current rediscovery of the ecumenical nature of the Christian Church. The Evangelical Church takes legitimate pride in the fact that it was the first of the world's churches to identify itself with the World Council of Churches, still in process of formation, and that it has been a member of the Federal Council of Churches since that organization was set up a generation ago. Its present move to lose itself in the larger unity of Protestantism is proof that its membership in both councils is more than a formal gesture or even a generous but transient impulse. It rightly sees the resurgence of pagan philosophies and the rise of forces which threaten the survival of the church as a call to men of good will

to close the scattered ranks of Christians and to strengthen their unity."—"It is not unlikely that they" (the Evangelical-United Brethren group) "may ultimately join with the Methodist Church, a merger of the Northern and the Southern Methodist Episcopal Churches and the Protestant Methodist Church." (CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1943 p. 63.)

Next, the Evangelical Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Church are merging. The Evangelical Reformed Church came into being through the union of the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church in the United States. (German Reformed Church.) *The Christian Herald* of August, 1940, voiced the delight of the unitists over this consummation in these words: "Joined: In the year of Our Lord 1529, in Marburg, Germany, two men sat debating the question of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper; one was Ulrich Zwingli, and the other was Martin Luther. Agreeing on several other disputed points, they just couldn't agree on 'The-Body-in-the-Supper.' Result: two churches were then formed instead of one.—In the year of Our Lord 1940, in Lancaster, Pa., delegates of the Evangelical Synod met with delegates of the Reformed Church and consummated the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the churches born of the Zwingli-Luther debate.—Those who don't like churches will remind us that it took those two four hundred years to get together; and those less caustic will remind us that it took the U. S. branches of these churches six years to work out the details. But what of that? The churches have plenty of time! What they should remember is that these two great communions are joining on a broad common base of mutual respect and confidence and that the judicial commission appointed to adjudicate any difficulties that might arise never held a single meeting." What a contrast, they say, between the narrow-minded and stubborn Luther and the broad-minded and great-hearted men of the age of unionism!¹⁾—*The Christian Herald* may soon

1) How the times have changed and the men of the times! Marburg 1529 and Marburg 1929! Charles S. Macfarland: "In 1929 a large number of Lutherans met with representative leaders of the Reformed and other churches at historic Marburg, in recognition of the four hundredth anniversary of the colloquy between Luther and Zwingli. It is of significance to note that an event which symbolized division was celebrated by a fraternal assembly at which the spirit of fellowship was so strong that a Lutheran went so far as to propose reunion of the Lutheran and Reformed churches." (*Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, p. 123.) The thing was hopeless four hundred years ago; now men of a different stamp are at the helm!—*The Friedensbote*, organ of the Evangelical Synod, carried an article on this point entitled "Zur Gedenkfeier des Marburger Religionsgesprächs 1529—1929," on which CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1930, p. 63, commented thus: "Es ist merkwuerdig, was diesem Herrn fuer Gedanken gekommen sind, als er seinen Geist

be in a position to publish another notice: "Joined, the Evangelical Reformed and the Congregational Christian churches." The Congregational Christian Church is itself the result of a merger and the unitists are naturally elated over the prospect of having four churches joining hands and over the wholesome influence such a consummation will exert. *The Christian Century* of Oct. 24, 1942, expresses its gratification in an article headed "Church Union in the Making," in which it declares: "It is a significant and heartening fact that these two churches which have had a taste of union want more of it! They are not content to be merely *united churches*, but wish to be *uniting churches*. The impulse for unity, once it has been released in action, tends to take the form of a mission, with the Holy Spirit (which is the Spirit of unity) increasingly in charge. And the Holy Spirit sets no limits to unity either in depth or in breadth. . . . To bring together two churches representing the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental streams of Protestantism will be an event of major significance in American church history. Naturally, there are problems in connection with such a union. But the joint commission discovered at its first meeting that these problems are not radical or substantial. There exists on both sides a spirit of Christian churchmanship which promises that their union would not be in any sense artificial. In the matter of 'faith,' or creed, the two groups are of one mind in not imposing any *lex fidei* (law of faith) upon their members, but, cultivating the Protestant tradition of their forbears, both groups insist upon the liberty of conscience in apprehending the revelation of God as it is testified to in the Scriptures. The 'Evangelical' branch of the Evangelical Reformed Church has always been in full accord with the motto made popular in the 'Reformed' branch of that church by its most famous theologian, Professor Philip Schaff: 'In essentials, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity.' This motto also describes the spirit of the Congregational Christian group throughout the history of both of its component parts. . . . The plan provides for union under the name, 'The United Church of America.' . . . The eyes of all Protestantism will watch the development of this

nach dem Marburg von 1529 wandern liess. 'Mancherlei Gaben und ein Geist' — an dieses Apostelwort knuepft er zunaechst den Seufzer, Gott wolle 'die Menschheit vor der Gleichmacherei, der Schablone, der nivelierenden Walze eines internationalen Einerlei bewahren, das am liebsten ein Menschen- (Rassen-, Glaubens-)Exemplar zuschneiden und nach diesem Bild dann alles zuschneiden wuerde.' Er freut sich dann, dass Christus 'das Geheimnis und die Kraft seines Geistes nicht in einer glatt gepraegten [Kirchen-]Sprache beschlossen hat.' . . . Worauf der Schreiber hinauswill, das ist der Lieblingsgrundsatz aller Unionisten, naemlich dass auf die Einheit in der Lehre nicht so viel ankommt, solange nur alle von ein und demselben Geist erfuellt sind."

rapprochement as they are watching that of the Episcopalians and Presbyterians. These two movements constitute the most significant projects in contemporary American Christianity in the realm of concrete Christian unity. . . . Its success will open the way for other bodies to release in similar action the impulse to unity which is one of the indisputable signs of renewed vitality shared by the entire modern church." — Comment of CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1943, p. 63: "It seems that these four churches are related in so far as they are all more or less indifferent over against a doctrinal position. . . . It seems that the only point on which they really are agreed is their indifference over against doctrine" [no *lex doctrinae!*], "in other words, their unionistic principle."

The unionists among the Episcopalians are working hard to bring about a union with the Presbyterians. They are hoping, too, that "recent conversations looking to reunion with the Methodist Church may lead to that end." They are also negotiating with some Lutherans.

The doings at Cleveland in December, 1942, raised the expectations of the unitists to a still higher pitch. It was the birth of what may become known as "The North American Council of Churches of Christ." If the present plans materialize, this new body will supersede "The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America." *The Christian Century*, Dec. 23, 1942, reports: "Cleveland, Dec. 11. More than 1,000 representative leaders of American Protestantism today adjourned after a week-long series of conferences which will probably result in the most important advance in Protestant co-operation in the history of American churches. Meeting together with the Federal Council of Churches at the time of its 1942 biennial session were the Foreign Missions Conference, the International Council of Religious Education, the Home Missions Council, the United Council of Church Women, the Missionary Education Movement, the United Stewardship Council, and the Council of Church Boards of Education. At the end of the week these previously separate organizations emerged with the 'North American Council of Churches of Christ' in process of formation. If the process now begun develops as expected, by 1945 or soon afterward the major functions of the churches of America will have been for the first time united in effective co-operation. . . . When they reached this decision, the delegates were so moved that they spontaneously sang a hymn of praise to God." *The Lutheran* of Dec. 30, 1942, discusses the event under the heading "American Co-operative Christianity" and gives the preamble of the proposed constitution: "In the providence of God, the time has come when it seems fitting more fully to manifest the essential oneness of the Christian churches of North America in Jesus Christ as their divine Lord and Savior, by the creation of

an inclusive co-operative agency to continue and extend the following [eight] agencies of the churches." *The Presbyterian* of Dec. 10, 1942, does not feel that the move to unite these agencies means much of an advance. "To a large extent, the personnel of these various organizations is overlapping. Some individuals are on so many boards that it is hard for them to remember which meeting they are attending. Probably twenty individuals by getting together could absolutely determine the action that every one of these different groups would take in any given situation. There is very much of an interlocking directory existing." The sponsors of this movement, however, see in it a great step forward in their cause of the "reunion of Christendom," and they are right about that. *The Christian Century* of Dec. 30, 1942, gives expression to its expectations and hope in the editorial "*Unitive Protestantism.*" "A few years ago Professor John T. McNeill wrote a book entitled *Unitive Protestantism*, in which he brought to light the ideas and impulses toward unity which he was able to trace in the Protestant movement from the Reformation down to our day. Despite the much stronger tendency toward sectarianism, Dr. McNeill found, to the grateful surprise of his readers, that there has always been in the Protestant conscience a genuine but ineffective protest against this fissiparous tendency and a recognition of the divine imperative of Christian unity. This latent yearning for a united expression of the Christian fellowship has in our time been quickened with fresh vitality. Sectarianism has been put on the defensive. Sectarian thinking and planning are being displaced by ecumenical thinking and planning. New evidence of the vigor of this spiritual urge which has inhered in Protestantism from the beginning was given at Cleveland this month. . . . The important thing for the reader to grasp is that the meeting was characterized by a profound desire for unity."²⁾

2) It may interest the reader to hear how a layman describes this movement and what great things he expects of it. *The Grand Rapids Herald* of Dec. 28, 1942, carried this story: "*60 Denominations End Competition in Merger.* It's a merger, to put it simply. It's something that probably would have brought fright and Sunday indigestion to the dear old stiffnecks of the 90's. The Presbyterians who thought the Episcopalians a bit flighty. The Baptists who thought the Congregationalists were getting their religion the easy way. And so on. . . . The move was a merger in only one sense. Perhaps the most important sense. It's a merger of work. . . . There has been talk of this merger for years. But it came to little until the churches saw they must close ranks swiftly to combat the poison of Fascism and dictatorship. Actually the first suggestion was made 100 years ago by an almost forgotten Lutheran, Samuel Schmucker, who lived in Gettysburg, Pa. But quite obviously he was a hundred years too soon. . . . A survey in 1920 led to the discovery that there were too many churches in some towns. Some towns supported five incompetent ministers and five weak churches, when they would have fared better with two well-educated parsons and two financially strong churches. So this was spread about. Church people talked.

H. P. Douglass' book *A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, 1927—1936*, gives "a survey of over sixty specific cases in which unity between two or more of the divided churches of Christendom was discussed, attempted or achieved." Henry P. Van Dusen's report: "Throughout the past fifteen years individual Christian communions or national churches have been approaching each other and exploring possibilities for full organic unions. Moreover, these dignified, grave, and open flirtations have eventuated in a remarkable crop of consummated marriages. Some of these might be regarded as marriages of cousins. But others embraced churches of very different clans, as in the United Church of Canada, which joins representatives of each of the three main Protestant types—Methodist, Presbyterians, and Congregational. Indeed, contrary to every law of logic and normal anticipation, more than half of both courtships and marriages took place between so-called 'unrelated' types of churches, less than half between those with historic family affinities." The report closes with the observation: "The progress achieved is likely to surprise the most skeptical. It may be summarized in this fact already indicated: *If either of two proposed unions which are now under promising negotiations should achieve consummation* (either the South India Scheme or the union of American Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches), *every principal church of non-Roman Christendom would be, directly or indirectly, in relations of full organic union or of mutual recognition with every other.*" (*Christendom*, 1943, Winter, p. 87 ff.) Roman Christendom is still holding out, but, says the *Report of the Edinburgh World Conference, 1937*, while "no union has been consummated between a church of radically 'catholic' and one of radically 'evangelical' tradition . . . the trend towards unity is nevertheless marked both in magnitude and in character. It is widespread throughout the world. It occurs in a wide variety of forms. It is vital, relevant to actual situations. It is making increasing appeal to the heart and conscience of all Christian men."

The unionists have won great successes and are looking for further conquests. *The Christian Century* issued this bulletin on Jan. 13, 1943: "The 1941 religious census of Manitoba shows that even after the first strong impulse provided by the merger of 1925 had worn away, the United Church of Canada continued to grow with unusual vigor. . . . That can mean only one thing. It is that the urge to unite into one body the former Methodist, Presbyterian,

. . . The climax came with the church men and women who have just met in Cleveland. It came so swiftly, finally, because the challenge of Fascism is so utterly basic that now, they contend, there can be no difference between Protestant, Jew, or Catholic in the stand they take." Etc. Etc.

and Congregational churches was not a transient notion, quickly forgotten when satisfied. Instead it was a great upsurge of the vital force of Canadian Christianity, tensing itself against the confinements of a too narrow denominationalism and struggling to free itself for the fulfillment of its high mission. Now it has attained this freedom and has had nearly two decades to demonstrate its validity and its power. . . . The groups which might have come into the union but refused to do so have declined in numbers. *Is it too much to hope that sectarianism will read the handwriting on a Manitoba wall?*" The unionists are very hopeful and are publishing figures to show that the forces opposing them are dwindling. Dr. H. P. Douglass, editor of *Christendom*, in a report of "Church Unity Movements in the United States," gave the result of a ballot: 16,355 voted on Church Union, two thirds voting for a federal or general union, one third against. The Reformed were found the most willing to associate with other denominations, and the Missouri Lutherans the least willing. (See *The Lutheran Companion*, Aug. 11, 1934.) Professor William Adams Brown describes the situation thus: "One of the most powerful motives which leads to the desire for Reunion in a country like Great Britain is lacking in American Christianity. I mean the desire for intercommunion and mutual recognition. *For the great majority of American Protestants this mutual recognition already exists.* The Presbyterian who moves to a community where there is no Presbyterian church would be welcomed to the communion by his Methodist or Congregational brothers. The same would be true of the *great majority of the Lutherans*" [our italics] "and an increasing number of Baptists. . . . It is not meant, of course, that all American Christians are of this broad and catholic type. The American Churches have their full share of convinced sectarians, men who insist that Christianity stands or falls with the supremacy of their particular type of creed or worship. But for the most part these uncompromising Christians are found within the denominations as members of a party or school of thought. In a few cases, as in that of the Southern Baptists and the Lutherans of the Missouri Synod, they are strong enough to control the policy of the denomination and have hitherto kept it from participating in any movement looking towards co-operation or unity. But with these exceptions they are a minority in each of the great communions and were, therefore, not largely represented among the delegation that went to Lausanne." (From an Essay in *The Reunion of Christendom*, edited by Sir James Marchant, p. 240 f.)³⁾ There are, to be sure, others among the Lu-

3) See the article "The Lutherans at Lausanne" in *Theological Monthly*, 1927, p. 353 ff.

therans besides the Missourians and others among the Reformed besides the Southern Baptists who are opposed to an ungodly, dishonest church union, but these men form a very small minority; and they may be losing ground as far as numbers are concerned. Another observer notes in *The Reunion of Christendom*, (p. 211): "The most striking religious development of the present time is the growth of the desire for Christian Reunion. There has been a great change of feeling in this matter in the past thirty years." We are losing ground, as far as numbers are concerned. The spirit of the times is against us. "The contemporary *Zeitgeist* of Christendom is characterized by this passion for unity." (*Review and Expositor*, Oct. 1939, p. 409.) Unionism is in the air, and the unionists are counting on that to break down our opposition. They are very hopeful. "Church union seems to be inevitable in America in the not too distant future. . . . From the nascent World Council of Churches down to the individual pastor and layman, church union is 'in the air.' Ministers talk about it; denominational leaders advocate it; laymen want it. On his most recent return to this country E. Stanley Jones brought great audiences to the edge of their seats applauding when he proposed the formation of 'United Churches of Christ in America'. . . . The laymen will rise up, the forces of the church will feel their united strength, the church will go out with a new sense of mission when we form some such organization as 'The International Council of the Churches of Christ in America!'" (*The Christian Century*, May 1, 1940.)

The question, then, that confronts us is: Shall we join the unionistic drive? It is an important question. In the foreword of *Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, Dr. Walther declared: "Mit Recht nennen die Englichen die Unionsfrage die 'Age-Question.' Denn in der Tat ist die Frage, welche unsere Zeit auf dem Gebiete der Kirche jetzt vor allem bewegt, keine andere als diese."⁴⁾ This question of the present age is pressing for an answer. We must take a definite stand. It is our Christian duty to fight against the unionistic propaganda and its specious arguments, to warn our people and ourselves against any sinful, ungodly union. And it is equally our

4) "War frueher die brennende Hauptfrage in der Kirche: Wo ist die Wahrheit? Wo ist die rechte Kirche? so ist man hingegen nun des Streitens hierueber muede und erklaert den Anspruch jeder Kirche, die Wahrheit zu haben und die wahre Kirche zu sein, a priori fuer sektiererisches Wesen. . . . Alle, welche das Christentum wieder fuer eine Religion uebernaturlicher Offenbarung anerkennen, sollen sich vereinigen, wenn auch nicht zu Einer kirchlichen Koerperschaft, doch zu Einer grossen evangelischen Allianz gegeneuber den sich mehr und mehr zusammenschliessenden Maechten des Unglaubens. Dieser Geist der Union zeigt sich nicht etwa nur innerhalb der sich uniert nennenden, sondern in allen sogenannten protestantischen Kirchen, selbst in der lutherischen, und zwar in dieser auch in unserem lieben Amerika."

Christian duty to prepare the way for a Christian reunion of Christendom, to work for union on the Scriptural plan.

So we shall deal first with the unionistic propaganda and examine some of the arguments by which the unionists would justify their drive to establish fraternal relations between churches which are not one in doctrine. One of their chief arguments is that full agreement in doctrine is not necessary for church union. They insist on the principle: *In necessariis unitas, in non-necessariis libertas, in utrisque caritas*. That is to say, there is a certain area in the Christian doctrine where liberty rules, where divergent teachings on the same matter are permissible, where unity of faith is not required. The unionistic propaganda makes much of this principle. The Moravian Church has placed itself squarely on the platform: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." (See *Popular Symbolics*, p. 278.) The *Episcopal Recorder* (Reformed Episcopal Church) carries on its masthead: "In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in All Things, Charity." The *Christian Century*, we have seen, commends the Evangelical Reformed and the Congregational Christian Churches for applying this principle, popularized by the famous Reformed theologian Ph. Schaff, consistently upheld by the Congregationalists. No *lex fidei!* Schaff writes: "It was during the fiercest dogmatic controversies and the horrors of the Thirty Years' War that a prophetic voice whispered to future generations the watchword of Christian peacemakers, which was unheeded in a century of intolerance and forgotten in a century of indifference, but resounds with increased force in a century of revival and reunion: In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity. This famous motto of Christian irenics appears for the first time in Germany A. D. 1627 and 1628. The author of the tract containing it is an orthodox Lutheran, Rupertus Meldenius" (*History of the Christian Church*, VI, p. 650. See Meusel, *Kirch. Handlexikon*, s. v. Meldenius). The Congregationalist R. W. Dale expressed it thus: "We should not rigorously insist on the acceptance either of the subordinate details of our creed or of the scientific forms in which we are accustomed to state even its regal and central articles. It would be treason to truth to trifle with the immortal substance of the Gospel of Christ; it would be treason to charity to refuse as brethren those who may differ from us about the theological forms in which the substance of the Gospel may be best expressed." (See Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 556.) John Dury of Edinburgh, pastor of a Scotch congregation in Elbing, Germany (died 1680 at Cassel), agitated for this principle: Agreement in the essentials is sufficient, and the differences should be tolerated until the Lord give further enlightenment. (See Guer-

icke, *Kirchengeschichte*, III, p. 426.) It goes back to Marburg. There Zwingli uttered the same sentiments. "Let us confess our union in all things in which we agree; and as for the rest, let us remember that we are brethren. There will never be peace in the churches if we cannot bear differences in secondary points." (Schaff, *op. cit.*, p. 645.) "Und weil wir," said Zwingli, "in diesem Hauptpunkt (von der geistlichen Niessung) einig sind, so bitte ich um der Liebe Christi willen, dass Ihr um jenes Unterschiedes willen niemand mit dem Verbrechen der Ketzerei beladet." (See Walther Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, p. 14.) Landgrave Philip agreed with Zwingli: "Ich halte Luther's Hauptlehre, die Seligkeit betreffend, fuer recht, lasse aber dessen Nebenbuecher auf sich beruhen." And the present-day unionists, too, agree with Zwingli. Quoting Zwingli: "There will never be peace between the churches if, while we maintain the grand doctrine of salvation by faith, we cannot differ on secondary points," D'Aubigne declares: "Such is, in fact, the true principle of Christian union. The sixteenth century was still too deeply sunk in scholasticism to understand this: let us hope that the nineteenth century will comprehend it better." (*History of the Great Reformation*, IV, p. 76.) There must be unity on the essentials, salvation by faith; on secondary, non-essential points, such as the Real Presence, there must be liberty.

"Non-essentials," "secondary points," "subordinate details"—there are other terms used to express the same idea. Edwin Lewis: We should distinguish between what is "central, continuous, indispensable," and what is "peripheral and evanescent"; all is well "if only the substance of the Christian faith is retained." (*The Faith We Declare*, pp. 214, 164.) The Joint Committee for Conferences of the Protestant Episcopal Church, reporting progress toward a better understanding between Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans with a view toward ultimate union, stated that while *minor differences* were found to exist, there was a general agreement on the *basic principles* involved. (See CONC. THEOL. MTHLY., 1935, p. 619.) The National Church planned by E. S. Jones would confess "Christ, the Son of the living God," and that, says Dr. Jones, "is sufficiently definite to hold us to the essentials and sufficiently indefinite to give freedom for *marginal differences*." The Continuance Committee of the Lausanne Conference finds that "if the churches agree in holding the *essentials* of the Christian faith, such differences—differences of emphasis and expression—would form no barrier to union." (See Macfarland, *op. cit.*, p. 165.) And on page 48 Macfarland, General Secretary Emeritus of the Federal Council, states: "Thus gradually the several denominations in the United States have advanced toward

unity, stage by stage. . . . There was a growing sense of freedom, an absence of abstract reasoning, much practice in prayer. These men accepted and assumed each other's faith in the *fundamental verities* of the Gospel and one another's experience of life in Christ." Dr. S. Parkes Cadman called, while president of the Federal Council, for a fifty-year armistice among the churches: "I would be glad to see a holiday given to all theological speculation for fifty years," and declared: "I plead for union upon an irreducible minimum of faith and propose certain *neutral zones* for difference of opinion in theological thought." (See *Lutheran Church Herald*, Nov. 29, 1927. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1934, p. 258.) The Lord Bishop of Winchester, Dr. E. T. Woods, wants us to hold to the fundamental articles but allow latitude in secondary, non-fundamental matters, wants the Christians "united in one organism, holding a common faith, free to worship in each other's churches, *united in the fundamentals*, but allowing, and gladly allowing, very wide divergencies in *secondary matters*, but presenting an unbroken front to the paganism of our day." (Marchant, *The Reunion of Christendom*, p. 108.) At the Malines Conversations "an attempt to draw an abstract distinction 'between *fundamental and non-fundamental* articles' was turned down by the Roman Catholics, while one of the Anglicans was of the opinion that the duty of the Conference 'was to bring increasingly to light all that may promote the cause of union, but to set aside or postpone all that would put difficulties in the way.'" (*The Reunion*, p. 173.) Dr. Ralph H. Long is absolutely right when he declares: "This—making the Lutheran Church of America stronger spiritually than it now is—cannot be done by deviating from the truth of God's Word, but rather will be accomplished by a more faithful adherence to the eternal truth. . . . There must be no letdown in our adherence to the Scriptures . . . no compromising of the truth." It is not well that he added: "There must be no compromise on the *fundamental* doctrines of our faith." (See *Journal of Theol. of the A. L. Conf.*, Jan., 1943, p. 142.)

In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty—does "this watchword of Christian peacemakers" mean that a certain kind and a certain number of the articles of the Christian religion are not binding on the Christian people? That the Church has the right either to accept or reject certain teachings of Scripture? That a denomination may, without prejudice to its good standing, deny one or two doctrines of the Bible? That, for instance, the doctrine of the Real Presence is presented in Scripture as a matter of indifference? The words "in non-essentials liberty" seem to indicate that. And the unionists are at pains to inform us that that is precisely the meaning of their watchword. Dr. H. M.

Woods tells us: "Protestant unity is clearly taught in Holy Scripture and is a part of that precious 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made His people free' (Gal. 5:1). This liberty consists of oneness in essentials and a reasonable latitude in non-essentials" (See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, XIII, p. 785.) And Harris Franklin Rall speaks in the same wise: "One of the great tasks today is to work for larger Christian unity. . . . Whatever form the coming unity will take, it must leave room for the first demand of religion, that a man shall be true to himself and to the light he receives. It must be a unity within which there is liberty." (*A Faith for Today*, p. 243 f.)

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty" means that the Church should establish "a unity within which there is liberty." And it is along these lines that we are asked to work towards the reunion of Christendom. We cannot do so. We cannot find any warrant in Holy Scripture for this plan of union. It is, indeed, presented to us and paraded before the Church as the only proper one. The unionists have clothed it with divine authority. They believe in it as an axiom founded on eternal truth. They will not permit men to gainsay it. They operate with it as having all the force of a proof-text. But there is no text in Scripture to support it. Scripture, indeed, tells us that certain things are left to our liberty. But there is no text that extends this liberty to the articles of the Christian faith. Scripture, indeed, admonishes us to deal kindly and patiently with the weak brethren who have stumbled into doctrinal errors, but there is no text that admonishes us to treat errors in non-essentials as unessential, fit to be tolerated in the Church. On the contrary, Scripture invests every teaching of Scripture with divine sanctity and puts all and any false teaching under the ban. There is Christ's word: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:20.) You cannot find room here for excepting the so-called non-essentials. There is Paul's word: "If any teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3). Will any man dare to say that the "non-essentials" do not belong to "wholesome words"? There is Rom. 16:17: "Contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." Do the "non-essentials" not belong to the doctrine which you have learned from Scripture? There is 2 John 9 and 10: "If any bring not this doctrine, the doctrine of Christ." No room here for exceptions! And the Christians are bidden "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), for the whole faith, for all the articles, be they principal or "secondary" points, be they of major or of minor importance; if a man permits any article of the faith once delivered unto the saints

to be treated as indifferent, as "free," he is a traitor. Luther would not subscribe to the article: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty." He said: "The doctrine is not ours, but God's, whose ministers only we are called; therefore we may not change or diminish one tittle thereof. . . . We protest that we desire nothing more than to be at unity with all men: so that they leave unto us the doctrine of faith, *entire and uncorrupt*. . . . We are bound to keep *all the articles* of the Christian doctrine, great ones and *small ones* (we do not, in fact, consider anyone of them small) pure and certain. We consider this of great importance. And it is very necessary." (On Gal. 5:9, 10. IX, pp. 644—649.)

Which of the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Church would you consider immaterial and indifferent, of such a nature that the other churches would be free to reject it in whole or in part? Dr. M. Loy, of the old Ohio Synod, took the same position as Luther. "We are constrained to stand aloof from all church unions founded on any other basis than that of the truth revealed in God's Word and confessed in our symbols, and from all movements and demonstrations of a unionistic character, participating in which would imply the admission that the distinctive doctrines of the Ev. Lutheran Church are no part of the faith once delivered to the saints, but are merely human opinions and therefore have no divine right in Christendom. We heartily desire the union of Christians and of churches, but can see neither fidelity nor expediency in a pretense of union where there is no agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. The only Scriptural way to labor for union is to labor for unity in the faith and agreement in its confession. That is divinely required and therefore essential." (*Distinctive Doctrines and Usages*, p. 15 f.) Dr. R. Lenski takes the same position: "Paul's injunction is to keep away from believers who are errorists and teach falsely. Not only the exact duplicates of the errorists of Paul's day are to be shunned, as though no new ones could arise, as though new ones do not divide, tear, and set traps, as though all errorists new and old, *great and small*, are not related, all in the same class; but according to Paul himself (Rom. 15:4), '*whatever things were written before, for our instruction were they written,*' to be fully applied, not *devalitized, evaded*. Give up the effort to make Paul even a mild unionist." (*Interpretation of Romans*, p. 918.) Dr. H. Offermann (Philadelphia Seminary, U. L. C.) wrote many years ago: "Kirchlichè Gemeinschaft ist wesentlich Bekenntnisgemeinschaft; sie setzt voraus, dass die betreffenden Synoden *in allen Stuecken* der Lehre und Praxis voellig miteinander uebereinstimmen. Dem 'Zionsboten' (General Synod) ist namentlich der zweite Teil dieses Satzes ein Dorn im

Auge. . . . Seine ganze Beweisfuehrung laesst sich doch nur vom Standpunkte eines verschwommenen Unionismus verstehen, der prinzipiell fuer die Gleichberechtigung aller Richtungen eintritt. Gewiss, man unterschreibt [in der Generalsynode] die Augsbургische Konfession. Es bleibt aber dem Belieben jedes Einzelnen ueberlassen, *wieviel oder wie wenig* er schliesslich fuer seine Person von ihr annehmen will. . . . Der 'Zionsbote' koennte seiner Synode einen wirklichen Dienst leisten, wenn er gegen jeden Unfug im eigenen Lager, gegen jede Religionsmengerei, gegen alle ungesunde Lehre und unlutherische Praxis ein kraeftiges, mannhafte Zeugnis ablegen wollte." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1904, p. 372.)

The *Evangelical Alliance*, in its day, agreed on a number of "essentials" concerning which there must be unity. The list comprised the "inspiration and authority of Scripture, the Trinity, the utter depravity of the human nature, incarnation and atonement, justification by faith alone, the resurrection of the body, the divine institution of the ministry, the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper." Dr. Pieper's judgment: "The program of the Chr. Alliance, insisting on unity in essentials only, placed Scripture doctrines on the free list and was therefore a repudiation of Christ's program: 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' We can and should have patience with the weak and deal with them in charity. But to set up the principle that a class of Scripture teachings is not necessarily binding is a human plan for the building of the Christian Church which is at variance with Christ's 'world plan' and cannot but have disastrous consequences, since it injures the foundation of the Christian Church: 'Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.'" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1925, p. 330.) In another connection Dr. Pieper declares: "Christians should never agree to disagree on any article of faith, but earnestly endeavor to bring about an agreement of all doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture. Nothing but the revealed truth, and the *whole* revealed truth—that is the platform which God has made for the Christian, and which every Christian is commanded to stand upon. An agreement on a more or less comprehensive collection of so-called 'fundamental articles,' selected by man, leaving a portion of the divinely revealed truth to the discretion of the dissenting parties, is a position wholly unbecoming to Christians, for, not to deny, but to confess the Word of Christ, is their duty in this world." (*Distinctive Doctrines and Usages*, p. 138.)

It is a vicious principle. It fosters the idea that these "non-essentials" are, after all, unimportant—not worth fighting for, not justifying disagreement. That idea results in grave harm. The distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Church are needed, all

of them, the least of them. Dr. F. E. Reinartz states: "Throughout the thirty years of life of the Federal Council there have been shallow unionistic tendencies showing themselves. . . . Nor have Federal Council representatives always been ready to acknowledge that the marginal differences of these bodies that are *one* at the Center are real and vital." (*The Luth. Ch. Quarterly*, 1942, p. 223.) These "marginal" doctrines absolutely do not deal with inconsequential, immaterial, indifferent matters. They provide for real and vital needs of the Christian. They belong to "the wholesome words." For every Scripture teaching is wholesome and necessary.

The Christian faith cannot accept the motto: "In non-essentials liberty." The Christian faith cannot bring itself to make free with half of the teachings of the Bible. The unionist says it can. The unionist speaks "of the power of Christian faith to span differences in belief. . . . My mind goes to a thrilling moment one evening (at the Oxford Conference, 1937) when the vote was taken to unite with Faith and Order to form a World Council of Churches, and the great Communion service on the last Sunday morning, at which all baptized Christians, forgetting post-denominational schisms, met together at the table of our one Lord. . . . 'Unity in diversity' was no longer a shibboleth, but a reality." (Georgia Harkness, *The Faith by Which the Church Lives*, pp. 18, 24.) The Christian faith is roused to resentment when it is asked to make the least word of Scripture a matter of indifference. Faith made Luther protest against such proposal and cry out: "The doctrine is not ours!" It is certainly not our Lord who asks us to minimize any of His words. Dr. Hans Boehm (Germany) does not mince words when speaking to this point. According to *Kirch. Zeitschrift*, Dec. 1939, p. 756, he says: "Wir moechten von unserem lutherischen Bekenntnis her die Zeichen aufrichten und sagen: wo sich irgend eine Union bildet, die um der aeußeren Geschlossenheit willen auf dieses gegenseitige Fragen nach dem gleichen Glaubensgrund verzichtet oder es fuer *belanglos* haelt oder es gar unterdrueckt, da hat bei der Herstellung einer solchen Einigkeit nicht der Herr Christus, sondern der Teufel seine Hand im Spiel gehabt."

The Lutheran conscience refuses to subscribe to the principle "In non-essentials liberty" and declares in the words of the Formula of Concord: "We have no intention of yielding *ought* of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and unity. . . . We are anxious to advance that unity by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, *no room is given to the least error.*" (*Conc. Trigl.*, p. 1095.)

The fundamental principle of the unionistic irenics is per-

nicious and vicious on another account. It fails to specify which are the essentials and which are the non-essentials. It grants the liberty to expand the non-fundamentals and contract the fundamentals as the occasion demands. It is "sufficiently indefinite" (E. S. Jones's phrase) to serve the unionistic purposes.

It goes without saying that Scripture contains no list made up of two columns headed respectively: Principal points, to be observed by all; secondary points, which are free. But it is also a notorious fact that the unionists have no such a list to offer. Each man has the liberty to make his own list. Is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper a primary or a secondary point? Does *sola gratia* in conversion lie at the center or is it peripheral? Nobody will decide definitely. The article *A Federal Plan for Church Unity in Christendom*, 1939, Summer, p. 392, states: "What the essentials are is a question that will have again to be considered; when we say, 'Unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials,' we are assuming that everyone agrees on what falls into each of these categories. If we could agree in the acceptance of certain articles as essentials, all the rest would fall naturally into the class of non-essentials. But the difficulty may be that certain groups will insist that articles of faith or morals are essential, which all the rest are agreed are non-essential. Will such a group, or denomination, be willing to accept the situation which permits that denomination to declare such articles to be essential to its members (since they believe them to be essential), and will that group at the same time live in fellowship with other denominations who state their conviction that those same articles are not essential?" Should we not set up an infallible pope who would give us an authoritative list? Then the following letter would have been answered by one who has authority: "*Essentials and Non-Essentials*. To the Editor: We are being reminded from every side that before we can hope to achieve any kind of organic Church unity on the concordat basis, we must be prepared to sacrifice 'non-essentials.' That seems obvious enough, and it may be that I am worthy of rebuke for so much as mentioning them before we have reached some agreement on the 'essentials.' But I wonder if we are making it easier for us to handle the non-essentials later on by hushing them up now? This diplomatic conspiracy of silence may only confuse the issue when we come to face it. What are the essentials and the non-essentials involved, anyway? Thus far we must say in all charity that the Presbyterians have failed to make their own classification clear. . . . (Rev.) Carroll E. Simcox." (*The Living Church*, June 19, 1940.) Which are the fundamentals, anyway? If you think you can get an answer to that by examining the teaching in vogue in a united church, say

the Evangelical Church of Germany, *die Unierte Kirche*, on the supposition that these people have united on the basis of what they consider fundamentals, you will be mistaken. H. Sasse examined this body and found: "Es gibt Unierte, die weder Lutheraner noch Reformierte sein wollen, sondern die sich zu einer besonderen Ausprägung des evangelischen Christentums bekennen, wobei dieser 'unierte' Typus bald als hoehere Einheit von lutherisch und reformiert verstanden wird, bald als ein gemeinsames Heiligtum, vor dessen Betreten man die konfessionellen Schuhe auszuziehen hat. Es gibt Unierte, die mit ganzem Ernst die grossen gemeinchristlichen Dogmen von der heiligen Dreieinigkeit und von der Gottmenschheit Jesu Christi festhalten. Es gibt andere Unierte, die solche alten 'griechischen' Dogmen als unzeitgemaess ablehnen. Es gibt Unierte, welche die Autoritaet der Heiligen Schrift allen Auspruechen der menschlichen Vernunft gegenueber behaupten. Es gibt andere Unierte, die in der Bibel nur ein Dokument der menschlichen Religionsgeschichte sehen. . . . Wirklich, es ist die hoechste Zeit, dass der Uneinigkeit zwischen den Anhaengern der Union ein Ende gemacht wird, dass die Anhaenger der *religion in which we all agree* uns sagen, worin sie denn eigentlich uebereinstimmen." (See CONC. THEOL. MTHLY., 1935, p. 643.) Which are the essentials, anyway?— According to the first sentence in Sasse's statement it would seem that some unionists take non-essentials to be all those teachings on which any two uniting churches differ.

The unionists have often attempted to draw up satisfactory lists of essentials. The Lutheran unionist Calixtus made up one. He called it the "*Consensus antiquitatis quinquesecularis*." "He took the position that agreement in the fundamentals was sufficient for church union and that the fundamentals were those doctrines taught by the Church of the first five centuries. Even this he reduced later on, settling on the Apostles' Creed as sufficient expression of what is fundamental in Christian doctrine. . . . Whatever was added later was not fundamental and had no significance for the common Christian, and doctrinal differences that had developed later were not fundamental." (*Proc. Syn. Conf.*, 1938, p. 20.)

The unionists want the list of fundamentals to be very short. The Formula of Concord is much too long. In their response to the Report of the Lausanne World Conference the Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland said: "We would urge that such a statement of Faith needs to be an absolute minimum and that such creeds and confessions as those produced in the sixteenth century—as, for example, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Irish Articles, the Westminster Confession, the Helvetic Confession, the Augsburg Confession, the Formula of Concord, etc.—should be

abandoned by all the churches. We would suggest that such a body of Doctrine couched in Scriptural terms is to be found in the ancient Creed called "The Apostles' Creed" and that this might be the rallying point on which the Churches could unite." (*Convictions*, edited by L. Hodgson, p. 69.) "Though it might be necessary," the statement continues, "to make some slight variations in this ancient symbol, as, for example, in such a phrase as 'He descended into Hell.'" And there are those who want more omissions from the Apostles' Creed. It does not represent the "absolute minimum." The number of required essentials must be reduced considerably. The unionists are busy today hunting the absolutely "irreducible minimum," the lowest "common denominator."

When they have found this least "common denominator," the list of "essentials" will have shrunk nearly to the vanishing point.—"When we were learning something about arithmetic in the grades," says a writer in *The Lutheran Herald* of Jan. 26, 1943, "we learned to add fractions . . . by first finding the least common denominator," and the editor comments: "Let us find a common meeting ground; let us set up minimum standards. Mr. Urnes proceeds to do so. Our reaction to his 'three declarations of principle' is that they are too indefinite, too open to diverse interpretations. But that is not the important point. What is important is that Mr. Urnes places his finger on the vital point—finding a 'common denominator.'" The Federal Council people have been hunting for such a "common denominator" these many years. The Evangelical Alliance list of "essentials," given above, no longer covered the situation. Some of these essentials are considered non-essential by too many men of the Federal Council. E. S. Jones declared at the session of the Federal Council of Dec. 14, 1942: "Some of us who work with the Federal Council believe profoundly in the incarnation, the atoning death, the new birth, and the resurrection of Christ. . . . I think, therefore, it ought to be registered that some of us who work within the framework of the Federal Council hold profoundly to the fundamentals of the faith, as do the others." That means that "some" of them do not believe these things. All the world knows that leaders of the Federal Council reject most of the Evangelical Alliance propositions. So these men must find the very lowest common denominator. E. S. Jones thinks he has found it. In his article "Church Federal Union—Now!" published in the *Christian Century* of Dec. 16, 1942, he proposes: "As to the doctrinal basis (of 'The Church of Christ in America' and 'The Church of Christ in Britain' and 'The Church of Christ in India,' etc.), we would make that simple—and yet fundamental. When Peter made the confession 'Thou art

the Christ, the Son of the living God,' Jesus said, 'Upon this rock I will build my church.' The rock was the confession that Peter had just made. We would accept his basis as the rock upon which we would build this church. Any branch that would confess that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God' is upon the rock. We would ask no more, but we would ask no less. That would leave the door open to union with everybody who could make that confession, including the Roman Catholics." There you have "the least common denominator."

There you have "the irreducible minimum of faith" which Dr. Cadman needs in order to unite the disunited groups in the Federal Council. Bishop Francis J. McConnell is satisfied with it. It works, he says. "The doctrinal statements to which those coming into the membership of the Methodist Church now agree are two. 'Do you consider Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and pledge your allegiance to His Kingdom?' 'Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ?' If we are to consider statement of belief in its bearing on the problem of the union of Methodism with other denominations, I do not think that the Methodist Church is likely to ask less than this—though the second question might conceivably be omitted. On the other hand, it is doubtful if the Church would ask more than this or if it would be willing to limit the right of the candidate to interpret the questions in his own way. The questions do imply and sum up the essentials of belief in the new united Church." (*Christendom*, 1939, Summer, p. 357.) W. A. Brown is satisfied with it. "Such a federal unity is the proposal for a World Council of Churches. This is a fellowship open to all churches which accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior, each church being the judge of the meaning it puts into these words." (*A Creed for Free Men*, p. 250.) "Jesus Christ as God and Savior" is the irreducible minimum, and, as the last clause shows, it can easily be reduced still further.—To sum up: the more doctrines are placed on the list of non-essentials, the better are the prospects for the reunion of Christendom on the unionistic basis.⁵⁾

5) Naturally some call for further reductions. A certain Chr. Barth, in 1819, reduced the formula "Jesus Christ—God and Savior" by half. He said: "Auf satisfactio vicaria, Erwaehlung etc. kommt nichts an, nur darauf, dass man Jesum als Heiland anerkennt." (See *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kztng.*, November, 1938.) For proof he added: "Man wird nicht wiedergeboren durch das *Tridentinum* oder die Concordienformel, sondern durch den Heiligen Geist." That sounds familiar.—Some demand a further reduction. The *Correspondence of the Chr. Cent.*, Nov. 9, 1938: "Making it simpler. To the Editor: Sir, I am so weary of the interminable arguments in your beloved journal over a basis of unity acceptable to all the Protestant churches. Why could not these two statements serve as creed and covenant? 1. I believe in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. 2. I wish to live in this belief. Oberlin, Ohio. L. T.

We will have none of this. The unionistic proposal is too indefinite. E. S. Jones likes it for that reason: "Christ, the Son of the living God . . . that is sufficiently definite to hold us to the essentials and *sufficiently indefinite* to give freedom for marginal differences." But we have no use for it. In matters of doctrine we want definite, clear, precise statements. Do not speak to us of "essentials and non-essentials" so long as you cannot give us an exact definition of what you mean. We want none of the shifting, trimming, backing-and-filling which your principle permits.

It is, furthermore, a wicked principle. No man, no theologian, no Federal or World Council has the right to give dispensations in matters of doctrine. The Pope deals with "dispensations"; the Christian theologian does not. No salesman assumes the right, in order to make quick sales, to offer a heavy or a light discount on them. The goods are not his, but the owner's. And "the doctrine is not ours." (Luther.) Schmauk and Benze declare in *The Confessional Principle*, p. XVIII: "If faith is the principle, shall its minimizing be taken as the normal condition of fellowship? Shall apprehension of some fundamentals be sufficient for the Church, or shall the unity be determined by the full truth of God's Word? Have God's representatives on earth the option to offer a discount on the terms set by God, in order to meet a given situation? May we overlook the *sola fide* in order that our churches on earth be filled with guests and that Heaven itself be not too utterly empty?" The doctrine is not ours!

It is a pernicious principle. It robs the Church of its strength. The Church and the Christian need all of the doctrines of the Bible, the greatest and the least. Speaking of "the reduction of Christianity to its lowest common denominator," Professor B. B. Warfield says: "That means nothing less than the shearing of Christianity of all its strength. . . . It certainly is a bad thing, a gravely bad thing, for the higher forms of Christianity to 'unite' with the lower; for that can mean nothing but descent to the lower level. There is nothing so bad in all the world in the way of Christianity as 'common Christianity'. . . . The only mode of

Terborgh."—Let us set down some irreducible minima of another kind. The Lambeth Quadrilateral: The Scriptures; the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; and the Historic Episcopate. That is the Anglican basis for negotiations with a view to reunion. (See Macfarland, *op. cit.*, p. 197.) The Pope, too, takes part in the discussion of what is essential and insists on this irreducible minimum: The Primacy of Peter, and the Immaculate Conception. Macfarland: "Thus we have the first indispensable condition of 'reunion,' acknowledgement of Papal sovereignty and infallibility. So much is clear. . . . On these two conditions, Papal authority and prayer to the Virgin Mary, Pope Pius XI bases his 'plea for unity.'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 210 ff.) Macfarland is not in favor of this proposal.

union . . . is one which makes it its business to raise all to the level of the purest Christianity which by the grace of God they already possess." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1917, p. 282.) Those who like to think that we can get along without this or that or the other doctrine should read the article on Cadman's "irreducible minimum" which *The Lutheran Church Herald* of Nov. 29, 1927, reprinted from *The Presbyterian*. It calls attention to an article by a physician discussing the "irreducible minimum" of the human body. Men had both arms and legs amputated and still lived. Others remained alive after the removal of the stomach or gall-bladder. Life persists after nose and eyes are gone. Yes, some parts of the brain may be cut away. Try this, said the doctor, on one individual, but before the irreducible minimum is reached the patient will be dead. "According to our Liberal brethren, men seem to be able to live without the inerrancy of Scriptures; therefore, lop that off. . . . And the Blood Atonement—many modern folk subsist comfortably enough without that outworn childish dogma: therefore, lop it off. . . . Of course, long before the 'irreducible minimum' is reached, the patient will be dead."

But we are not yet through with our examination of the fundamental principle of unionism.

TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

Huldreich Zwingli, the Father of Reformed Theology

I

Huldreich Zwingli (born January 1, 1484, died October 11, 1531) has often been called the forerunner of Calvin; but as Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, III:27, points out, Zwingli is the "real author of the Reformed confession and, together with Bucer, the founder of Reformed theology." It was Bucer who formed the connecting link between Zwingli and Calvin.

At the Colloquy at Marburg in 1529 Luther refused the hand of fellowship to Zwingli, saying, "You have a different spirit." From his broad view of Christianity Zwingli could well tolerate Luther's differences in teaching; but for Luther to tolerate Zwingli's deviations from the truth would have been on his part a betrayal of the Gospel of Christ. This is the intolerance of truth. Writing of the Marburg Colloquy, McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant*, p. 67, says: "It may seem that the controversy concerned only a minor matter and that the difference between the two reformers was of no such importance as to justify a break; but in reality the two men, as Luther himself clearly recognized, were of an altogether different spirit, and the disagreement touching the